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NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

TRAVEL GUIDELINES



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TRAVEL GUIDELINES FOR DOCS EMPLOYEES

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INTRODUCTION

Travel is authorized only when essential to the mission of this agency. **Authorization is to be documented via an Authorization to Travel Form, completed prior to the dates of travel. Travel vouchers not accompanied by the completed form will be rejected.** Alternatives such as conference calls, teleconference and webinars should be used in lieu of travel whenever possible. Each traveler, and the supervisor, is charged with the responsibility for planning and executing travel with the least possible cost to the state. When overnight travel is unavoidable, trips should be planned to maximize the cost by accomplishing multiple agendas on the trip.

This document provides the general guidelines and responsibilities for DOCS employees who are required to travel and outlines the responsibilities of the traveler, the supervisor and the agency.

For more detailed information, refer to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) Travel Manual located at www.osc.state.ny.us/agencies/travel.htm, applicable DOCS Directives and the DOCS SYSM Bulletin Board - Travel Info.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

Administration

- ◆ Designate an employee's normal work location ("official station") which is in the best interest of the state.
- ◆ Authorize travel only when necessary
- ◆ Select a method of travel in the best interest of the State and meets the traveler's needs
- ◆ Determine if attendance at conventions or seminars is in the best interest of the State
- ◆ Establish procedure for reconciliation of travel card charges
- ◆ Ensure that exceptions or waivers are justified and necessary
- ◆ Distribute this policy and guideline to effected supervisors

Business Office

- ◆ Verify that all charges are actual, reasonable and necessary
- ◆ Ensure that all expenses comply with travel rules and regulations
- ◆ Provide and control all travel related documents (vouchers, tax exempt certificates, etc.)
- ◆ Provide a NYS travel credit card to minimize out of pocket expenses when appropriate.
- ◆ Establish procedures to ensure accountability of cash advances and use of travel card
- ◆ Review and approve travel vouchers completely and timely

SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

- ◆ Know State travel rules and regulations and DOCS specific travel policies and procedures
- ◆ Be aware of normal work location's effect on the travel reimbursement – this includes reviewing it periodically to be sure that it's accurate.
- ◆ Provide subordinates information on travel policy and guidelines
- ◆ Approve requests for staff to be in travel status only when necessary
- ◆ Review traveler's itinerary in advance to make sure travel is necessary and in most effective manner
- ◆ Verify that voucher is within allowable rates and all required documentation is attached
- ◆ Review and certify travelers' vouchers completely
- ◆ Sign Authorization to Travel and Travel Voucher legibly.
- ◆ Forward vouchers to agency finance office in timely fashion

TRAVELER'S RESPONSIBILITY

- ◆ Know State travel rules and regulations and know DOCS policies and procedures
- ◆ Know your "official station" and its effect on your eligibility for travel reimbursement
- ◆ Obtain necessary approvals for travel, including method of travel, PRIOR to trip
- ◆ Obtain all necessary travel documents, vouchers, tax-exempt certificate, etc.
Forms are available as attachments to Directive 2724, Travel Voucher Preparation.
- ◆ Plan and complete travel in the most economical/cost effective manner
- ◆ Use NYS corporate travel credit card, if available, to minimize out of pocket expenses.
- ◆ Maintain an accurate record of expenses including departure and return times, and mileage
- ◆ Obtain required receipts or documentation
- ◆ Claim reimbursement only for actual allowed expenses within reimbursement rates
- ◆ Account for any cash advance received, or charges made to the corporate travel card
- ◆ Complete and sign all documents legibly.
- ◆ Accurately complete and submit a travel voucher within 21 days of completion of trip

FRAUDULENT CLAIMS – SECTION 175.35 PENAL LAW

Offering a false instrument for filing is a Class “E” Felony.

Employees, including supervisors, who knowingly misrepresent the facts concerning travel for official business or who file or sign any travel form which contains deliberate false statements given with intent to defraud the State may be subject both to administrative and/or disciplinary action, including the possibility of termination and criminal action.

