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# ***DOUGHERTY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM***



# **DCSS Travel Regulations & Procedures Manual**

**Business & Support Services**

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## **TRAVEL POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL (BUS-M001)**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Dougherty County School System shall be guided by general travel regulations set forth in this manual when employees are required to travel away from headquarters in the performance of their official duties. These regulations, which are general in nature, are intended to provide a reasonable degree of uniformity.

In requiring employees to travel in the performance of their duties, the Dougherty County School System expects to reimburse them for reasonable and necessary expenses as may be incurred while traveling away from their official headquarters and places of residence.

*In accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated Section 50-5B-5, "The state accounting officer in cooperation with the Office of Planning and Budget is authorized to and shall adopt rules and regulations governing in-state and out-of-state travel and travel reimbursement that promote economy and efficiency in state government and which treat employees fairly and equitably."*

*All agencies are required to follow the minimum guidelines outlined in the Statewide Travel Regulations. However, agencies are also authorized to establish policies that further restrict an employee's travel if the agency determines that stricter policies are necessary. Agencies are not authorized to set more lenient policies than those authorized by the Statewide Travel Regulations.*

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### **1.0 DEFINITIONS:**

- 1.1 Agency** - any department, board, commission, or other organizational unit of government that is subject to these Statewide Travel Regulations.
- 1.2 Commercial transportation** - any entity that offers transportation of people or goods to the public for pay.
- 1.3 County and Municipal Excise Tax** - the local taxes charged by hotel/motels for lodging, also referred to as "hotel/motel" or "occupancy" tax. This tax is separate from the state sales tax.
- 1.4 Employee Travel Expense Statement** - the accounting document used to reimburse an employee for travel expenses incurred while on official business.
- 1.5 Federal Per Diem Rate** - the maximum allowance for expenses of federal employees who are on travel status. The available rate only includes locations within the continental United States. Separate per diem limits have been established for non-contiguous U. S. and foreign travel.
- 1.6 Headquarters** - is defined as the office at which employees normally carries out the responsibilities of their position or as otherwise designated by the local school superintendent, deputy superintendent, director or supervisor.
- 1.7 High Cost Area** - any area within Georgia which meal expenses may be reimbursed at a higher amount than the limits that otherwise applies to travel within Georgia. High cost areas are limited to the following counties: Chatham, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Glynn, and Gwinnett counties.
- 1.8 Lodging** - a hotel, motel, inn, apartment or similar entity that furnishes lodging to the public for pay.
- 1.9 Meal Expense** - the cost of a meal including applicable taxes and tip.
- 1.10 Miscellaneous Travel Expense** - a necessary and reasonable expense incurred by an employee while traveling on official business. This term does not apply to meals, lodging, mileage or transportation costs.
- 1.11 Normal Commuting Miles** - the miles traveled on a regular (usually daily) basis from an employee's residence to the location most frequently associated with work performed outside of that residence. This should be a standard distance that does not change from one reimbursement request to the next.
- 1.12 Personal Motor Vehicle** - a motor vehicle that is owned or leased for personal use by an employee. Personal motor vehicles include automobiles, aircraft, and motorcycles
- 1.13 Personnel** - is defined as persons governed by the rules and regulations of the local school system.
- 1.14 Point of Departure** - the beginning location used to calculate state-use miles traveled in a personal vehicle.
- 1.15 Travel Advance** - any payment to an employee for travel expenses that will be incurred for a scheduled, future trip.
- 1.16 Travel Exception** - written authorization for travel reimbursement of expenses generally not allowable under the DCSS Travel Regulations.
- 1.17 Travel Expenses** - meal, lodging, mileage, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses.

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### 2.0 AUTHORIZATION FOR TRAVEL:

- 2.1 Employees may be reimbursed for reasonable travel-related expenses incurred while on official business for the Dougherty County School System. Subject to the provisions outlined in these travel regulations, the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget have authorized reimbursement for the following expenses associated with employee travel:
- 2.1.1 Meals associated with overnight lodging and in certain circumstances where there is no overnight lodging;
  - 2.1.2 Lodging expenses;
  - 2.1.3 Mileage for use of a personal motor vehicle;
  - 2.1.4 Transportation expenses, including parking and toll fees; and
  - 2.1.5 Certain miscellaneous expenses associated with travel.
- 2.2 The specific policies regarding the reimbursement of travel expenses, as well as expense limits and required documentation are outlined in the following chapters.
- 2.3 **Employees who are required to travel for their job and are eligible for travel reimbursement should receive authorization from their department head or other designated official prior to performing the travel.**

