

# TRAVEL EXPENSE GUIDELINES

*Policy DEE*

## **Approval for Travel**

Employees wishing to attend functions on behalf of the District must secure approval from their immediate supervisor prior to making plans to attend. This approval must be secured using the District's travel request form appropriate to the event (there are separate forms for overnight and non-overnight travel). This form should be submitted for approval prior to entering items in the requisition system or committing District funds for any expenses, including registration fees and hotels, but **MUST** be submitted at least two weeks prior to the travel event if any funds are to be advanced prior to travel.

## Expense Guidelines

- Only in state travel will be considered for approval without extenuating circumstances.
- District employees can choose to use their own cars and be reimbursed on a per mile basis, or may reserve and use a District provided vehicle for group travel, if available. Reservation of a district vehicle should be done as soon as you know about the event, as vehicles are limited in number.
- The District will pay mileage for only one vehicle per four people attending a function. Official route mileage will be based on the shortest route as calculated at [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com) with the departure address being the street address of the employee's usual work site and the arrival address being the street address of the hotel (for overnight travel) or the conference facility (for non-overnight travel). Exceptions to the shortest route reimbursement may be made with prior approval of the business office for justifiable alternate routes (primarily safety issues).
- Plane tickets will only be paid for in extenuating circumstances. Without extenuating circumstances, airplane travel will only be paid up to the standard mileage that would have been allowable to the same destination. All additional expenditure will be borne by the employee, including rental vehicle if applicable.
- The District expects two employees of the same sex attending a meeting to share a room. An employee who chooses not to share a room will be responsible for their own room expense. If employees agree not to share a room, employees can be paid one-half each of the lowest cost room.
- Employees will be reimbursed for meals on a per diem basis. This reimbursement is based on the currently approved per diem schedule and time of departure from and return to District. When a banquet is part of a conference and that banquet exceeds District reimbursement rates, the District will pay for the Conference meal in lieu of the standard amount for that particular meal.
- The District currently has not set a limit for hotel room rates. Where multiple hotels and rates are available for a conference, the employee should remember

that taxpayer dollars are being used to fund such expenses, and the location with the lowest rate, consistent with safety considerations, should be sought. The allowable amount will be limited to the amount submitted for approval on the appropriate travel form or the original budgeted amount, whichever is lower, unless previous approval for a budget amendment has been granted.

## GUIDELINES FOR PAYING FOR TRAVEL

At least two weeks prior to traveling, the employee should complete the Travel Request form. Once approved by all necessary departments, the original form will be given to the business office when travel requires expenditures of any kind. This form should list all anticipated expenditures that are considered reimbursable by the District. Employees may pay for all related expenditures by personal means and request reimbursement upon their return or request the use of a District credit card for hotel expenses and an advance check for meals and mileage (for overnight travel only). In either case the employee should maintain and submit copies of receipts for all expenditures except for meals and mileage expenses which are paid based on approved District Schedules. Employees should secure a tax exempt form prior to travel as the District will not reimburse for state hotel taxes. Employees requesting meal reimbursement for non-overnight travel should submit receipts in a timely manner, but no later than 30 days after the date of the travel. Receipts submitted after that time will not be reimbursed. Additionally, the District's fiscal year ends June 30, and all mileage reimbursement for the school year must be submitted no later than July 15 of the following year, or reimbursement will be denied.

### Hotel Expenses

Employees that wish for the District to pay for hotel/motel expenses should come by the Business Office the day before departure to secure the credit card. In order to secure such card, the employee must read and sign a credit card usage form prior to the travel. In such instances when the employee needs the District to secure the reservation, the employee should make all appropriate reservations and forward the reservation number, phone number, hotel name, etc., to the business office using the approved form for such, so the reservation can be confirmed. **It is the employee's responsibility to gather the exact expense information for the hotel, including local hotel taxes, and provide that information on the travel form. Credit card charges that exceed the expenses identified on the approved travel form may result in the employee's pay being docked. If plans change, it is the employee's responsibility to verify that reservations have been canceled; failure to do so could result in the employee's pay being docked.** The travel card and receipt for charges should be returned to the business office immediately upon return from the travel. Detailed receipts are required in all cases.

### Advances

Sabine Independent School District employees can receive advances to cover their mileage and meal allowances only when overnight travel is involved. If an advance is desired, the employee should make sure that these requests are made at least two weeks in advance to allow sufficient time to generate the requested check. If such request is not made two weeks prior to travel, the business office will reimburse the employee for his/her expenses in the next check run following the return of appropriate travel receipts.

## District Vehicles

District vehicles are provided based on District transportation needs, meaning that if we have teams or groups traveling they will be given preference in most cases. Following those mandatory needs, the remaining vehicles will be distributed on a first come, first served basis, so it is very important for employees to make reservations as soon as possible. When requesting a District vehicle, in addition to calling the transportation department to reserve the vehicle please note such on the travel request form. When it is noted that an employee is using a District vehicle, appropriate credit cards will be given to the employee that will allow for the charging of fuel and emergency vehicle repairs. Just like noted in Hotel Expenses above, this card should be secured from the business office the day before the travel, and again, a travel card usage form must be read and signed before you are allowed to leave with the card. Upon return from the travel, the cards should be returned immediately, and all receipts charged to those cards submitted. Detail receipts should be secured in all cases. Note: The District's commercial fuel cards (Shell, Exxon, etc.) do not allow for "pay at the pump" use. The user must sign the receipt inside the station.

## Travel with Students

Employees will follow the same guidelines as above with several additional requirements.

- Students meals will be reimbursed for actual or per diem which ever is smaller.
- Advances for meal money will be given when appropriate paperwork is completed, approved and turned into the Business Office at least two weeks prior to travel.
- If students are given their per diem travel amount, the employee must get the students' signature as to such receipt, and that documentation must be returned to the business office.
- If actual meals are charged, copies of detail receipts must be submitted. The signature slip with the grand total is not a sufficiently detailed receipt.
- When travel requires overnight stay, same sex students are required to stay four to a room.
- Credit cards are available for covering these student expenses. Appropriate forms noted above should be completed prior to travel.
- Per Diem meal limits for students are the same as employees when overnight travel is involved (please note that all meal limits are inclusive of any gratuity paid).
- The meal allowance for single event travel (a team traveling to a game, for example) is limited to \$7.00 per student (including any gratuity). Meals will not be provided by the District for away games that involve a "short" trip. Short is defined as a trip requiring less than 30 minutes travel time and includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following destinations: Gladewater, Kilgore, Union Grove, White Oak, and Winona. If the event schedule is such that travel time is less than 30 minutes but the group will be at the destination for an extended period of time (in tournament play, for example), an exception for meals may be considered if requested prior to travel as outlined in previous guidelines.