I. GENERAL

TRAVEL STATUS

An employee is in official travel status when on assignment at a work location MORE THAN 35 MILES FROM BOTH HOME AND NORMAL WORK LOCATION/ "OFFICIAL STATION". The employee's actual assigned work location is the point from which travel status is determined. This determines how you are eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses such as meals and lodging.

When travel is to a work location within 35 miles of your residence or "official station", you are not considered to be in travel status, but rather you are considered to be traveling in proximity of your official station.

NORMAL WORK LOCATION – "OFFICIAL STATION"

The normal work location / official station, is the employee's usual work location. Your NORMAL WORK LOCATION is to be listed on your voucher in the "Official Station" field. The "official station" will be set by the Department and will be in the best interest of the State and never for the convenience of the employee. The purpose of setting "official station" is to establish a point of reference to determine when an employee is in travel status and becomes eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses. Reimbursement for transportation costs between the "official station" and the employee's residence is considered commuting and is not allowed.

EMPLOYEES WHO WORK AT VARIOUS SITES

Employees who have field or regional responsibilities who are required to work at various sites or facilities may receive reimbursement for all reasonable and necessary transportation charges excluding commute.

Similar to the rules that apply to outside hospital sites (see Section III) audit guidelines need to be established for field and regional travel assignments for travel over 35 miles from home and official station.

IRS REPORTING

Internal Revenue Service Regulations require that travel expense reimbursements to employees who travel to a single location for more than one year must be processed as taxable reimbursements. **If an assignment is expected to be a temporary assignment but is expected to last more than one year, all travel expense reimbursements are taxable from the first date of travel.** If your travel to a single location was originally anticipated to last less than one year, but at some point changes to beyond one year, all expense reimbursements after that change are considered taxable income. These rules also apply if you worked at more than one location. DOCS should periodically review temporary assignments for compliance of IRS law and protection of employees.

The Internal Revenue Service requires withholding and reporting on the following types of travel reimbursements. The agency finance office is responsible for reporting this information.

1. Per diem amounts paid in excess of the per diem rate and not substantiated with receipts
2. Meals for non-overnight travel – with or without receipts
3. Mileage reimbursement in excess of the maximum rate allowed by the IRS
4. Reimbursement for expenses at a single location in excess of one year

ELIGIBILITY FOR MEAL REIMBURSEMENT

Meals for Overnight Trips: (as taken from the OSC Travel Manual)

The normal per diem allowance is for dinner the first day, lodging and breakfast on the following day (return day). You may be eligible for breakfast on the day of departure or dinner on the day of return, if you meet the following time limits:

Breakfast: You will be allowed reimbursement for breakfast if you have to leave at least one hour before your normal work starting time.

Dinner: You will be allowed reimbursement for dinner on the day the trip ends if you Return at least two hours later than your normal work ending time.

Meals for Day Trips: (as taken from the OSC Travel Manual)

You may be eligible for meals if your departure and return times meet the time limits for meals (listed above under Breakfast and Dinner).

It is required that you indicate your normal work hours on the face of the voucher in the box where you list your official station. This enables your supervisor and the Finance Unit Travel Audit Staff to immediately verify your entitlement to your meal reimbursement and may avoid the return of your voucher for this information.

No travel meals are provided when travel is within 35 miles from both home and official station. Overtime meals allowances may be earned if eligibility criteria is met. (See Department Directive # 2729, (Travel Voucher Preparation))

OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

All overnight travel requires PRIOR approval of the Division Head. The Per Diem rates will be based on the last area of assignment for that business day unless early arrival at a subsequent location the next day is required for purposes of state business.

FINDING LODGING AT ESTABLISHED RATES

The traveler is responsible for finding lodging at the established NYS reimbursement rates (These rates are listed on the Department E-mail Bulletin Board under the heading "Travel Info").

On occasion, travelers may be unable to find a hotel at a rate within the maximum federal per diem rate for the location of travel.