### 3.0 PER DIEM ALLOWANCE FOR MEALS

#### 3.1 Meal Expenses Associated with Overnight Travel within Georgia

- 3.1.1 Employees traveling overnight will be paid a per diem amount designed to cover the cost of meals (including taxes and tips), based on the number of meals per day for which the employee is eligible. ♦ **How many meals per day? [See chart on page 6]**
- 3.1.2 Employees traveling overnight are generally eligible for per diem amounts designed to cover the cost of three (3) meals per day for all days on travel status **other than** the day of departure and the day of return. There are specific instances in which an employee **may be** eligible for the three-meal per diem rate on departure/return days (see discussion below).
- 3.1.3 There are also instances in which an employee may not receive per diem for the normally eligible number of meals: If any meal is included as a part of the cost of conference registration, etc., such meal(s) should not be considered eligible in the calculation of per diem. For example, if conference registration includes breakfast and lunch, the employee will only receive per diem for the dinner meal (\$15; \$20 for high cost areas). Because most conferences, etc., accommodate a variety of dietary needs/restrictions, employees are expected to participate in such meals. In rare circumstances, an employee may be unable to participate in a conference meal. In such a case, the employee may request the per diem amount associated with the meal purchased in lieu of that provided. If requesting such reimbursement, a receipt documenting the meal purchase must be attached to the travel expense statement; also, justification for the meal purchase must be indicated on the statement.

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- 3.1.4 Day of departure.** Employees may only receive per diem for meals occurring while officially on travel status. For example, if an employee departs at 3:00 p.m., the employee is not eligible for breakfast or lunch per diem amounts for the day of departure.
- 3.1.4.1** If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 6:30 a.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for breakfast on the day of departure.
- 3.1.4.2** If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 11:00 a.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for lunch on the day of departure.
- 3.1.4.3** If an employee departs on an overnight trip prior to 5:30 p.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for dinner on the day of departure.
- 3.1.5 Day of return.** Employees may only receive per diem for meals occurring while officially on travel status. For example, if an employee returns at 11:00 a.m., the employee is not eligible for per diem for lunch on the day of return.
- 3.1.5.1** If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 6:30 a.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for breakfast on the day of return.
- 3.1.5.2** If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 1:30 p.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for lunch on the day of return.
- 3.1.5.3** If an employee returns from an overnight trip after 7:30 p.m., the employee is eligible for per diem for dinner on the day of return.

Day of Departure			Time of Departure/Return	Day of Return		
B	L	D	12:00 a.m. - 6:30 a.m.			
	L	D	6:30 a.m - 11:00 a.m.	B		
		D	11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	B		
		D	1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	B	L	
			5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	B	L	
			7:30 p.m. - 12:00 a.m	B	L	D

◆ **What are the per diem rates?**

General Guidelines.

Eligible Meals	Per Diem Amount
Breakfast	\$6.00
Lunch	\$7.00
Dinner	\$15.00

- 3.1.6 High Cost Areas.** Employees are considered traveling in high cost areas of Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at a location designated as a high cost area (see definitions in Section 1) or lodging is obtained in a location designated as a high cost area. Per diem rates applicable to high cost areas are outlined below:

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Eligible Meals	Per Diem Amount
Breakfast	\$7.00
Lunch	\$9.00
Dinner	\$20.00

### **3.2 Meals Associated with Overnight Travel Outside of Georgia**

Employees are considered traveling outside of Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at an out-of-state location. Employees who are working in Georgia but spending the night in lodging in another state are **not** traveling outside of Georgia.

Employees traveling outside of Georgia may receive meal per diem amounts up to the federal per diem rates (less the \$3 federal "incidentals" allowance; reimbursement of such incidental expenses are covered elsewhere in these travel regulations), at the discretion of the approving department head/program director or designee. **When traveling outside of Georgia, meal receipts must be provided.** If receipts are not provided, reimbursement will not exceed the Georgia high cost rate. The federal per diem rates (for locations within the continental United States) are available at the following address:

<http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>.

The breakdown by meal for federal per diem amounts may be found at the following address:

<http://www.gsa.gov/mie>.

The federal government has also established per diem rates for foreign travel. The Internet address for this information is as follows:

[http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)

Per diem rates associated with travel to high cost out-of-state areas should be approved by the department head/program or his/her designee prior to the trip, in order that the employee might plan meals accordingly. Receipts must be provided to be reimbursed.

