

## Appendix K – Financial Assistance Example





# DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**TITLE: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**NO: 300.1**

**DIRECTOR: GARY J.  
ARTHUR**

**INITIAL RELEASE  
DATE: 09/24/99**

**REVISED: 07/31/03**

### **PURPOSE**

The Department recognizes that many residents are financially unable to participate in the programs offered by the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks but still desire the opportunity to experience the benefits of leisure activities or licensed childcare. The Department has established a Scholarship and Financial Assistance Program as a supplement of funds to make recreational leisure activities available to as many county residents as possible. These funds are made available through scholarships. The purpose of this program is to enable as many county residents as possible to benefit from the funds available.

Scholarships are awarded based on family income and outside assistance with a percentage of payment scale. At various times, financial assistance is awarded in concurrence with other County departments or outside organizations. Financial assistance is awarded on a first come, first served basis in accordance to program availability, the budget allowance each fiscal year, and program eligibility. Sports booster clubs will donate money to assist with scholarship dollars for their particular programs. Programs sponsored and run by other organizations are not eligible for reduced rates. Western Howard County Baseball and Senior Fitness Fun are examples of ineligible programs. Material fees, required equipment, and some programs are not eligible for a reduced rate. Reduced rate applies only to the program fee. Extra costs or program material fees are the responsibility of the participant.

### **SUBTITLE**

Scholarship and Financial Assistance Program

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **I. Funding**

The financial assistance funding limit will be set during the budget process each year. Outside organizations may assist participants by agreeing in writing to fund all or a portion of the cost. This may cover either entire costs or balance of costs based on eligibility and funds still available through the department. All information contained herein is applicable while funds are available.

**Refer to Howard County Council Bill No. 17-1999, effective July 6, 1999**



## II. Personnel

A. Division managers will be responsible to review the financial information provided and award or deny scholarships based on the guidelines set in Section III, Rules of Participation.

B. The Customer Service Manager, and designated staff, are responsible for:

1. Tracking applications through the process. They will maintain a file of all requests containing the name of the applicant, date application was received, date forwarded to division manager, date returned to registration, and the date the approval letter was sent to the applicant.
2. Contacting the individuals requesting assistance
3. Billing the individuals requesting assistance
4. Billing any outside organization also involved
5. Tracking funds available and awarded on a seasonal and yearly

basis.

6. Providing seasonal reports by course and function number of amount awarded.
7. Insuring that all requests are kept in a confidential manner to protect the privacy of the requesting registrant.

C. The marketing or registration staff will assist with making this policy available to the public on flyers and through the brochure.

D. The Office of Law can assist with the wording of information provided to the public describing the policies listed herein, and with the collection of any delinquent balances of \$100 or more.

## III. Rules of Participation

A. Only residents of Howard County may apply for Financial Assistance towards any programs offered through the brochure, flyer or Internet by following the guidelines below. Non-county residents are not eligible for a reduction of fees.

B. Registrants must complete a scholarship application form per person per fiscal year.

C. Registrants must provide up to date, complete, income verification once a year to have their application considered. New information will be required each Fall regardless of which season original information was provided.

D. Registrants must provide a 25% deposit to secure a space in the program while the information is being reviewed. If a deposit is not given, the program may be filled while the process is being completed.

E. Registrants who do not meet the financial assistance guidelines and still need financial help may be able to receive a payment plan for the full amount of the program, this policy applies to non-county residents as w

#### IV. GUIDELINES

A. Financial assistance is limited to one program per person per season (excluding childcare) while funds are available. Recreational licensed childcare is awarded yearly and includes all days and hours that licensed care is provided.

B. There are no limits on the amount being awarded for leisure programs; however, there is a \$60 limit for trips.

C. The income guidelines for a family of three is as follows. This was based on family income guidelines from the Howard County Housing and Community Development Office, and were averaged from their scale.

Income	Reduction Percent
Under \$14,500	75%
\$14,501-\$18,000	65%
\$19,000-\$25,000	55%
\$26,000-\$30,000	45%
\$31,000-\$35,000	35%
\$36,000-\$40,000	25%
\$41,000-\$46,000	15%

#### V. Procedures

A. At first contact with the participant, a scholarship application will be given for completion. This may be done in person, through the mail, fax, e-mail, or by an outside organization.