If that occurs, a "request for waiver from established rates" (form available on following page) must be approved by the Superintendent or Chief Fiscal Officer PRIOR to travel.

Contact your Finance Office for procedure and form.

A traveler who stays at a motel/hotel that charges over the NYS rate and does not have a waiver will be responsible for the difference in cost over the established rate.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF ESTABLISHED TRAVEL RATE

To:

From:

Please review the following waiver request and indicate your approval/disapproval.
Thank you.

Employee Name		Title
Office		Request date
Travel Destination		Dates of Travel
Purpose of Travel		
Steps taken to procure lodging at approved rate and reason for waiver request		
Hotel 1	Hotel 2	Hotel 3
Name:	Name:	Name:
Rate:	Rate:	Rate:
Approved Rate	Requested Rate	Difference
\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Based upon the circumstances presented, this request is:

APPROVED

DISAPPROVED

SUPERINTENDENT / CHIEF FISCAL OFFICER

SELECTING METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION

MASS TRANSIT

Mass transit must be the first choice of transportation mode, if available. Employees will not be reimbursed for any other mode of travel to destinations where mass transit is available unless due to exigent, unforeseen circumstances an employee must travel by car because mass transit isn't available at the time the employee has to travel, or airline travel is more efficient and cost effective. Travel by car or airline, where mass transit is available, must be approved by the Deputy Commissioner for Administration.

AIR TRAVEL

All air travel requires the Deputy Commissioner of Administration or higher level PRIOR approval.

- 1) The Office of General Services has issued statewide contracts for air travel for selected Cities (Award No. 20631, Commodity Group 79006). These contracts provide reduced air fares for State employees. The ticket price for a covered itinerary may not exceed the established OGS contract airfare. [An exception may be made only in the event of an emergency or where it can be shown that \$200 or more would be saved over the contract fare. Such exceptions will require the approval of the Chief Fiscal Officer.]
- 2) All airline tickets must be purchased using the Corporate Card or Business Travel Account (BTA). BTA's are to be used for employees who do not have Corporate cards and employees may not use personal credit cards or other means requiring reimbursement. For agencies that have not yet established BTA's, your Corporate card program administrator may do so through Visa.
- 3) All airline ticketing must be done through a State authorized travel agent (on OGS Contract), who will be responsible for certifying that the ticketing was done in Accordance with this policy. Refer to the notice on "NEW TRAVEL AGENT CONTRACT" on the Department E-mail Bulletin Board under "Travel Info".

STATE VEHICLE POOL

Facilities must establish their own procedure for determining if a state vehicle is available and documenting when one is not available. Central Office employees must contact Support Operations to determine if a state vehicle is available and obtain documentation when a state vehicle is not available before renting a car or requesting personal car mileage. This must be attached to their travel voucher.

Note: Refueling state vehicles should be done at DOCS facilities or other state facilities.

TRIP CALCULATOR

In circumstances where neither mass transit nor a pool car is available, employees may use the least expensive option of either a rental car suitable under the circumstances or their personal car. Employees must use a "trip calculator" to determine which mode is cheaper, and travel reimbursement will be limited to the transportation mode indicated, as described below. *Note: This mandate would not apply to an employee who has a physical disability and must use a specifically equipped personal vehicle.*

The "trip calculator" is a pre-programmed spreadsheet, which calculates and compares the price for traveling by rental car versus reimbursing an employee for personal car mileage (currently 55 cents per mile). An employee enters data for the distance to be traveled, the timeframe, the rental car gas mileage (MPG), and the cost of gasoline per gallon, and receives a recommendation. Employees may opt to use their personal cars in non-optimal situations, but will only be reimbursed for the value of the car rental. A second pre-programmed spreadsheet assists employees in calculating their allowable reimbursement in the form of mileage.

Copies of the pre-programmed spreadsheets may be found at:

<http://www.goer.state.ny.us/employee/travel-info.html>

Employees must include a copy of the completed relevant forms from the GOER website when submitting their travel reimbursement request. Agencies are reminded to ensure that when employees travel together on the same trip in the same personal car, mileage reimbursement is paid to only one individual.

