



SEIU UHW - WEST & JOINT EMPLOYER
EDUCATION FUND

Frequently Asked Questions: An Education Fund Overview

The SEIU UHW-West & Joint Employer Education Fund is a Labor/Management Trust Fund that provides education and training programs to health care employees in participating facilities throughout California as well as parts of Colorado, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. The Education Fund is an independent, non-profit organization.

How did the Education Fund get started?

In the late 1990's, many employers began experiencing difficulty in recruiting staff into entry-level healthcare positions. A group of long-term care employers, in response to Union complaints about understaffing, asked the Union to assist with the recruitment of Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs). The Union responded with a plan to recruit, train and support people from low-income communities in Oakland to become CNAs. The first programs were funded by the City of Oakland with money from the federal government.

This led to the birth of the Shirley Ware Education Center (SWEC). SWEC worked with employers, such as Kaiser Permanente, to provide training for employees. This training was funded primarily through public and private grants. At the end of the initial program, 98 percent of participants successfully completed the training program and were subsequently hired into upgraded positions. Hundreds of workers have since benefited from training. A key to the success of these training programs was that they were labor/management partnerships offered through SWEC. SEIU and employers worked together to ensure success. While these programs were successful, there were limits to what could be done working with grants only.

Consequently in 2004, SEIU UHW-West and a number of employers bargained a Labor Management Education Fund, which became the SEIU-UHW West & Joint Employer Education Fund. SWEC has since been integrated into the Education Fund.

What exactly is a Labor-Management Education Fund? How is the Education Fund governed?

The Education Fund is a benefit obtained through the collective bargaining process that exists to provide training and educational opportunities for eligible employees. The Education Fund is governed by 10 trustees – five representing labor and five representing participating employers. Trustees, whether they represent a union or an employer, are responsible individually and collectively for ensuring that Education Fund monies are used for the benefit of employees.

What is the purpose of the Education Fund?

- ♦ To provide educational and training opportunities for healthcare workers
- ♦ To enhance career advancement and employment security
- ♦ To contribute to an excellent standard of patient care

Who is eligible to receive Education Fund benefits?

An employee who:

- Works in a participating SEIU bargaining unit position for an employer makes an Education Fund contribution.
- Is a regular full- or part-time employee eligible for benefits.
- Has completed his/her initial probationary period

- Meets other eligibility criteria required by the training program or partnering educational institution

What Programs and Services does the Education Fund offer?

- ♦ **Career Counseling** - Gateway to services provided by the Education Fund; individual counseling to identify and assess skills, interests, abilities, and potential barriers; establish employee-centered career and education goals; develop an individualized plan to address skill gaps.
- ♦ **Career Preparation/STEP** – College courses that are prerequisites for Nursing, Technical, Professional and other Allied Health programs. Courses include Chemistry, Anatomy, and Microbiology as well as Medical Terminology, Math, English and Computer Skills that help build students’ academic success.
- ♦ **Professional Development Courses** - Continuing education and specialty credentialing courses, seminars and workshops for employees to maintain or upgrade their professional license or certificate. Courses are provided by experts in the field and designed for eligible employees who wish to further develop their skills in their chosen profession and obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs).
- ♦ **Forgivable Loan Program** - Provides limited number of loans to allow employees enrolled in programs leading to high demand careers to reduce hours of work and focus on school. Examples include: RN, Radiologic Technologists, and Respiratory Therapists. Funds received do not need to be repaid if participants remain employed in an upgraded position with their current employer for a specified time period, and/or meet other requirements.
- ♦ **Academic Support** – Provides exam preparation, Academic Success Workshops, “Bridge” classes, and tutoring services to help adult learners succeed in school and on the job.
- ♦ **Other Programs:**
 - ♦ **Job to Job Training** – Provides counseling and short-term training for employees at risk of layoff or job displacement. This program is intended to retrain employees for other open positions with the same employer.
 - ♦ **Career Upgrade** - Provided depending on employer need to fill high-demand, hard-to-fill positions. Examples include RN, Certified Phlebotomy Technician, Sterile Processing Technician, Surgical Technician, and Mammographer.
 - ♦ Some employers may have separate budgets to be utilized for special programs
 - ♦ Through the Shirley Ware Education Center, the Fund seek grants to provide additional programs and to leverage employer contributions

How do eligible members learn about Education Fund programs and services?

- ♦ **Website** – An excellent source of current information www.seiu-uhweduc.org
- ♦ **E-Newsletter** – Emailed to participating employees
- ♦ **Mailings** – Packets of information about our programs and services mailed to members when new employers join the fund
- ♦ **Program Catalog** - Produced twice a year to coincide with Fall and Spring semesters. Includes schedule of courses for our Career Prep, Professional Development classes, Career Counseling workshops, Forgivable Loan Program Application and other information.
- ♦ **Brochures**
- ♦ **Quarterly Newsletter** - Mailed to employers and union members
- ♦ **Presentations** – Fund staff schedule presentations at steward council meetings, division staff meetings, as well as facility visits and management staff meetings
- ♦ **Career Days** – Held at participating facilities throughout the year