

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PAROLE DIVISION**



**POLICY AND
OPERATING PROCEDURE**

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SUPERSEDES: 10/01/14

SUBJECT: TRAVEL POLICY

PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for employees who must travel outside their assigned offices and procedures for reimbursement of expenses related to official business travel.

PROCEDURE:

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Under the Executive Director's authority, state travel by employees shall maximize economy and efficiency. The Agency shall use teleconferencing and other telecommunications technology when possible to reduce travel expenditures. The Parole Division shall ensure that travel expenses are the most cost efficient.
- B. Employees traveling to all training, meetings, or other work-related events shall submit their travel plans, including lodging, car rentals, and times of departure and return, to their immediate supervisor, for approval. Any overnight travel requires the prior approval of the Region/Section Director. All travel related to conferences, seminars, and training (regardless of dollar amount, destination, or number of participants) must be approved in advance by the Chief Financial Officer or Deputy Chief Financial Officer. Exceptions include parole officer training (i.e., Parole Officer Training Academy (POTA), Specialized Officer Supervision School (SOSS), Parole Supervisor Training, Unit Supervisor Training, and In-Service Training).
- C. The time that an employee is allowed to leave and required to return to the workplace shall be approved by the Region Director, Section Director, or designee based on the method of travel and length of the event, combined with the time the event begins and concludes. If involved, air travel could dictate when the employee leaves or returns.
- D. Detailed reimbursement guidelines for Texas Department of Criminal Justice employees may be found in the *Texas Department of Criminal Justice Travel Guide* (TDCJ Travel Guide).

The TDCJ Travel Guide is found on the TDCJ Intranet at http://itd.tdcj.texas.gov/TDCJ_Intranet/docs/Travel_Guide.pdf. Persons with questions about the state business-related travel shall refer to the TDCJ Travel Guide.

II. GROUND TRAVEL

- A. Employees shall travel by vehicle if the event can be reached in four (4) hours or less.
- B. If two or more employees from the same location are attending the same event, they shall travel together.
- C. State vehicles shall be used when available and should be reserved immediately upon learning of the event.

III. PERSONAL VEHICLE MILEAGE

- A. An employee may claim mileage expense if a personal vehicle is used to conduct state business at the rate set by the State Comptroller's Office.
 - 1. Before using a personal vehicle, employees should first use a state vehicle if one is available. Employees shall receive prior approval before using a personal vehicle. Employees who were instructed to use a state vehicle may not request reimbursement for mileage of a personal vehicle.
 - 2. If an employee travels from his residence because it is closer than headquarters to a duty point, the residence shall be treated as a temporary headquarters and may be used to calculate departure and arrival distance from and to the residence.
 - 3. The shortest route between points is presumed to be the most cost-effective. A longer route may be considered for safety reasons or when road construction prohibits the shorter route. A statement of justification for the longer route shall accompany the travel voucher.
 - 4. The number of miles traveled may not exceed the mileage of the most cost-effective route between point of departure and point of destination. The number of miles traveled by an employee for official state business may be determined by the Agency's designated online mapping service found in the TDCJ Travel Guide, or by point to point itemization. Point to point mileage may be documented by the vehicle odometer reading.
 - 5. Mileage claims shall be reviewed by the approving supervisor. The supervisor shall choose, at random, 10 mileage entries to compare with the agency's designated mapping service and enter the mileage obtained in the margin next to the entry checked. Any deviation of over five (5) miles shall require review and an explanation by the employee submitting the travel voucher.

If the employee cannot explain the variance, the employee shall correct the mileage entry prior to approval by the supervisor.

6. When a group of employees travel together in one personal vehicle, only the owner of the vehicle shall claim mileage.

B. In addition to regular duty travel, mileage may be claimed for the following:

1. Mileage incurred while obtaining lodging outside of a duty point;
2. Mileage incurred while obtaining lodging inside office duty point; and
3. Mileage incurred while traveling between a residence and the airport.

IV. AIR TRAVEL

- A. Air travel shall be approved when two or fewer employees are required to travel a distance that would require more than four (4) hours to reach by vehicle. Air travel for distances which could be reached by vehicle in less than four (4) hours may be approved based on time of notification and the length of the event.
- B. The Assistant Region Director, Section Director, or designee may approve the use of rental cars if the employee is traveling by air and staying at a hotel where there is no method of transportation to the event. The length of the event shall also be considered during the approval process.

V. LODGING

- A. Employees may remain overnight only if the combined travel time and event total eight (8) hours or more.
- B. Unless the event is designated “double occupancy,” single occupancy is authorized. If the event is designated “double occupancy” by the Director and an employee desires single lodging, the cost shall be at the employee’s expense and not available for reimbursement.
- C. Unless specific lodging is required by the agency, employees shall stay in lodging close to the site of the event and with a state rate as allowed in the TDCJ Travel Guide.
- D. The Texas Procurement and Support Services rule states that state agencies must use contract travel services whenever those services provide the most efficient travel resulting in the total lowest cost. It is the employee’s responsibility to attempt to utilize a contract hotel. When using a contract hotel, ask for and ensure that the state contract rate is what is charged.

Reimbursement rates and contract hotel listing for the desired time period are found on the TDCJ intranet at http://itd.tdcj.texas.gov/TDCJ_Intranet/dept_divs/bus_fin/bus_fin_acct_bus_srv_travel.html.

Hotels throughout the state have contracts that outline predetermined room rates. These contract rates, however, could exceed the maximum allowable rate for that city or county. If an employee chooses to book a room at a hotel that exceeds the maximum allowable rate, the difference in the maximum allowable rate and applicable taxes will be paid by the employee. State law prohibits TDCJ from reimbursing an employee more than the maximum allowable rate.

- E. Employees may use a non-contracted hotel for an overnight stay when a contracted hotel is not available or is not as cost-effective. The employee shall complete a Travel Voucher Supplemental form to be submitted with the Travel Voucher, stating why a non-contract hotel was used.
- F. When a room is shared, an employee may be reimbursed for his share of the lodging expense not to exceed the maximum rate. Each employee shall submit a travel voucher. If only one person sharing double occupancy lodging is a state employee, the single occupancy rate must be claimed for reimbursement. If all persons sharing the lodgings are state employees, the amount that each person can be reimbursed is the state rate divided by the number of employees. Receipts for shared lodging that employees submit may have a different employee named on the travel voucher as long as the employee can show proof of payment in order to be reimbursed for his portion of the lodging.
- G. Original lodging receipts are required to show proof that expenses were incurred and payment was made. If the original receipt is lost, a copy of the receipt or canceled check or credit card slip may be submitted. The travel voucher must state that the original was lost.
- H. State employees are not exempt from the hotel occupancy tax, which includes the state sales tax. The tax shall be submitted on a travel voucher for reimbursement.

VI. HOTEL CREDIT CARD

- A. TDCJ hotel credit card is limited to a minimum of a two (2) night stay for both in-state and out-of-state travel.
- B. The Credit Card Authorization (CCA) Form must be received in the Travel Office two (2) business days (48 working hours) before the first day of travel. For example, travel for Saturday, Sunday, or Monday must be received in the Travel Office on Thursday. Travel for Tuesday must be received on Friday. Incomplete CCA forms will not be processed. All CCA forms must be approved and signed by the Region Director, Section Director, or designee.

Detailed instructions on how to complete the credit card authorization form are located in the TDCJ Travel Guide.

- C. A completed Video Teleconference Form and a copy of the approved Decision Memorandum, if applicable, shall be included with the CCA Form.

VII. MEAL GUIDELINES

Employees who are required to travel on business shall be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, not to exceed the rate established for each day of travel in the TDCJ Travel Guide, with the maximum for the first and last day of travel based on departure and arrival times to designated headquarters. Reimbursement rates are found on the TDCJ Intranet at http://itd.tdcj.texas.gov/TDCJ_Intranet/dept_divs/bus_fin/bus_fin_acct_bus_srv_travel.html .

VIII. PARTIAL PER DIEM

- A. An employee must be in travel status for six (6) consecutive hours in a calendar day before any meal expenses may be claimed for reimbursement. A calendar day is 12:00 midnight to 12:00 midnight.
- B. An employee may not be reimbursed for meals incurred within his or her designated headquarters. For example, when an employee travels from his or her headquarters to the duty point, the meals claimed for the day must be in route to the duty point, at the duty point, or in route back to headquarters. An employee cannot wait until they arrive back at headquarters to claim their meal.
- C. An employee cannot claim reimbursement for any meals eaten on a Correctional Institutions Division (CID) unit.
- D. An employee cannot claim reimbursement for any meals provided at a conference or seminar.
- E. In the event an employee travels from his or her personal residence (because it is closer than the designated headquarters) to the duty point, the residence will be treated as a temporary headquarters and meals should be calculated using the departure and arrival time from and to the residence.
- F. Partial per diem reimbursement is considered by the IRS as additional income and must be reported on the employee's W-2. When an employee is reimbursed for non-overnight meals, federal withholding taxes, Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and OASI matching will be deducted from the gross amount submitted on the voucher.
- G. The Partial Per Diem is audited by the Travel Office to ensure all applicable state and agency rules are followed. The Payroll Department processes the payment reimbursement.
- H. Employees must obtain an acceptable meal receipt and attach it to the Partial Per Diem to file a claim for reimbursement. See the TDCJ Travel Guide for requirements.

- I. Reasonable meal quantities purchased are intended to be consumed within the allotted timeframe of travel. Reasonable meal quantities are to be justified by the employee's supervisor.

IX. TRAVEL VOUCHER

A copy of the Travel Voucher and instructions on completing the form are found in the TDCJ Travel Guide on the TDCJ Intranet.

- A. Travel Vouchers shall be submitted for payment within thirty (30) days of travel. Only one travel voucher per month shall be submitted. If a travel voucher is submitted for travel dates 90 days or older, the Affidavit of Travel form (PDTW-06) must be included. Travel vouchers will not be processed without the Affidavit of Travel form for travel dates 90 days or older.
- B. Designated headquarters is defined as the regular place of business or assigned place of employment where an employee conducts Agency business during normal office hours.
- C. Travel vouchers for Personal Mileage only shall be sent directly to the Travel Office in Huntsville for reimbursement.
- D. Travel vouchers for lodging, per diem, or any expenses other than mileage only, shall be sent to the Parole Division Executive Administration Office in Austin to the attention of the Budget Coordinator. If the Travel Office receives travel vouchers directly that require budget signature, the reimbursement could be delayed an additional 30 days for a total of up to 75 days before payment is processed.
- E. Travel Voucher Requirements
 1. State employee responsibilities
 - a. Employees and supervisors who sign the travel voucher shall ensure that the travel claim submission complies with requirements established by law.
 - b. Employees shall not submit claims for reimbursement for expenses not incurred.
 - c. Falsification of information can result in felony criminal charges filed as well as disciplinary action by TDCJ.
 - d. Overpayments shall be immediately reimbursed to the state.
 - e. Legible copies of all receipts for lodgings and incidental expenses for overnight travel shall be attached to the travel voucher.
 - f. Only blue or black ink shall be used to complete the travel vouchers. Red ink is not permitted and is for the Travel Office use only.

- g. The use of correction fluid or correction tape is not allowed on travel vouchers or records of transportation.
- h. Faxed or emailed copies of travel vouchers will not be processed. The original signed travel vouchers must be mailed to the appropriate office.

2. Specific descriptions of travel, duties, and activities

- a. The duty point to which the employee traveled must be identified. Point-to-point travel locations must be listed to allow validation.
- b. Travel reasons and duties performed must be clearly indicated for each duty point and date.
- c. All abbreviations or acronyms must be spelled out.
- d. Mileage shall be itemized on a point-to-point basis. Itemization must be sufficiently detailed for the numbers to be verified.
- e. Inter-city mileage shall show the addresses and names of the physical locations.
- f. The voucher must include a statement that travel was by way of a personally owned, rented, or leased vehicle.

3. Departmental responsibilities

- a. Department heads must coordinate travel of employees traveling from the same location.
- b. The department head has the authority to determine when coordination of travel is not feasible. A written notice or statement must be included with the travel voucher stating, "Coordination of travel is not feasible" and the reasons.

F. Timeline for Payment Reimbursement (Travel Office)

- 1. Government Code 660.019 requires that travel reimbursements are to be made no later than the 45th day after a valid travel voucher is received by the Travel Office.
- 2. A travel voucher that is submitted to the Travel Office that does not follow state and agency guidelines is not considered valid.
- 3. If a travel voucher is found to be invalid, the Travel Office will contact the employee. Upon correction/resolution between the employee and the Travel Office, the reimbursement shall be made no later than 30 days from the date of the correction/resolution.

G. Incidental Expenses

Incidental expenses include any necessary and reasonable expenses incurred while traveling on state business and do not include meals, lodging, transportation, and tips/gratuities.

1. Reimbursable Incidental Expenses include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Gasoline for state-owned cars;
 - b. Gasoline for rental cars;
 - c. Telephone calls, fax charges, cellular telephone expense, and Internet access at hotels (all used only for official state business);
 - d. Toll roads and parking fees;
 - e. Repair charges for state-owned cars;
 - f. Repair charges for rental cars;
 - g. Workbooks, required documents purchased for seminar or conferences and admittance fees while accompanying clients of the state; and
 - h. Postage, shipping, freight charges, cost of money orders, and document reproduction charges.

Items listed under a, e, g, and h cannot be listed on a Travel Voucher. Reimbursement for these items must be on a Cash Reimbursement Form located at http://itd.tdcj.texas.gov/TDCJ_Intranet/dept_divs/bus_fin/bus_fin_acct_bus_srv_travel.html.

Items a and e will need to be routed through Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) for budget approval prior to submitting to the Travel Office.

2. Non-reimbursable Incidental Expenses include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Personal items;
 - b. Expenses not related to official state business;
 - c. Expenses related to a personal vehicle other than parking and tolls; and
 - d. Tips/gratuities.

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