### **3.3 Meals Not Associated with Overnight Travel**

Employees who are required to travel for their job and do not stay overnight may receive per diem for certain meals under the following situations:

- 3.3.1 Employees acting as an official representative for their department may receive per diem for meals that are an integral part of a scheduled, official meeting. Per diem is only authorized, however, if the meeting is with persons outside the employee's department and if the meeting continues during the meal. Employees are not authorized to receive this per diem if they leave the premises of the meeting site.
- 3.3.2 Employees may be reimbursed for noon meals that are part of a required registration fee that is paid by the employee. Note: In this instance, a per diem is not authorized; the registration fee is the basis for reimbursement.
- 3.3.3 Employees on State business who travel more than 30 miles from home or headquarters on a work assignment, and are away for more than thirteen (13) hours may receive per diem for the noon meal, even when there is no overnight lodging. In addition to the noon meal, employees who depart prior to 6:30 a.m. are entitled to per diem for breakfast, and employees who return later than 7:30 p.m. are entitled to per diem for dinner. Employees

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must meet the eligibility requirements outlined above for per diem related to the noon meal before per diem for breakfast and/or dinner will be considered.

It should be noted that the Statewide Travel Regulations do not authorize employees to receive per diem for a "lunch meeting" in which the meal and meeting are one and the same.

### **3.4 Meals While Taking Leave**

3.4.1 Employees who take annual leave while on travel status are not authorized to receive per diem for any meal during the period of leave.

### **3.5 Documentation Relating to Meals**

3.5.1 Receipts for meals are not required, except as discussed in section 3.2. Times of departure (for the day of departure) and return (for the day of return) should be noted on the employee travel expense statement to substantiate meals eligible for payment of per diem. ***If times for departure and arrival are not noted on the expense statement, meals will not be an eligible expense.*** All meals included as a part of conference registration fees, etc., should be noted on travel form. Meal expenses incurred that exceed the authorized per diem amounts due to travel in high cost areas or out-of-state should be itemized separately and explained on the travel expense statement, and are eligible for reimbursement as determined by the approving official.

## **4.0 LODGING EXPENSES**

### **4.1 General Provisions**

4.1.1 Employees who travel more than 50 miles from their home office, residence, or headquarters may be reimbursed for lodging expenses associated with approved overnight travel.

4.1.2 Employees will be reimbursed for the actual lodging expenses, provided the expenses are reasonable. Each agency may establish its own policy regarding the maximum reasonable rates for overnight lodging.

### **4.2 Responsibilities of Employee**

4.2.1 Employees traveling overnight are responsible for ensuring the most reasonable lodging rates are obtained. To accomplish this, employees should:

- Make reservations in advance, whenever practical,
- Utilize minimum rate accommodations,
- Avoid the "deluxe" hotels and motels, and
- Obtain corporate/government rates, whenever possible.

### **4.3 Georgia's "Green Hotels" Program**

4.3.1 The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has developed a program to identify and certify lodging properties that are taking significant steps to reduce their demands on Georgia's natural resources and to act as good corporate citizens. These certified

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“Green Hotels” meet a stringent. By using less toxic cleaning and maintenance chemicals, these hotels provide healthier conditions for guests and employees.

- 4.3.2 When traveling on state business and hosting meetings, state employees are encouraged to explore opportunities to support these properties where cost-competitive. The current list of certified properties is available at the following web site:

[http://www.greenseal.org/programs/lodging\\_properties.cfm](http://www.greenseal.org/programs/lodging_properties.cfm)

### **4.4 Reimbursement of Lodging Expenses for Overnight Travel Outside of Georgia**

- 4.4.1 Lodging expenses for hotels/motels outside Georgia may exceed the maximum reasonable rates set by an agency. Employees traveling out-of-state should refer to the federal per diem rates to identify high cost areas of the United States, and to determine whether higher expenses are justified. The rates published by the federal government, however, should only be used as a guide. Lodging expenses associated with travel to high cost areas should be approved by the agency head or other designated official prior to the trip.

<http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>.

- 4.4.2 The federal government has also established per diem rates for foreign travel. The Internet address for this information is as follows:

[http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)

### **4.5 Lodging Associated with a Meeting or Seminar**

- 4.5.1 Employees who stay at a hotel/motel that is holding a scheduled meeting or seminar may incur lodging expenses that exceed the rates generally considered reasonable. The higher cost may be justified in order to avoid excessive transportation costs between a lower cost hotel/motel and the location of the meeting.

### **4.6 Authorization for Lodging within the 50 Mile Radius**

- 4.6.1 On occasion, agencies are required to sponsor conferences, trade shows, and other functions that require personnel to work at the event. Also on occasion, agencies sponsor employee retreats that require groups of employees to be present at an off-site location. In many cases, the employees involved in these activities reside or work less than 50 miles from the scheduled event site
- 4.6.2 Agency heads are authorized to approve overnight travel for such persons who are engaged in activities as described above, provided the affected employees are required to conduct business activities at the site the following day. In addition to lodging, affected employees may be reimbursed for meals and mileage in accordance with the provisions of the Statewide Travel Regulations.
- 4.6.3 Agencies are required to keep records of all persons authorized for travel status under this provision. Such records must be maintained in a central file and must include the names of all persons approved for travel under this provision, the dates of the event, the purpose of the event, the responsibilities of the individuals approved for travel status, and the written and signed authorization of the agency head. Authorization for such travel must be done in advance of the scheduled event.
- 4.6.4 It should be noted that this provision only applies to conferences and other agency sponsored events that occur. This provision does not authorize persons to claim travel

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reimbursement for activities that are part of their normal responsibilities. In addition, this provision would not apply for persons who are required to attend evening meetings as part of their normal responsibilities.