B. The scholarship application needs to be returned to the registration office, completed with verification of income. Preferred is the prior year's income tax form, copies of any subsidized income such as medical, housing, food stamps, and income from child support. Photocopies are needed. An applicant may attach notes, a letter from employer on company letterhead, or other documentation that may allow them to be considered on current circumstances rather than actual income.

C. Applications may be received with or ahead of the registration form and deposit.

1. If received with a registration form and deposit, the participant will be immediately registered in the program pending approval. If a reduction of fees is denied, the applicant may request a full refund of the deposit.
2. If received without a deposit, the participant will not be registered until a deposit is received.
3. If application is received with a letter from an outside organization, guaranteeing partial coverage of the program, (on official letterhead), the participant will be immediately registered in the program pending approval.

E. The application will then be reviewed by the Division Manager and approved or denied based on guidelines stated above. If unable to make a determination from information provided, the Division Manager will contact the registrant for additional information.

F. Once a scholarship is approved or denied based on eligibility, the registrant will be sent a letter (within approximately five working days) from the registration staff advising them of the decision. There are four basic letter styles used:

1. Approved, no deposit received: Letter is sent stating reduction percentage and amount now due. Deposit is needed to guarantee enrollment. Payment plan schedule may be included for some programs such as summer camp; however, program must be paid in full before start date for participant to be allowed to attend.

2. Approved, deposit received: Letter is sent stating reduction percentage and amount (if any) now due. A payment plan schedule may be included for some large-dollar programs such as summer camp; however, program must be paid in full before start date for participant to be allowed to attend.

3. Denied, with or without deposit: Letter is sent stating reason for denial and full amount now due. A payment plan schedule may be included to allow the registrant to attend even though denied; however, program must be paid in full, or payment plan followed diligently before program begins, for participant to be allowed to attend.

4. Approved, with outside organization assistance: Letter is sent to both the applicant and the representative, stating amount now due and amounts to

be covered by each party. Applicant is responsible for full amount if outside organization is unable to cover any of the cost quoted. Applicant must pay their portion according to the payment schedule provided or before the program begins for registrant to attend.

G. ANY applicant may ask for their request to be reconsidered based on the amount denied or awarded. These requests will be forwarded to the appropriate Division manager with any additional back-up provided. A deposit must be made to guarantee registration as well as regular payments received according to the schedule provided while awaiting the final decision.

H. ANY applicant may request a change in the payment plan schedule. Approval or denial of this will be decided by the clerk maintaining the scholarship records, registration supervisor or Division Manager based on past history and start date of the program. Letters will be sent documenting the request and the new agreed upon schedule if there is a change.

I. ANY applicant requesting a scholarship that has not paid a prior payment schedule in full, had returned checks or were consistently late in following the payment schedule will be designated on the computer by a special code, warning registration staff to only register them according to the following guidelines:

1. Will be required to pay outstanding balance in full prior to a deposit being taken; and
2. Will be required to pay current fees in full, or in full at the prior reduction amount before being saved a place in the program; and
3. Will be required to pay current fee in full at new rate prior to being allowed to attend the program

J. Copies of all letters will be filed with the applications at the end of the season, and a back-up will be maintained in the secured registration area. Notes are made and recorded on these copies of the letters, showing status (dates of payments, not using, posted in computer, requests for new schedules or reconsideration and date paid in full). All information will be kept confidential.

K. Applications for scholarships will be kept in three-ring binders, alphabetically by season (Recreational Licensed Childcare will maintain a separate school year binder). Outside organization letters (invoices) will be in the back of the book as an addendum.

L. All information will also be entered on a spreadsheet (Excel), indicating revenue cost centers involved and balance of budgeted amount allowed to be awarded. This information may be sorted as needed for various reports (by location,

cost center, reduction amount, type of program). Reports requested may be generated directly from this file. Scholarships that are awarded but not used will be listed separately here. A spreadsheet file is kept for each season and for Recreational Licensed Childcare during the school year.

M. Copies of letters and applications will be filed in the Registration Warehouse once the season or school year is complete. Eventually they will be moved to cold storage.