

Travel Procedures for Out of Town / Out of County Travel and Reimbursement Hamilton County Department of Education

Section 1: Purpose, Responsibility, and Accountability

1.1 Purpose

The HCDE Travel Procedures are designed to provide a framework for recording, submitting, and reimbursing costs related to travel for employees. The HCDE Travel Procedures are intended to be practical, understandable, and accountable. Effort has been made to simplify procedures as much as possible while still maintaining a valid audit trail. The overriding principle is to insure proper stewardship of public funds, without incurring additional charges to employees who must travel.

1.2 Responsibility

Deliberate disregard for these regulations while traveling on county business, or filing of an intentionally misleading or fraudulent travel claim, are grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. It is the responsibility of each HCDE department and school to inform its employees of the requirements of the HCDE Travel Procedures and to monitor the travel claims of all employees. It is the responsibility of the employee to adhere to the HCDE Travel Procedures.

1.3 Accountability

Employees, when traveling, should be as conservative as circumstances permit. In the event an alternate means of travel is available or multiple prices exist for travel related costs, the lower cost should be selected whenever practical. Employees assume these responsibilities when they accept the opportunity to travel. Employees must assume the additional cost for optional travel costs that could reasonably be avoided. **(i.e., First Class upgrades, rental cars when cabs are more cost effective, limos instead of shuttles, driving instead of flying long distances).**

1.4 Original Documentation

HCDE Expense Voucher and receipts must be original with employees and administrators, including appropriate budget or grant managers original signatures.

Section 2: General Policy and Authorization

2.1 General Policy

- a) Travel for the purpose of attending a conference or meeting must have prior approval from school and district level administrators, including appropriate budget or grant managers. Travel may not be undertaken unless it is has been approved.
- b) The principal or district administrator is responsible for ensuring all employees understand and follow the HCDE Travel Procedures.
- c) Claims for reimbursement for travel expenses should be submitted no later than two (2) weeks after completion of the travel. Claims submitted after this period must provide written explanation for the delay.
- d) Receipts are required for all reimbursable items or fares except for meals and other optional daily expenses (i.e., tips) which are included in the per diem allowance.

- e) Travel must be by the most direct route possible, and any individual traveling by an indirect route must assume any extra expense incurred.
- Departure for all approved travel for conferences and meetings must take place the day of the conference or the day prior dependent upon time allowance for check-in for the conference.
 - Return from all approved travel for conferences and meetings must take place on the day the conference ends provided travel arrangements are available within the same day. If not travel may occur the following day.

2.2 Authorization

- a) The HCDE Conference Attendance Request Form must be completed and approved by school and district level administrators, including appropriate budget or grant managers prior to making travel arrangements. Conference Attendance Request forms should be submitted at least four (4) weeks prior to the conference/meeting date(s).
- b) When requesting attendance for a conference, include the vendor providing the conference as well as the conference name. If a vendor has not been used previously, a completed W-9 form is also required from the vendor.
- c) Conference/meeting registration fees may be paid by purchase order if the vendor accepts purchase orders. When requesting a purchase order for registration, you must include the registration form.
- d) When filing for reimbursement, you must attach the signed, approved HCDE Conference Attendance Request form with the appropriate receipts. All reimbursement forms must include the signature of the employee/traveler and the school or applicable district level administrator, including appropriate budget or grant managers.

Section 3: Travel Arrangement and Reimbursement

Travel should be arranged in the most cost effective manner possible. It is the responsibility of school and district administrators to determine the most cost effective manner possible based on budgetary constraints.

3.1 Hotel-Motel-Accommodations Services

- a) When making reservations for accommodations, please be cautious with cancellation policies to limit employee cost risk for cancellation fees.
- b) Caution: accommodations services (i.e., Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) – can only be used when total costs, including fees, is less than or comparable to conference rates. However, their cancellation policies could put the employee at a greater risk of expense reimbursement.
- c) Employees must provide a detailed hotel-motel-accommodations receipt.
- Only actual room costs plus tax will be reimbursed. Receipts are required and must itemize room charges and taxes by date.
 - Reimbursement for lodging requires the original statement/receipt from the lodging provider and proof of payment. The lodging statement/receipt must have a \$0.00 balance.

- The employee paying for the accommodations must submit the necessary documentation and HCDE Expense Voucher for reimbursement. It is not acceptable for family members or friends to pay for accommodations.
- If employees share accommodations, all names of individuals sharing the accommodations must be included on the HCDE Expense Voucher. An explanation of the cost division must be included with the submitted HCDE Expense Voucher.
- Not reimbursable:
 - i. Charges for personal services, in-room movies, personal phone calls, and upgrades.
 - ii. Tips paid to hotel personnel are not reimbursable. Employees' per diem allowance accounts for these types of incidental and optional expenses.

3.2 Per Diem (incidental expenses and meals)

- a) Employees will receive a fixed allowance (per diem) for incidental expenses and meals only when overnight travel is required.
 - Standard per diem: \$45.00 per full day; \$33.75 per departure and return days
 - High cost location per diem: \$58.00 per full day; \$43.50 per departure and return days
 - i. High cost locations: Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Washington, D.C., Key West, Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia, and Seattle.
- b) The per diem allowance does not require receipts.
- c) If employees decline the per diem, an explanation must be provided on the HCDE Expense Voucher.
- d) Tips for services and other incidental and optional expenses are accounted for through the per diem allowance. Tips and other incidental and optional expenses are not reimbursable.