### **4.7 Sharing Lodging**

- 4.7.1 When employees on travel status share a room, reimbursement will be calculated, if practical, on a prorated share of the total cost. When a state employee on travel status is accompanied by someone who is not a state employee on travel status, the employee is entitled to reimbursement at a single room rate.

### **4.8 Taxes Associated with Lodging Expenses**

- 4.8.1 Employees should review hotel/motel receipts to ensure that taxes have been applied correctly to their lodging expenses in accordance with the state tax laws and regulations. Employees should attempt to resolve any problems with the billing prior to checkout.

#### **◆ Lodging paid directly by employee (personal credit card, personal check, or cash)**

- 4.8.2 State and local government officials and employees traveling within the state on official business are exempt from paying the county or municipal excise tax on lodging ("hotel/motel" or "occupancy" tax). [OCGA 48-13-51 (a)(1)(C)(ii)]. Employees are required to pay any state/local sales and use taxes. The exemption when paying by personal credit card, check or cash applies only to the hotel/motel tax.
- 4.8.3 Employees are required to submit a copy of the hotel/motel tax-exemption form when they register at a hotel/motel. A copy of this form is provided in back of this manual. This exemption does not apply to employees staying at an out-of-state hotel/motel. Employees should be able to provide proper identification to document their employment as a state or local government employee.
- 4.8.4 Employees should be sure to present the hotel/motel tax-exemption form to the hotel at check-in. If the hotel refuses to accept the form at check-in, the employee should attempt to resolve the issue with hotel management before checking out at the end of their stay. If the matter is not resolved by the time the employee checks out, the employee should pay the tax. The employee should explain the payment of the tax as an unusual expense on their travel statement.
- 4.8.5 The employee's agency is authorized to reimburse the employee for the hotel/motel tax if the employee provides the agency with the following information: employee name; date(s) of lodging, name, address, telephone number of hotel, and documentation from the hotel/motel of their refusal to omit the excise tax. The employee's agency should forward this information to the State Accounting Office by email to [SAO\\_Reporting@sao.ga.gov](mailto:SAO_Reporting@sao.ga.gov) (note underscore in email address: [SAO\\_Reporting@sao.ga.gov](mailto:SAO_Reporting@sao.ga.gov)) or by regular mail to 200 Piedmont Avenue, Suite 1604 West Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334.

- ◆ Lodging paid directly by the state or local government (direct-bill, state credit card, or government check)

The hotel/motel should not collect any taxes associated with the lodging expenses.

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### 4.9 Resort and Other Fees

- 4.9.1 Some hotels include a charge for “resort” or other fees. These are not tax exempt fees, and should be reimbursed as an eligible lodging expense.

### 4.10 Lodging Expenses Incurred while Taking Leave

- 4.10.1 Employees who take annual leave while on travel status may not be reimbursed for lodging expenses incurred during the period of leave.

### 4.11 Required Documentation of Lodging Expenses (see also 9.1)

- 4.11.1 Daily lodging expenses, including applicable taxes, must be itemized on the employee travel expense statement. Employees requesting reimbursement for lodging expenses are required to submit receipts with their expense statement. In addition, any expenses that exceed the maximum reasonable rates established by the respective agency should be explained on the travel statement. Individuals responsible for approving travel expenses should review these explanations to determine whether the higher costs are justified and allowable.

## 5.0 TRAVEL BY STATE-OWNED OR PERSONAL VEHICLES

### 5.1 General Provisions

- 5.1.1 The Legislature in its 2005 special session passed Senate Bill 1 EX, amending OCGA 50-19-7 and tying the mileage reimbursement rate for use of a personal motor vehicle to the rate established by the United States General Services Administration (GSA) pursuant to the Federal Travel Regulations Amendment 2005-01 as of July 1, 2005, or subsequently amended. These GSA rates are based on a determination of the most advantageous form of travel. Advantageous use may be determined based on energy conservation, total cost to the State (including costs of overtime, lost work time, and actual transportation costs), total distance traveled, number of points visited, and number of travelers. Documentation of the determination of “advantageous use” should be retained for audit purposes.
- 5.1.2 The mileage reimbursement encompasses all expenses associated with the operation of a personal motor vehicle, with the exception of tolls and parking expenses, which are reimbursed separately.

