

Report criticizes lottery's class expenses

The auditor criticized the Oregon Lottery Commission for reimbursing employees for college courses

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City/State Politics Reporter

It's only rock 'n' roll — but the state auditor doesn't like it.

A report from the auditor criticized the Oregon Lottery Commission for, among other things, reimbursing employees for college courses the auditor deemed questionable. Lottery Commission officials are defending the classes as necessary steps toward a college degree.

The courses specifically men-

tioned in the report are "Fundamentals of Acting" and "Introduction to Rock Music," each of which was taken by a different employee of the Lottery Commission.

Chuck Hibner, deputy director of the Audits Division for the Secretary of State's office, said the purpose of the report was to identify ways for the Lottery Commission to cut expenditures. In addition to the college courses, the audit also questioned expenditures for travel, meals and other training.

Lee Moore, deputy director for the Lottery Commission, said employees can be reimbursed for education expenses as long as they are pursuing degrees related to some aspect of

the commission's operations, such as business administration or computer science.

The primary goal of the program is to retain an educated work force, Moore said.

"Once a person gets a degree, they owe us two years," he said. Moore added that workers who leave before the two-year period has ended must reimburse the commission for education expenses.

Moore said both of the employees in question were enrolled in degree programs at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. The acting class was an elective for a student working toward an associate's degree in business, and the rock history course

was for a student pursuing an associate's degree in marketing.

Both courses help fulfill liberal arts requirements for Associate of Arts degree programs at Chemeketa.

Hibner said it is not uncommon for state agencies to finance college courses for employees, but the courses must be directly related to the employees' job duties. Because the Lottery Commission is funded by lottery ticket sales instead of tax revenues, it is not subject to the same expenditure restrictions as other state agencies.

Nonetheless, Secretary of State Bill Bradbury said the Lottery Commission should cut expenses for the benefit of programs that are

funded by lottery proceeds.

"Every dollar that the lottery spends on administrative expenses costs public schools in Oregon 63 cents, costs economic development programs 21 cents, costs state parks and salmon recovery programs 15 cents and costs gambling treatment programs a penny," Bradbury said in a prepared statement.

Moore said the degree program is cost effective in the long run because retaining educated workers is vital for the commission.

"Education is an investment that we make in people," he said.

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Grant

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Dishion said he and colleagues Frances Gardner, of the University of Oxford in England, and Daniel Shaw, of the University of Pittsburgh, established the idea. Melvin Wilson, of the University of Virginia, also contributed to the process.

The idea first arose from discussions at a 1999 conference in Barcelona, Spain, called the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Research in Child and Adolescent Psychopathology.

Dishion became interested in helping prevent risky behavior in children when he was a student.

"When I was an undergraduate in (the University of California at) Santa Barbara, I worked as a child care worker," Dishion said. "I noticed that some of the children we were serving had behavioral problems that interfered with their health and happiness."

Project researchers have now developed an effective method of parenting for the study that is adaptable case by case for each of

the children and their families.

"We have a strength-based intervention program, so rather than concentrating on defects, we emphasize strength," Dishion said.

At heart, the method involves three key ingredients.

The researchers help parents anticipate situations that could lead to bad behavior, emphasize nonphysical discipline and focus on developing a good parent-child relationship.

"We'd like to say it's never too early and it's never too late to help kids."

Jeff Sprague
co-director,
Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior

"We focus on a set of skills we call family management skills that involve using proactive strategies for encouraging positive behavior," he said.

Dishion said the panel of scien-

tists chose his grant application because of its solid science and focus on toddlers.

Many say problems that lead to substance abuse begin at a young age.

"We'd like to say it's never too early and it's never too late to help kids," said Jeff Sprague, co-director of the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior.

Sprague said children develop habits in their formative years, which may lead to problems when they are older.

Other researchers concur.

"There are certain red flag things that will get (the parent) in trouble later in life," said Hill Walker, co-director of the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior.

Walker said warning signs are high-level aggression, severe tantrums and strongly oppositional, defiant behavior.

"The more practice vulnerable children have in behavior problems, the more difficult they are to change," he said.

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Mak McCambridge Emerald

Terri Theobald puts a fiery novelty contact in her eye.

Eyes

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tested for quality or sterilization. Mathers said the lenses might contain more pigment or be larger than regular contacts, which could reduce tear flow and the amount of oxygen transmitted to the eye — possibly leading to infection or corneal ulcers. Left untreated, infections could lead to blindness, a high price to pay for fashion's sake.

"In a matter of days, that infection can go from something that's a little uncomfortable to a hole in your eye," Mathers said.

Mathers said consumers who aren't informed about eye health often trade their lenses as well.

"That is a huge problem," he said. "You're trading your bacteria."

This can spread viruses, such as "pink eye" and viral conjunctivitis.

"This is highly transmissible and very distressing," Mathers added.

Roline said all this can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines.

"The big deal is to understand that (the lens) is a medical device and has the potential to do harm if it is not fitted well or maintained properly," he said.

These guidelines include visiting a doctor for fitting — whether the patient needs a vision-improving prescription or just wants the contacts as an accessory — as well as learning to insert and disinfect the contacts correctly.

Whether they want to support their favorite sports teams with logo lenses or attract attention with extra-sparkly eyes this holiday season, students should visit an eye care professional.

"When worn appropriately, (novelty lenses) are reasonable to use, and they are just as safe as other contact lenses," Mathers said.

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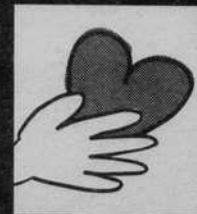
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