3.3 Transportation

Standard procedure allows employees to be reimbursed for the cost of Basic Economy/Main Cabin airline tickets. When making transportation arrangements, please be cautious with cancellation policies to limit employee cost risk for cancellation fees.

- a) Airline:
 - Employees must assume the additional cost for optional travel costs that could reasonably be avoided. **(i.e., First Class upgrades, Business, Comfort Plus upgrades, rental cars when cabs are more cost effective, limos instead of shuttles, driving instead of flying long distances).** Employees are required to provide the following in order to be reimbursed:
 - i. a detailed receipt for the purchased airline ticket(s).
 - ii. boarding passes for all flights -- If you choose to use electronic boarding passes (i.e., smart phone, device) you must submit printed copies with your Expense Voucher.
 - Not reimbursable:
 - i. Charges for seat selection, food and beverages, in-flight movies, phone calls, upgrades, and other optional charges.
 - ii. Tips paid to airport/airline personnel are not reimbursable. Employees' per diem allowance accounts for these types of incidental and optional expenses.

b) Ground Transportation:

- The following ground transportation services can be utilized for travel to/from the airport, between lodging and meeting sites, and for other business purposes:
 - i. Taxi and Shuttle
 - ii. Ride-sharing Services (i.e., Uber, Lyft, etc.)
- Detailed receipts are required for all ground transportation
- Not reimbursable:
 - i. Tips paid to transportation personnel are not reimbursable. Employees' per diem allowance accounts for these types of incidental and optional expenses.

c) Vehicle Rental:

- Vehicle rental is allowable when specific written authorization has been secured in advance from HCDE Central Office administration. When renting a vehicle locally prior to travel, employees may contact the HCDE Purchasing Department for assistance.
- Any person authorized to rent a vehicle for school business should waive the rental insurance offer when signing the rental agreement. The employee should sign their name and add the words "on behalf of HCDE" to their signature area. This will ensure HCDE has insurance coverage under TNRMT for car rentals by employees on company business. CAUTION: If the employee fails to sign the rental agreement including the words "on behalf of HCDE", the individual is renting the vehicle in their name only and HCDE insurance would NOT apply. Only HCDE employees are covered by this insurance provision.
- Detailed receipts are required for vehicle rental reimbursement
- Gasoline purchased for rental vehicles are reimbursable and should be included as part of the transportation line on the HCDE Expense Voucher. Gasoline receipts must be included with the HCDE Expense Voucher.

d) Mileage:

- Only mileage for official business may be claimed for reimbursement (i.e., travel to/from the airport, between lodging and meeting sites, and for other business purposes)
- Mileage for the use of personal vehicles will be reimbursed based on the current federal rate. This reimbursement rate is intended to reimburse expenses for gas, oil, vehicle depreciation, and other incidental expenses related to driving. No separate claims for such expenses can be made.
- In the case of employees using their personal vehicle for a trip that is cheaper by airline, mileage reimbursement will be allowed not to exceed the cost of the lowest available round trip coach airfare.
- Mileage may be calculated by trip meter (trip odometer) readings or use of an online map service (i.e., Google Maps, MapQuest, etc.). Employees can begin/end mileage from their place of residence for out of town travel only when leaving from their residence.
- Carpooling: Employees may choose to car pool to a conference, meeting, or for business purposes. Only the driver may be reimbursed. The driver must provide the name of the passengers on the HCDE Expense Voucher and the passengers must note the name of the driver on their respective HCDE Expense Vouchers.

3.4 Other Expenses (i.e., registration, parking, airline checked baggage, etc.)

- a) Conference/meeting registration fees may be paid by:
 - Purchase order if the vendor accepts purchase orders. When requesting a purchase order for registration, you must include the registration form.
 - Individual employee attending conference or meeting. Individual employee will be reimbursed.
- b) Parking:
 - Necessary charges for routine parking (i.e., airport, hotel, other parking for business purposes) will be reimbursed with original receipts. Charges incurred through street parking meters may be reimbursed with proof provided through a credit card statement.
 - Valet parking is reimbursable only where it is required by the hotel.
- c) Airline Checked Baggage:
 - Airline fees for employee's checked baggage (**1 bag only**) will be reimbursed with the appropriate receipts.
- d) Toll Fees
 - Reasonable toll fees will be reimbursed if the employee provides the appropriate receipts.

3.5 Non-reimbursable Items

- a) Expenses of educational materials, professional development materials, or other business related materials or expenses are not actual travel expenses. Reimbursement will require administrative approval.
- b) Expenses for entertainment, laundry, messages, alcoholic beverages, or other personal charges will not be reimbursed.

3.6 Reimbursement Steps

- a) The document authorized for requesting reimbursement for out-of-town travel expenses is the Hamilton County Department of Education Expense Voucher.
 - Complete the HCDE Expense Voucher
 - Include approved HCDE Conference Attendance Request Form
 - Include all required, original receipts for reimbursable expenses. All receipts for reimbursable expenses and boarding passes that are less than a full page in size must be taped to an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper.
 - Secure required original signatures of employee and school/district administrators, including appropriate budget or grant managers for the HCDE Expense Voucher.
- b) Submit HCDE Expense Voucher and corresponding documentation to the appropriate administrator/department.
- c) Once documentation is received by the HCDE Accounts Payable department, a reimbursement check will be issued to the employee within a two (2) week time period (pending unforeseen reimbursement concerns/issues).

Any exceptions to these guidelines will require prior administrative approval.