### 5.2 Mileage Reimbursement Rate for Use of Personal Vehicles

- 5.2.1 **Note: Mileage rates are changed only upon notification from SAO/OPB via the SAO web site; new rates should not be utilized based solely on GSA updates.**
- 5.2.2 Tier 1 Rate. When it is determined that a personal motor vehicle is the most advantageous form of travel, the employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled at the Tier 1 rate.
- |   |            |                 |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| • | Automobile | \$0.55 per mile |
| • | Motorcycle | \$0.52 per mile |
| • | Aircraft   | \$1.24 per mile |
- 5.2.3 Tier 2 Rate. If a government-owned (agency-owned) vehicle is available, and its use is determined to be most advantageous to the state, but a personal motor vehicle is used, the

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employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled at the Tier 2 rate of \$0.285 per mile.

- 5.2.4 Tier 3 Rate. When a government-owned vehicle is assigned directly to an employee, but that employee utilizes a personal motor vehicle, the employee will be reimbursed for business miles traveled at the Tier 3 rate of \$0.125 per mile.

### **5.3 Determination of Business Miles Traveled**

- 5.3.1 Employees may be reimbursed for the mileage incurred from the point of departure to the travel destination. If an employee departs from headquarters, mileage is calculated from headquarters to the destination point. If an employee departs from his/her residence, mileage is calculated from the residence to the destination point, with a reduction for normal one-way commuting miles. For the return trip, if an employee returns to headquarters, mileage is calculated based on the distance to such headquarters. If an employee returns to his/her residence, mileage is calculated based on the distance to the residence, with a reduction for normal one-way commuting miles. Agencies should set internal (written) policies for establishing normal commuting miles/starting point for mileage reimbursement when an employee's regular business function requires the use of a personal motor vehicle for travel from residence to multiple locations in a given day, or when an employee's "headquarters" differ from day to day.

Exceptions:

- If travel occurs on a weekend or holiday, mileage is calculated from the point of departure with no reduction for normal commuting miles.
- If an employee does not regularly travel to an office (headquarters) outside of his/her residence (i.e., residence is "headquarters"), the requirement to deduct normal commuting miles does not apply.

Employees may also be reimbursed for business miles traveled as follows:

- Miles traveled to pick up additional passengers
- Miles traveled to obtain meals for which employee is eligible for reimbursement
- Miles traveled to multiple work sites

**Example 1:** Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee is required to travel to job site 40 miles from headquarters. Employee drives to headquarters, then to remote site, then back to headquarters before returning home. Employee's business miles traveled are 80 miles.

**Example 2:** Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee is required to travel to job site 18 miles from headquarters. Employee drives to headquarters, then to remote site, then home, which is 19 miles from remote site. Employee's business miles traveled are 22 miles, as follows: from headquarters to remote site, 18 miles; from remote site to residence, 19 miles minus 15 miles one-way normal commute.

**Example 3:** Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee leaves from home to attend a conference 200 miles from the employee's residence. At the conclusion of the conference, the employee returns directly home. Employee's business miles traveled are 370 miles (400 actual miles traveled minus 30 round-trip commuting miles).

**Example 4:** Employee's normal commute is 15 miles one way. Employee leaves from headquarters on Monday for a remote work site 150 miles from headquarters. Employee

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acquires lodging 5 miles from remote work site. Employee returns to headquarters on Friday. Employee's business miles traveled are 340 miles, as follows: from headquarters to remote site, 150 miles; from remote site to lodging on Monday, 5 miles; from lodging to remote site and back to lodging Tuesday – Thursday, 10 miles each day (30 miles); from lodging to remote site on Friday, 5 miles; from remote site back to headquarters, 150 miles.

### **5.4 Prohibited Mileage Reimbursement**

- 5.4.1 Employees are not entitled to mileage reimbursement for:
- travel between their place of residence and their official headquarters, or
  - personal mileage incurred while on travel status.

### **5.5 Use of Agency-Owned or DOAS Vehicles**

- 5.5.1 Agencies that maintain a fleet of vehicles should establish internal policies and procedures consistent with state fleet management policy for employees to request, utilize, and maintain the vehicles. Employees traveling in DCSS vehicles should purchase fuel using the fuel credit card. If the vehicle should break down while traveling, the agency responsible for maintaining the vehicle will provide for repairs and roadside assistance to the driver.

### **5.6 Reimbursement for Parking Fees and Tolls**

- 5.6.1 Agencies may also reimburse employees who incur parking and toll expenses while on official travel for the agency. These expenses are reimbursable for travel in both state-owned and personal vehicles.
- 5.6.2 While there are no maximum limits for parking, employees are encouraged to utilize low-cost, long-term parking to minimize the cost.

