



NWS Health & Wellness Reimbursement Program

Additional Information to Assist You

(February 12, 2021) In response to members' inquiries, NWSEO has obtained additional information on the NWS Health & Wellness Reimbursement Program. Due to COVID-19 and restrictions at local health clubs and gyms across the nation, many employees are exercising at home through online subscription-based health and wellness services, which are covered in this program.

Below is a list of frequently asked questions along with the responses from NWS. If you have any additional questions, please contact the NWS Management and Organization Division, via email at daphne.love@noaa.gov, or by phone at 301-427-6939.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What if I paid for a one-year membership starting in October 2020?

You are eligible for reimbursement (up to \$300) for services provided in calendar year 2021, even though costs were incurred in 2020. You need to provide your supervisor with documentation showing the cost for membership for that portion of calendar year 2021 and a receipt for payment.

2. What if I paid for a two-year membership starting in January 2021?

You are eligible for reimbursement (up to \$300) for services provided in each calendar year. You will need to submit the appropriate documentation for reimbursement for each calendar year. You are responsible for saving your receipts.

3. What if I have a family membership?

You can be reimbursed for the cost of an individual membership (up to \$300). You must provide your supervisor with documentation showing the cost of an individual membership and a receipt of payment for the family membership.

4. My wife and I are both NWS employees. We have a couples membership. How does the program work for us?

In the case where a husband and wife both work for the NWS, reimbursement will be treated like FAQ 3. That is, a NWS employee shows documentation for the cost of individual membership as well as a receipt for the total amount paid for the family membership. The combined amount cannot be more than the total paid for family membership unless one member had additional expenses for some other service covered by the program. The total amount paid cannot be more than \$300 per person per year.

5. Will reimbursements be allowed for month-to-month membership fees if the total number of months is less than 12 months? My gym occasionally offers special workshops for \$10. My yearly fees are less than \$300 dollars. Can the workshops be reimbursed? What about fees for classes but not membership fees? Costco has a membership to a fitness center. For \$300 you get a certificate to take to the fitness club. Is this covered under the program? I can get a "Punch Pass" for \$110 for 20 visits to the local health club. Is this covered under the program? *There are numerous means of obtaining covered services. If the receipt you provide is anything but clear, it is your responsibility to make it clear. If you purchase your membership through a retail store, such as Costco, be prepared to show documentation that you actually signed up for and used the facility you paid for. If it is for month-to-month membership or clinics, etc., you may need to provide separate receipts if your health/wellness facility is unwilling to give you one end of the year receipt for all services.*

6. Does Weight Watchers weekly dues fall under the program? What about supplements? *Programs like Weight Watchers are intended to be part of the program, but, there are many weight-loss programs, some more reputable than others. Nationally recognized weight loss programs are covered. Food and supplements provided by these programs are covered. But an individual will not be reimbursed for their own self-managed program. For instance, a nationally recognized program may offer food or supplements as part of the program, which would be covered, but you individually purchasing that plans' food or supplements at a grocery store would not be covered. In addition, any program covered by the FEHB would not be covered by this plan. In other words, if food or supplements are part of your contract with the facility/program, they will be reimbursable, if it is ancillary to it, it is not reimbursable.*

7. Would yoga classes, martial arts classes, or a membership at an aquatics center be reimbursable under the program? *The program is designed to reimburse for health and wellness not recreation or leisure. Classes such as these are permissible if they are geared towards long-term physical fitness and not just recreational in nature.*

8. What about investments in home exercise equipment, such as bicycles, skis, running shoes, etc? *Due to the complications of the NWS buying equipment like this, it was decided that at this time, expenditures like this will not be covered.*

9. What constitutes a health club? YMCA, Gold's Gym, Recreation Center, City Based Fitness Program, an access fee for local community college athletic facilities, Jazzercise? *The program is designed to reimburse for health and wellness not recreation or leisure. It does not cover entrance fees, or membership fees that are not directly associated with physical fitness and wellness. All of the programs in this example would be covered provided they are geared towards long-term physical fitness and not just recreational in nature.*

10. What if we do not pay health club dues, but we pay an amenities fee at an apartment complex in which we reside and higher monthly rent to accommodate the fitness facility in an apartment complex? Are we still eligible? *If this is a separate fee and not just your rent, this will be covered.*

11. Will this plan cover fees to use the local City Recreation Center?

The intent of the program is to promote health and wellness through improved physical fitness. If the facility you belong to is not a traditional fitness and wellness center be prepared to provide documentation that supports your claim otherwise it may be rejected.

12. There are several health Clubs that are just for women (Curves, Women's Only).

Does attending one of these clubs make the employee ineligible for the rebate?

Women only clubs are covered as the law treats these facilities as a privacy matter. No other facility that discriminates against individuals on the basis of sex, race, religion, or sexual preference will be covered by the program.

13. I know that there are corporate rates available at YMCA's, but only if your employer is participating. Can you tell me if any kind of agreement will be made between the federal government and health clubs like YMCA to offer a corporate discount to federal employees?

That is not part of this program.

14. There are Health Clubs that require automatic monthly payments be placed on a Credit Card. Is it a requirement to send in monthly credit card statements for the entire year? I know there will be many employees who would not want to send in their statements due to privacy concerns and/or the statements are used for proof of purchase for other things.

You should ask your health/wellness facility for a receipt for the entire year. If that is not possible a credit card or bank statement(s) with personal or non-applicable information crossed out will be accepted.

15. One health club I am considering is at a college campus. They charge based on school semester year rather than calendar year. If I pay my yearly membership in October for the period October through September, will I be able to submit my receipt in December and get reimbursed the full \$300 for the yearly membership or will I only get reimbursed for the October to December time period? In other words, is the reimbursement based on what you have used for the current year or what you have paid in the current year?

Reimbursement is for service rendered in the current year up to \$300. Therefore, if you paid in 2020, for use in 2021, you would submit two receipts with Form B, the receipt for the portion paid in 2020 but used in 2021 and the receipt for the portion paid in 2021 and used in 2021.

16. Can I use official time to participate in health club and wellness activities?

No.

17. What happens if I transfer from one office to another within the National Weather Service?

All documents associated with this program will be forwarded upon transfer to your new duty location.

18. What do I do if I participate and separate from the National Weather Service before the reimbursement period?

Follow the guidelines on how to get reimbursement at least one pay period before separation.

19. What about remote NWS locations where there are absolutely no health and wellness facilities/activities?

Employees and managers should work together using the flexibilities in this program to find creative solutions to this problem.



In order to be eligible for the programs, it is important that the correct forms are submitted to your supervisor no later than **March 31, 2021**.

Complete information on the program is available here:

[Health Program Guidance](#)

You may also visit <https://nwseo.org/membership-benefits/>.

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