CAR RENTALS

The Office of General Services has issued a statewide contract for car rentals (the current vendor is Enterprise Rent-a-Car). This contract provides reduced rates for State employees in the various regions of the State. The contract can be found at:

<http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/purchase/snt/awardnotes/7200119536can.htm>

If no rental vehicle is available you must document all pertinent information and submit with your travel voucher.

Travelers must follow these guidelines:

- 1) Must be in travel status to rent a vehicle and have PRIOR approval from their supervisor and Division Head to rent vehicle. Vehicles rented can only be used for official State business.
- 2) Rent vehicle from the OGS contracted vendor (currently Enterprise Car Rental). If more information is needed regarding this contract, contact Support Operations.
- 3) Rent the most economical vehicle class for trip (compact/midsize). Renting larger than a midsize vehicle class requires approval from Division Head and an explanation must be provided with travel voucher.
- 4) Rent vehicle in traveler's name, as an agent of New York State and sign agreement as an agent of New York State.
- 5) Rentals must be paid for using the traveler's Corporate Card. No additional insurance coverage is to be purchased when using the Corporate Travel Card. Exception : Rental of vans and pick up trucks are not covered by insurance provided by corporate card. If you do not have a Corporate Travel Card you should contact your business office before renting a car. (See DOCS email bulletin board – Car Rental Info)

- 6) Department Directive # 2932, "Use of State Owned Vehicles" governs the use of rental vehicles by Department employees and specifically prohibits any personal use of these vehicles. The Department's Counsels Office has also advised us that the traveler would be liable for any use of a vehicle that is not within the scope of his/her public employment and duties.

- 7) The traveler is responsible for accuracy of the rental agreement. Prior to leaving rental agency, verify prices, duration of travel, and that tax has not been charged. Upon returning the vehicle, ask the agent for the printout of the payment information. This printout is required in addition to the copy of the signed rental agreement.

- 8) Rentals should generally be picked up the day that travel begins and should be turned in the same day that travel ends. Do not keep vehicles on days that you are not in Travel status. You may be responsible for expenses incurred on non-travel days.

- 9) When establishing your travel itinerary, please try to coordinate with the hours of the rental car agency so that additional expenses are not incurred.

- 10) Car rentals should be refueled using regular unleaded gas.

- 11) **If you have an accident with a rental car you must contact the Agency Finance Office immediately.**

PERSONAL CAR MILEAGE

New York State reimburses employees for business use of privately owned automobiles based on the standard mileage allowance established by the Internal Revenue Service. The OSC website for mileage information is:

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/agencies/travel/mileage.htm>

Employees must use a state vehicle if one is available for their travel. When an employee is in official travel status a cost analysis must be performed to determine the method of travel in the best interest of the state.

PROXIMITY MILEAGE

REIMBURSEMENT – WITHIN 35 MILES – FROM HOME or OFFICIAL STATION

When an employee is assigned to work at an alternate work location which is less than 35 miles from either his or her home or his or her official station, the employee is not considered to be in travel status, but rather is considered to be traveling in proximity of his or her official station.

When traveling in proximity of home or official station, an employee using a personal vehicle, is, as outlined below, entitled to reimbursement of transportation expenses associated with travel:

- from home to an alternate work location
- between the official station and an alternate work location
- between alternate work locations
- from an alternate work location to the employee's home.

The Department of Correctional Services has established a reimbursement policy that provides the amount calculated under the "lesser of mileage rule." This policy will be effective for travel on or after 9/1/2008.

When travel is from an employee's home to an alternate work location, or from an alternate work location to home, transportation expenses must be reimbursed using the lesser of 1) mileage between the employee's home and the alternate work location, or 2) mileage between the employee's official station and the alternate work location, times the Internal Revenue Service mileage reimbursement rate. This reimbursement method is called the "lesser of mileage rule."

When travel is between an employee's official station and an alternate work location, or between two or more alternate work locations, transportation expenses will be reimbursed by payment for the actual mileage between such locations, times the Internal Revenue Service mileage reimbursement rate.

The expense of meals or lodging within the proximity of the official station will not normally be reimbursed, unless it is in the best interest of the State as determined by the Chief Fiscal Officer in Central Office or the Superintendent in a facility.

Reimbursement for travel in the proximity of the home or the official station is subject to the audit of the Comptroller.

No transportation costs will be allowed between any employee's home and his or her official station.

IN-STATE TRAVEL COSTING OVER \$500

In-state travel for meetings, conferences and non-essential travel costing over \$500 requires **PRIOR** approval from the Office of State Operations. A Budget Bulletin B-1184 attachment is required.

Traveler's should contact their business office for all in-state travel costing over \$500 to determine if an attachment A or B is required.

The business office must submit for the appropriate attachment in accordance with Budget Bulletin B-1184 in the Agency Spending Controls application and provide a copy of the approved attachment to the traveler.

Traveler's should allow sufficient time to obtain required approvals.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

All out of State travel requires **PRIOR** approval from the Commissioner and the Office of State Operations.

Office of State Operations approval is obtained by the business office submitting an attachment as directed in Budget Bulletin B-1184 in the Agency Spending Controls Application.

Traveler's should allow sufficient time to obtain required approvals.

Per Diem rates for cities in other states are available from the Finance office or by accessing the General Service Administration(GSA) website at

www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=17943&contentType=GSA_BASIC

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, CONVENTIONS, TRAINING

Authorization to conduct or attendance at a conference must be approved in accordance with Department Directive # 2005, (Request to Attend/Conduct Training/Conference). Approval of the Deputy Commissioner of Administration or higher level or your Superintendent is required. All conferences, seminars or training programs sponsored by NYS should be within established per diem rates. Sponsorship of a training program is to be approved by the Superintendent of the Training Academy.

The State Comptroller's guidelines require that any conference conducted by the Department that is estimated to cost in excess of \$15,000 be advertised in the Contract Reporter. Such advertising can be arranged through Support Operations or the facility business office and requires a minimum lead time to two months.

For conferences not sponsored by New York State, lodging and meal amounts may exceed the normal per diem amounts. Approval must be obtained from the Deputy Commissioner of Administration or higher level for central office employees or Superintendent for facility employees to exceed the allowable rates.

Approval will be provided only if the rates are reasonable and it is necessary for the employee to stay at the conference site.

If meals are included in the conference fee, the meals cannot be claimed on the voucher. Fees for social activities such as sightseeing tours or golf outings, are considered personal expenses and will not be reimbursed.

Many conferences supply transportation between the conference site and the transportation terminal. Car rental should be justified and used for official business only.

TRAVEL TO INTERVIEWS

Travel expenses for any interview will be the responsibility of the individual applicant.

TRAVEL RELATED TO SUBPOENAS AND COURT APPEARANCES

State employees who appear in court or at hearings on behalf of the Department are considered to be on official business and are entitled to normal travel reimbursement.

Former employees and non-employees appearing on behalf of the State are also entitled to reimbursement. Such reimbursement should be for reasonable costs and should parallel State rates whenever possible.

STATE CORPORATE TRAVEL CARD PROGRAM

The Department participates in the State Corporate Travel Card Program. The Corporate Travel Card is to be used ONLY for travel expenses (lodging, meals, transportation) required to conduct official business. It must not be used for retail purchases while in travel status. EVERY Corporate Travel Card purchase must be reflected on a travel voucher (with receipts) submitted to the Finance Office promptly on completion of your trip.

In any case where a business trip is extended for personal reasons, the Corporate Travel Card cannot be used for personal expenses. This precludes the use of the Corporate Travel Card to secure car rentals for personal use days either prior to or at end of your contract for transportation on State business. The State is not responsible for you or your passengers for personal rental days.

NOTE: Misuse of the State Corporate Travel Card will result in the cancellation of your card.

For staff without a State Corporate Travel Card, the Department offers the following alternative forms of payment for travel related expenses:

- ◆ An Agency arranged direct billing from the vendor to the Agency/Facility Finance Office
- ◆ A New York State Standard Voucher (Form AC92)
- ◆ A New York State Purchase Order (Form AC130)
- ◆ The traveler's personal credit card
- ◆ Cash or check
- ◆ Travel Advance

II. GUIDELINES FOR ESCORTING INMATES

REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR ESCORT OF INMATES

Due to the rotation of security personnel it may not be feasible to issue them a corporate travel card. Therefore, the Travel Advance Account may be used to advance Security personnel for travel expenses. When they are involved in transferring inmates from one facility to another, escorting inmates to court, on funeral and sick visits or assigned to hospital duty on a temporary basis, the amount of the advance will be sufficient to cover the officer's expenses for meals and lodging as well as any expenses the officer may incur for the inmate.

GUIDELINES FOR INMATE ESCORT EXPENSES

Officers escorting inmates are considered in travel status when over 35 miles from official station. Travel meal eligibility is based upon the officer's assigned shift of the day and actual departure and return times. See Travel Manual "Reimbursement Allowances". All Comptroller rules and current rates apply for the reimbursement of travel expenses and meals.

ESCORT MEAL ALLOWANCE

The State will provide Correction Officers, Sergeants and Lieutenants who escort inmates between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m and who are required to purchase a noon meal for said inmate or inmates, a subsidy of \$3.50 which is the current negotiated amount for the purpose of purchasing their own noon meal. Eligibility extends to all Officers, Sergeants, and Lieutenants involved in the escort and is not limited to the employee making the purchase of the inmate's meal. Payment of the \$3.50 subsidy is contingent upon submission of the receipt required for the inmate's meal. (Refer to the current NYSCOPBA Contract, Article 17.4.)

Note: Correction Officers and Sergeants (Lieutenants in the SSpU) who are required to escort inmates on trips and to remain with those inmates while on that trip and who are required to begin and end their workday at their official stations shall be eligible for escort meal allowances (as defined above) while in travel status. All requirements for that reimbursement must be met except for the requirement and that employee must be over 35 miles from home or facility in order to be eligible.

MEALS FOR INMATES

Lunches purchased when required for an inmate, documented by a receipt and approved by appropriate facility administrative staff, will be allowed at actual cost up to but not to exceed \$3.50 which is the current negotiated amount for the escort meal as described above. Every effort should be made to provide the inmate with a facility prepared bagged lunch when transporting during the noon hour.

Breakfast and dinner meals when purchased for an inmate will be allowed at actual cost up to but not to exceed the allowable state rates and must be documented by a receipt.

III. GUIDELINES FOR TRAVEL TO OUTSIDE HOSPITAL ASSIGNMENTS

MILEAGE – USE OF PERSONAL VEHICLE

Where hospital duty is a bid type post, the assignment is considered a permanent duty assignment. Therefore, the employee is not entitled to any travel reimbursement.

If an officer reports for duty to the facility and is subsequently assigned duty at a local hospital, mileage from the facility to the hospital will be allowed.

Reimbursement for return trips at the end of the shift will be calculated using the appropriate method.

If an officer is instructed to return to the facility at the end of his or her shift, mileage will be allowed from the hospital to the facility only when written instructions issued by the shift supervisor indicating the need for the officer's return to the facility are submitted with the travel voucher.

MEALS FOR EMPLOYEES

An Officer assigned to a hospital within a 35 mile radius of the facility will be entitled to receive the overtime meal allowance when eligible under applicable overtime rules. See Directive #2729, Reimbursement of Overtime Meals.

An officer assigned to a hospital more than 35 miles from his or her "official station" or place of residence is in travel status. If the individual is on overtime and does not meet the time requirements for travel meals, he or she may be eligible for overtime meals if the overtime meal requirements are met. **An employee cannot receive both an overtime and a travel meal allowance for the same period. If eligible, he or she can receive one or the other.**