### **5.7 Required Documentation of Mileage, Parking, and Toll Expenses (see also 9.1)**

- 5.7.1 All requests for reimbursement of mileage, parking, and toll charges must be documented on the employee travel expense statement.
- 5.7.2 Employees traveling by personal vehicles and requesting reimbursement must record the actual odometer readings on the expense statement. Personal/commuting mileage is then excluded to determine the actual state-use miles. Employees should claim mileage based on the most direct route from the point of departure to the destination. Deviations from the most direct route (i.e., due to field visits, picking up passengers, etc.) should be explained on the travel expense statement.
- 5.7.3 Requests for reimbursement of parking fees and tolls paid should also be recorded on the travel expense statement. Employees are expected to obtain receipts for these expenses. If it is not possible to obtain a receipt, then a written explanation should be included on the expense statement.
- 5.7.4 Employees who share a state-owned or personal vehicle with another employee and do not claim reimbursement for mileage should indicate the name of the person they rode with and the dates of the trips on the travel expense statement.

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- 5.7.5 Instances in which employees utilize state-owned aircraft should also be noted on the travel expense statement.

### 6.0 TRAVEL BY COMMERCIAL OR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

#### 6.1 General Provisions

- 6.1.1 When commercial transportation is necessary, employees may be reimbursed for the expenses incurred. Employees will be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred, provided the appropriate steps were taken to obtain the lowest possible fare or cost.
- 6.1.2 Travel by commercial or public transportation must be approved by authorized agency personnel prior to the date of travel. When considering such a request, designated personnel should consider the distance to be traveled, the travel time, and the cost.

#### 6.2 Commercial Air Transportation

- 6.2.1 Employees should utilize commercial air transportation when it is more cost effective and efficient to travel by air than by vehicle. Under such circumstances, state agencies may reimburse employees for expenses incurred for air travel, provided these expenses were approved prior to the date of travel. Employees who choose to travel by personal vehicle when air travel is more cost effective should only be reimbursed for the cost of the lowest available airfare to the specified destination.
- 6.2.2 Employees who require air travel should obtain the lowest available airfare to the specified destination, which may include the use of the Internet, a travel agency, or the State airfare contract. The State Purchasing Office of the Department of Administrative Services has contracted with airlines for various travel destinations. Employees should refer to the statewide contract when making travel arrangements. Airfares included in this contract may be accessed through the following address: [http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR\\_StateWide\\_contract\\_menu.jsp](http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR_StateWide_contract_menu.jsp)
- 6.2.3 Employees who utilize the state airfare contract may purchase their tickets through a travel agent. Employees should use electronic ticketing to avoid any surcharge associated with hard-copy tickets. Tickets may be purchased using a state issued corporate charge card, state purchasing card, personal credit card (on an as-needed basis with prior approval of employer) or through invoicing by a travel agent.
- 6.2.4 Many travel agencies now charge small fees for issuing tickets. These fees, if reasonable, are part of the cost of travel. Employees may, therefore, be reimbursed for such costs, regardless of whether the airfare tickets were purchased through the State airfare contract or not.
- 6.2.5 Travel agencies used for making travel arrangements should not be related to the employee making, authorizing, or approving the arrangements. The travel agencies should also not be related to the employee actually traveling. A "related" party would include any members of the employee's family or any organizations in which the employee or his/her family members have a financial interest. The purpose for not using such travel agencies is to maintain the State's integrity in financial matters. It is important that the actions of all State employees be above reproach.
- 6.2.6 In general, it is the State's policy that state officials or employees traveling by commercial air carrier travel in the most cost-effective manner and utilize the lowest possible coach fares. Officials or employees traveling by commercial air carrier will not be reimbursed for

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the portion of non-coach (first class, business class, etc.) airfare that exceeds the cost of the lowest, available fare on the same flight unless:

- There is no other space available on the needed flight;
- A licensed medical practitioner certifies that because of a person's mental or physical condition, specific air travel arrangements are required; or
- The Commissioner of Public Safety certifies that specific air travel arrangements are necessary for security reasons.

6.2.7 It is the responsibility of agency officials to obtain necessary medical certifications for any employee that requires special air travel arrangements due to a medical condition. Agency officials should also obtain information specifying the expected length of time such condition would have an impact on travel needs. State agencies should maintain such information in a manner that would enable the auditors to readily determine who is subject to these special travel provisions.

### **6.3 Upgrades to Non-Coach Travel**

6.3.1 State officials or employees may, at any time, use personal frequent flyer miles or similar programs to upgrade to non-coach travel. In addition, nothing in this policy shall preclude a state official or employee from personally paying for an upgrade to non-coach travel.

