

**LAKWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

SOG NUMBER: 500.03	RULE & REGULATION
DATE IMPLEMENTED: DATE REVISED:	TITLE: VOLUNTEER TUITION CREDIT PROGRAM (VTCP)

PURPOSE:

This guideline was promulgated to establish procedures for volunteers when applying to participate in the Volunteer Tuition Credit Program

SCOPE:

All Volunteer Members of the Fire Department

GENERAL:

The State of New Jersey enacted Volunteer Tuition Credit Program, P.L. 1998, Chapter 145 which permits volunteer fire service personnel who are active and in good standing, as well as their spouses and dependent children, to receive tuition credit to a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute; provided that available classroom space permits and that tuition paying students constitute the minimum number required for the course.

To be eligible to receive tuition credit at a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute, the member shall agree to serve as a member of a volunteer fire company for a minimum of four years and sign an agreement with the district pledging four years of service in exchange for the tuition credit. Following each year of volunteer service performed, the volunteer or the spouse or dependent children shall be entitled to receive tuition credit of up to \$600, not to exceed a maximum of \$2,400 for the member, children, and spouse over a four-year service period.

Upon being accepted and enrolled in a county college, county vocational school or county technical institute, the volunteer, dependent child, or spouse shall provide verification to the institution that the volunteer has performed the service required for the tuition credit. Upon completion of each semester, the volunteer shall submit a transcript to the District Clerk to be maintained in a permanent record. The volunteer or the dependent child or spouse shall maintain a "C" grade average to continue eligibility for the tuition credit program.

PROCEDURE:

- A. A volunteer member wishing to participate in the program shall fill out and sign the State of New Jersey Volunteer Tuition Credit Program Service Pledge Agreement (VTC-2) form, pledging 4 years of active service in good standing to the Fire Department and shall submit same to the Chief of Department via the forms email address.

- B. Upon receipt of the VTC-2 form the Chief will affix his signature if the member meets the requirement of eligibility and the form will remain in the members personal file at Fire Headquarters.
- C. The Chief reserves the right to review all applications on a case-by-case basis and may withhold signature (even if the applicant is in good standing) if disciplinary issues are present by the applicant. The Chief shall provide reasoning to the applicant.
- D. Following each year of service, the Chief will send a letter of verification (VTC-3 or VTC-4) along with a Certificate of Authorization (VTC-5) to the Township Clerk at the request of the volunteer or on behalf of all eligible volunteers.
- E. The first requests for the letter of verification may come at any time after a volunteer has earned one year of service.
- F. The Township Clerk then issues a signed and sealed VTC-5 form to the volunteer with a copy forwarded to the District Clerk which becomes part of the permanent file kept at Fire Headquarters (it shall be the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure a copy has been submitted to the District Clerk).
- G. The VTC-5 form can then be presented by the volunteer, spouse, and dependent children to the learning institution during the enrollment period. Only the original form can be accepted.
- H. Enrollment is limited to those classes where space is available and tuition-paying students constitute the minimum number required for the course. The institution may wait until the last day of registration to determine space availability.
- I. The learning institution will show the tuition amount on the lower portion of the certificate and show a running balance for other courses taken during this period.
- J. Upon completion of each semester or course cycle, the student must submit a transcript to the District Clerk at Fire Headquarters, which becomes part of the permanent file kept at Fire Headquarters.
- K. A student must maintain a grade of "C", "2.0" or "pass" in the courses taken under the Program to continue eligibility.
- L. The Municipality and/or the Fire District assumes no responsibility for the requisitioning of any supportive documents.
- M. The Certificate of Authorization is an "original only" document. In the event of its loss, it is not replaceable.

Please Note: Students should exercise caution when using the VTC program for selection of core and/or major requirements because the program limits credits to open enrollment registrations. Some of the schools do not let volunteers on a tuition credit register for a class until all paying students have registered. This sometimes leads to popular courses closing and one may be unable to register using a tuition credit. It would be advisable for a student to use VTC for their elective courses because there is more flexibility in their options in the event a course is dropped or is filled. The VTC law does not allow the State to enact rules and regulations for the implementation of the program. Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) established the forms, guidelines, and procedures in cooperation with the Municipal Clerks Association, NJ County College Association, NJ Vo-Tech Association, and the Division of Fire Safety. The law does not provide for sanctions against any institution that does not enforce the program.

State of New Jersey
Volunteer Tuition Credit Program
P.L. 1998, c.145
Service Pledge Agreement

I, _____, agree to serve as an active volunteer
Print Name

member of the _____
Volunteer Organization

for a minimum term of four (4) years.

I further agree to comply with the regulations, rules and by-laws that are applicable to this volunteer service organization and that I will, to the best of my ability, perform the duties required of me as a member.

Following each year of volunteer service, my spouse, dependent children, and I are eligible to participate in the Volunteer Tuition Credit Program as set forth in the N.J.S.A. 18A:71-78.1 et seq. I further understand that a "C", "2.0" or "pass" is required for the student to maintain program eligibility and that registration is on a space available basis.

Signature of President, Captain, or Chief

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Date

**State of New Jersey
Volunteer Tuition Credit Program
P.L. 1998, c.145
Verification of Service Performed**

As of _____, _____
Date *Name of Volunteer*

has successfully completed one year of active volunteer service with the

Name of Organization

This letter is intended to serve as verification to the _____
Name of Municipality

that the volunteer has fulfilled the obligation as stated in the Service Pledge Agreement. A copy of this letter is to remain in the volunteer's file along with the required documents for the Volunteer Tuition Credit Program.

Signature of President, Captain, or Chief

Signature of Secretary

Date

Date

State of New Jersey
Volunteer Tuition Credit Program
P.L. 1998, c.145
Blanket Verification of Service Performed

As of _____, the following individuals have completed one
Date

year of active volunteer service with the: _____
Name of Organization

This letter is intended to serve as verification to the:
_____ that the volunteers are fulfilling the
Name of Municipality

obligations as stated in the Service Pledge Agreement required by N.J.S.A 18A:71-78.3. A copy of this letter is to remain in each of their files along with the required documents for the Volunteer Tuition Credit Program.

List of Volunteers

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signature of President, Captain, or Chief

Signature of Secretary

Date

Date

State of New Jersey
Volunteer Tuition Credit Program
P.L. 1998, c.145
Certificate of Authorization/Voucher

The fire or emergency medical volunteer listed below, has completed one year of service with the:

Name of Organization

Pursuant to P.L. 1998, c. 145 (N.J.S.A. 18A:71-78.1), this voucher may be used by the volunteer and the volunteer's immediate family as payment for tuition at any county college, county vocational, or county technical school in the State of New Jersey on a space available basis. Pursuant to this law, this voucher is redeemable for up to \$600.00 of tuition credit. The institution may wait until the last day of registration to determine if space is available.

Name of Volunteer:

Name(s) of eligible family member(s):

This certificate must have an original signature and be sealed by the Municipal Clerk and may not be reproduced. It is good for a period of one (1) year from the date below. Any balance remaining is void and non-transferable.

Signature of Volunteer

Signature of Municipal Official

Date

Date

Space below for educational institution only:
