

Proposed travel procedures for Southwest Region Schools

Processing travel has been time consuming because the district policies and procedures are very limited. The proposed procedure is intended to clarify many questions that arise in the business office. Board policy #4133 states that "the superintendent or designee shall establish procedures for the submission and verification of expense claims." Since it is the business office that processes the travel claims it is appropriate for the business office to develop the procedure for approval.

The attached procedure was developed utilizing state travel procedures and the district procedures already in place. Please review and comment on this proposed procedure.

Student travel is not addressed here, however many procedures will apply.

Items in gray font need further explanation:

Delegation of approval – not addressed in district policy but for the sake of internal controls should be addressed.

Travel out of district does not address that a designee can sign but should be included.

Per diem when a meal is provided if it is decided to not pay it how it will be monitored should be discussed. It could be very time consuming. Maybe it should be encouraged but not enforced. Currently it appears that students don't get per diem when meals are furnished but staff does.

Visitors paying \$25 – if it is not included here where should it be? Do we even want visitors paying \$25? Another monitoring decision to be made.

TRAVEL PROCEDURES FOR SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOLS

**Prior to requesting authorization to travel ask these questions:
Will the benefits of this travel outweigh the cost of the travel?
Would my time be better spent on site?**

TRAVEL APPROVALS

All official travel shall be authorized and approved in advance by the appropriate supervisor or appointed designee. The request for approval shall be in writing and submitted on the Travel Authorization (TA). Any deviation from the original travel plans reflected on the approved TA shall be documented on the TA and approved by the appropriate authority. All delegation of approving authority shall be documented and kept on file in the business office.

Travel Within District

The TA requires prior approval from supervisor or designee. Day trips not requiring overnight travel will be authorized with the signature on the TR that is used to pay for the travel.

Travel to Anchorage or outside the state

In addition to the approvals required for travel within district, prior approval is required by the superintendent or designee.

SCHOOL BOARD TRAVEL

Board members are entitled to reimbursement in the same manner as provided to district employees.

COMPLETING THE TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION (TA) FORM

The Travel Authorization (TA), is used to secure approval for all travel with overnight stays, apply for advance payment of proposed travel, and claim reimbursement for travel performed. No travel expenses shall be processed unless claimed on a TA.

Before actual travel, the employee completes the TA with dates, costs and vendors. All sections that apply; itinerary, airfare, hotel, car rental, registration, and per diem need to be completed. Get initials where needed. The account code and appropriate approvals must be on the TA prior to approval. The TA is then forwarded to the business office for necessary purchases at least 10 business days prior to travel. It is the responsibility of the traveler to get the TA to the business office in a timely manner, otherwise travel arrangements will not get made.

INTERRUPTION OR DEVIATION OF TRAVEL FOR EMPLOYEE CONVENIENCE

Any interruption or deviation from the most direct and efficient means of travel for employee convenience requires prior approval by the authorized approver. Any additional time or expense resulting from an interruption or deviation for employee convenience shall be borne solely by the employee.

When an employee begins and/or ends a period of leave while on travel status, the following apply:

1. Per diem, travel allowances, and reimbursements shall be based solely on such charges as would have been incurred if traveling by the most direct and efficient means.
2. Per diem, travel allowances, and reimbursements stop the hour an employee goes on annual or personal leave and resumes the hour the employee returns to duty or resumes route of travel required by district business.
3. Any additional time away from the employee's duty station will require appropriate leave approved prior to travel.
4. Copies of leave slips shall be submitted at the same time as the Travel Authorization (TA)
5. If an employee accepts a voluntary bump from an airline, the traveler is put on personal travel rather than district business. Travel status ends, no further per diem is allowed, and all district insurance coverage stops for the duration of the trip. The traveler is responsible for any additional travel expenses and getting any necessary leave approved.

PROCUREMENT OF AIR TRANSPORTATION

When traveling on district business, employees must obtain the most economical means of travel, generally coach class accommodations.

The district uses three primary methods to purchase transportation for individuals traveling on official district business.

1. The preferred method for in-district travel is with a travel request (TR). These can pay for seat fares or charters whichever is the most economical means of transportation. All supervisors that can authorize travel have TR books.
2. The preferred method for out of the district travel to Anchorage is Pen Air's corporate account utilizing the district credit card. Employees are directed to utilize the Pen Air corporate ticket since they are completely changeable and refundable with no extra cost. Any employee authorized to travel out of the district will be set up with an account on the Pen Air website to make their reservations. When these reservations are made the business office needs to be contacted to purchase the ticket. If traveling past Anchorage employee will use sound judgment on reserving flights at the least cost to the district, these tickets are paid for with the district credit card.
3. The third method is the use of a physical bulk ticket from Pen Air. When using a bulk ticket the employee is responsible for returning it to the business office if the travel is canceled and is responsible for any lost ticket fee. This method is being phased out by Pen Air.

EXCESS BAGGAGE

Excess baggage paid for by the district will be limited to personal and district baggage necessary to carry out official district business. Such baggage shall be transported by the most economical method (checked as excess baggage, shipped via air freight, etc.).

PER DIEM

Per diem allowances and prorated per diem allowances are used when the employee is in travel status which requires overnight lodging. Day trips will not get per diem per IRS law.

Occasionally an employee is provided with a meal while at a conference, training seminar, etc., or as part of a lodging package such as at bed and breakfast inns (and the district is reimbursing for actual lodging costs). When an employee is provided with a meal in these or similar circumstances, the employee should not claim per diem for that meal.

Approved per diem rates for the district are:

In district, other than Dillingham

Breakfast	\$5.00
Lunch	\$5.00
Dinner	\$7.00

Dillingham and out of district

Breakfast	\$10.00
Lunch	\$10.00
Dinner	\$20.00

Prorated per diem will be determined as follows:

Breakfast, lunch and dinner if departure time is before 8:00AM

Lunch and dinner if departure time is before 11:00AM

Dinner if departure time is before 6:00PM

Breakfast if return time is before 11:00AM

Breakfast and lunch if return time is before 5:00PM

Breakfast, lunch and dinner if return time is after 5:00PM

TRAVEL ADVANCES

An advance of estimated per diem and other travel costs may be made to an employee before the employee enters travel status. Advances must be requested on the TA and initialed by the supervisor. If the employee circles yes but there are no initials the advance will not be given. Checks are processed every Thursday. It is the traveler's responsibility to get travel advance requests to the business office in enough time to cut the check and get the advance to the employee.

If the final amount due an employee is less than the travel advance previously received, a personal check or money order must accompany the TA. If the employee is due an additional amount, final payment shall be made within ten business days of the receipt of a properly completed TA.

RENTAL VEHICLES

When necessary, the rental of an automobile may be authorized for employees in travel status. The rental vehicle must be justified and requires advance written approval by the supervisor. The cost and intended use of the vehicle must be considered in determining the size and type of vehicle to rent. Rental of a larger vehicle may be allowed when several employees are traveling together or circumstances require the use of a larger vehicle. Such situations must also be documented and approved in advance by the appropriate division director or designee.

If the conference or training is held in the same hotel as lodging a rental car is generally not authorized.

When making reservations, it is necessary to receive a confirmation number which will be documented on the TA. A purchase order or district credit card will be used to pay for rental cars. District insurance coverage applies to rentals and additional vendor offered insurance coverage is to be denied by the traveler. Rental vehicles may be driven on school business only, and school insurance coverage applies only where the vehicle is used on school business.

If there is damage done to any rental vehicle:

- employees are cautioned to never accept or admit liability;
- if the lessor requests information or payment, advise the lessor to contact the business office;
- if there is personal injury or an accident, telephone the business office as soon as possible.

AIRPORT SHUTTLE, COURTESY VAN, AND TAXI SERVICE

When an employee in travel status requires transportation either to or from an airport or ferry terminal, an airport shuttle or courtesy van service shall be used whenever possible. Taxi fare is allowed when a shuttle or courtesy van is not. Obtain a receipt for reimbursement purposes.

PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

An employee may use a privately owned vehicle, such as car, boat, snow machine, or plane, when it is in the best interest of the district. The approving official shall be responsible for substantiating that use of a privately owned vehicle is in the district's best interest. The employee shall receive a mileage reimbursement for the use of a personal automobile, boat, snowmobile, motorcycle, etc. at the current IRS rates. Whenever possible use a district vehicle, district insurance only covers where the privately owned vehicle insurance doesn't.

Any additional time away from the duty station required as a result of using a privately owned conveyance for personal convenience will be charged to annual leave, personal leave, or leave without pay.

When two or more officials or employees are traveling in the same direction, and it is possible to share a privately-owned automobile or airplane, the mileage permitted shall be allowed only once

LODGING

The district will pay for lodging expenses when traveling on official district business and overnight lodging is obtained.

The employee is responsible for ensuring that lodging costs are reasonable and necessary and that any school district discount rates are used. The employee will get the confirmation number to put on the TA. A purchase order or district credit card will be used to purchase lodging to take advantage of not being charged lodging taxes.

Employees staying in privately owned lodging or who are provided meals and/or lodging by another district staff member may reimburse the host for meals at the rates specified for in district travel and for lodging at the rate of ten (\$10) per night when a bed with clean sheets is provided. (Receipt for lodging must be attached to a TA for reimbursement.)

Visitors who are not employees of the district may be charged \$25 per night for sleeping in the school district facilities.

AIRLINE DELAYS, RESCHEDULING, AND OVERBOOKING

When an airline assumes the cost of an employee's lodging and/or meals due to airline delays the

employee shall be paid up to the originally scheduled arrival time. When the airline does not assume the cost of an employee's lodging and/or meals the employee shall be paid in the same manner as the rest of the trip unless the delay is connected to a change of schedule by the employee.

Unused transportation and accommodations

When travelers' plans change, it is the traveler's responsibility to release air, car, and hotel reservations within the time limits specified by carriers and hotels (usually 24 hours). The district will not reimburse travelers for charges incurred as a result of failure to release accommodations unless the reason is due to bad weather. Return the TA and all goldenrod copies to the business office with documentation for what did not get used.

COMPLETING THE TRAVEL PROCESS AFTER TRAVEL HAS OCCURED

All car rental and lodging that are paid by purchase order will require the traveler to sign the goldenrod copy and return it to the business office. Without the signed copy verifying the travel expenses were incurred and should be paid, the invoice from the vendor can not get paid. If there are any changes they must be explained on the goldenrod copy.

Any expenses that are claimed by the employee after travel should be submitted within ten business days of completion of the trip. It is the traveler's responsibility to follow up on the reimbursement. Any expense that is not per diem will need a receipt to get reimbursed. Some parking can be reimbursed without a receipt. Taxi fare reimbursements require a receipt.

Fines for traffic or parking violations, lost keys, lost airline tickets, or similar expenses are not authorized and will not be reimbursed

Fraudulent claims may be subject to disciplinary and/or other action.