6.3.2 For purposes of conducting official state business, state officials or employees may negotiate or arrange for upgrades to non-coach travel with individual commercial carriers if:

- The flight is international and over five hours in duration; and
- The carrier agrees not to charge any additional cost to the state.

### **6.4 Indemnification Received Due to Travel Inconveniences Imposed by Airlines**

6.4.1 Occasions may arise when airlines overbook, change, delay or cancel flights, thereby imposing travel inconveniences on their passengers. In these instances, airlines often offer the impacted passengers indemnification for these inconveniences. Examples of indemnification that may be offered by an airline include vouchers for meals or lodging, upgrades to non-coach travel, and credits toward future flight costs. State employees are authorized to accept such indemnification if the travel inconvenience was imposed by the airline and there is no additional cost to the state.

### **6.5 Out-of-State Rental of Motor Vehicles**

6.5.1 The use of commercially leased vehicles when traveling out of State will be left to the discretion of agency personnel responsible for authorizing travel. Employees requiring the use of commercially leased vehicles may obtain their vehicles through the state contracted rental agency according to the conditions of the statewide contract issued by the State Purchasing Office of the Department of Administrative Services. This contract is available on the Internet at the following address:

[http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR\\_StateWide\\_contract\\_menu.jsp](http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR_StateWide_contract_menu.jsp)

6.5.2 Employees are also encouraged to contact travel agencies to identify the lowest available rates. Employees who are able to obtain lower rates through other companies should use these other companies to rent their vehicles.

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- 6.5.3 Employees traveling on State business in a rented motor vehicle are covered by the State's liability policy; therefore, liability coverage should be declined when renting a motor vehicle.
- 6.5.4 Loss Damage Waiver/Collision Damage Waiver (LDW/CDW) insurance is included in the statewide contract at no additional cost. Contact DOAS Risk Management Services for more information.
- 6.5.5 Employees requiring the use of commercially leased vehicles will be reimbursed for gasoline purchases associated with the business use of such vehicle, provided appropriate receipts are included.

### **6.6 Travel by Railroad**

- 6.6.1 State agencies may reimburse employees for the actual cost of rail transportation, provided the appropriate personnel authorized the travel expense in advance. Employees traveling by rail are encouraged to obtain the lowest possible fare. There is not a statewide contract for transportation by rail.

### **6.7 Travel by Mass Transportation, Taxi, or Airport Vans**

- 6.7.1 Employees officially on travel status may be reimbursed for necessary costs of transportation by bus, taxi, or airport vans for the following situations:
- Between the individual's departure point and the common carrier's departure point;
  - Between the common carrier's arrival point and the individual's lodging or meeting place; and
  - Between the lodging and meeting places if at different locations.
- 6.7.2 It is expected that airport vans will be utilized when available and practical, and when they are the lowest cost alternative.

### **6.8 Required Documentation of Expenses (see also 9.1)**

- 6.8.1 All travel by rented or public transportation must be recorded on the employee travel expense statement. Employees requesting reimbursement must submit receipts for travel by commercial air carrier or railroad and for the cost of rented vehicles, including the cost of gasoline purchased. **Employees are required to submit receipts for travel by mass transportation, taxi, or airport vans.** Additionally, a point-to-point explanation is required for each item reimbursed. All transportation expenses should be itemized on the employee travel expense statement.

## **7.0 MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL EXPENSES**

### **7.1 Telephone/Telegraph/FAX Expenses**

- 7.1.1 Employees may be reimbursed for expenses incurred for work related telephone, telegraph, and FAX messages. Employees must document these claims on the travel expense statement, and indicate the location from which each call was made, the person contacted, and the reason for the communication. Personal calls made while on travel status are not reimbursable.

### **7.2 Internet Usage Charges**

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- 7.2.1 Employees may be reimbursed for work-related internet usage charges. These charges should be separately identified on the itemized hotel/motel bill, but should **not** be listed on the travel reimbursement request as “lodging;” rather, these charges should be included in the “miscellaneous” section of the travel expense form.

### **7.3 Stationery/Supplies/Postage Expenses**

- 7.3.1 Reimbursement for stationery, supplies, stenographic, or duplicating services may be reimbursed, provided the expense is directly associated with a work related project and the cost is reasonable. In addition, work related postage expenses may be reimbursed. Employees requesting reimbursement for these expenses must document actual expenses on the travel statement and explain the purpose for these expenses. Receipts/invoices should accompany the travel expense statement.

### **7.4 Baggage Handling Services**

- 7.4.1 Employees may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses associated with baggage handling services (portage) when an expense is actually incurred in moving luggage into or out of lodging places, common carriers, and/or airports.

### **7.5 Registration Fees**

Registration fees required for participation in workshops, seminars, or conferences that an employee is directed and/or authorized to attend will be allowed when supported by a paid receipt or a copy of the check showing payment. Any part of a registration fee applicable to meals will be reported as a meal expense, and not as a registration fee, if the costs can be separately identified.

### **7.6 Visa/Passport Fees**

When travel required by an employer necessitates the use of a passport and/or visa, and the employee does not currently possess such valid document(s), the related visa/passport fee is eligible for reimbursement when documented by a receipt.

### **7.7 Unallowable Expenses**

The following expenses are not reimbursable unless specific legal authority has been established:

- Laundry (allowable when overnight travel exceeds seven (7) consecutive days)
- Tipping for maid services
- Valet services for parking, when self-parking options are available
- Theater
- Entertainment
- Alcoholic beverages
- Visa/passport fees (except as noted above)
- Bank charges for ATM withdrawals

## **8.0 CORPORATE CHARGE CARDS AND CASH ADVANCES – (Not Applicable)**

## **9.0 REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES**

### **9.1 Required Documentation of Travel Expenses**

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9.1.1 Employees requesting reimbursement for travel expenses are required to submit their claim to authorized personnel on the employee travel expense statement. A copy of the travel expense statement may be found on the DCSS web site.

9.1.2 Requests for reimbursement should include the following information:

- Itemized expenses for authorized meals, lodging, mileage, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses. The types of expenses which are authorized and the allowable limits are discussed in 3.0 through 7.0.
- Explanation of any expenses which exceed the established limits and of any unusual expenses;
- Explanation of the purpose for the trip; and
- Description of the type(s) of transportation used.

9.1.3 Employees are required to sign their travel expense statement, attesting that the information presented on the form is accurate. Employees who provide false information are subject to criminal penalty of a felony for false statements, which is subject to punishment by fine of not more than \$1,000 or by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years.

9.1.4 Employees are also required to submit receipts for the following expenses:

- Meals purchased in lieu of those provided at conference/training
- Lodging,
- Parking fees and tolls
- Airline or Railroad Fares,
- Rental of Motor Vehicles,
- Gasoline purchased for Rental Vehicles,
- Supplies,
- Registration Fees, and
- Visa/Passport Fees.

9.1.5 Receipts for parking, tolls, mass transit/taxi/airport vans, and communications expenses are recommended. However, if receipts are not available, employees are required to include an explanation of the expense on the travel expense statement. Receipts for meals are not required, except as noted above.

### **9.2 Frequency of Reimbursement**

9.2.1 *Agencies should reimburse employees for travel expenses at least semi-monthly. DCSS process travel expenses once a week.*

9.2.2 *If an agency elects to reimburse on a monthly basis, the agency should have a provision to immediately reimburse any claim that exceeds \$200. Otherwise, the agency should allow the employee the right to obtain a travel advance if requested by the employee.*

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## 9.3 Responsibility of Agency

9.3.1 Each agency head should designate a person (or persons) responsible for examining and approving claims for reimbursement under these travel regulations. Claims should be reviewed to ensure they are reasonable, accurate, and only cover expenses that were actually incurred by the employee. Claims that exceed the established limits should be reviewed more closely to ensure the explanations are sufficient to justify the higher expenses. Employees should not assume that all expenses that exceed the authorized limits and are explained on the travel expense statement will be automatically approved.

## 10.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS:

<u>Form No.</u>	<u>Form Title:</u>
BUS-F001	Local Travel
BUS-F002	Employee Expense Statement
BUS-F008	Credit Card Usage Form (For System Vehicles Only)
BUS-F009	Trip Authorization Form (For System Vehicles Only)

[State of Georgia Exemption of the Local Hotel/Motel Excise Tax](#)

## 11.0 RECORD RETENTION TABLE:

Identification	Storage	Retention	Protection	Disposition
Local Travel Form	Hard copy in Accounts Payable	Minimum period five years	Maintained in a secure area	Discard as desired
Employee Expense Statement	Hard copy in Accounts Payable	Minimum period five years	Maintained in a secure area	Discard as desired
Credit Card Usage Form	Hard copy in Business Services Office	Minimum period one year	Maintained in a secure area	Discard as desired
Trip Authorization Form	Hard copy in Business Services Office	Minimum period one year	Maintained in a secure area	Discard as desired

## 12.0 REVISION HISTORY:

Date:	Rev.	Description of Revision:
27-Sep-02	A	Initial Release of Manual
27-Oct-03	B	Added approval authority and official version stamp in red to page 1.
22-Sep-05	C	Changed mileage reimbursement rate in section 7.1.6.
06-Jan-06	D	Changed mileage reimbursement rate in section 7.1.6.
02-Feb-09	E	Changed the format of the manual to reflect the State of Georgia

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		Statewide Travel Regulations.
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