

FINANCE

Accounts Payable

Travel—Local and Nonlocal

This regulation supersedes Regulation 5310.8.

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for approving and paying expenses for FCPS employees while they are on official travel.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION

This regulation has been changed in its entirety.

III. APPLICABILITY

All official travel funded through appropriated sources is subject to the requirements of this regulation.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Official Travel

All official travel considered essential to the effective operation of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). Travel is classified as either local or nonlocal as follows:

1. Local Travel—Travel that either does not require an overnight stay or does not require air or rail transportation (excluding Metro).
2. Nonlocal Travel—Travel that either requires an overnight stay such that round trip travel is not completed in one calendar day or requires air or rail transportation (excluding Metro).

B. Approving Authority

Principals, directors, assistant superintendents, the deputy superintendent, and the Superintendent, or their respective delegates, serve as approving authorities for travel. Delegates must be at the assistant principal or coordinator level or above. To approve travel, approving authorities and delegates must be at a higher grade level than the traveler seeking approval.

C. Base Location

Base location will be defined by the FCPS Department of Human Resources.

D. GSA Per Diem Rates

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) establishes per diem rates for lodging and meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Lodging per diem covers the costs of lodging excluding taxes while M&IE per diem covers the cost of meals including tax and tip and incidental expenses limited to bellhop and housekeeping tips. GSA per diem rates may be found at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

E. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Standard Mileage Rate

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) establishes a standard mileage rate to calculate reimbursement for operating a personal vehicle for business miles driven.

F. Online Travel

An automated web-based application used to submit, approve, and track official travel requests.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Travelers must:

1. Ensure that expenses are reasonable and necessary.
2. Use sound judgment and advance planning to minimize expenses.
3. Submit requests for travel approval and/or reimbursement in accordance with specified procedures and time frames.

B. Approving authorities must:

1. Ensure compliance with the provisions of this regulation by determining whether travel for which approval is sought is essential to the effective operation of FCPS and whether expenses are reasonable and necessary;
2. Verify the allowability of expenses.
3. Assign a delegate to approve travel, if so desired.

C. Department and school finance staff members must:

1. Ensure compliance with the provisions of this regulation by confirming the availability of funding.
2. Verify the allowability of expenses.
3. Ensure the completeness and accuracy of the information provided and receipts submitted as documentation of expenses.
4. Retain financial records, including all original receipts, according to the FCPS

records retention schedule for payment records and provide to auditors as requested.

D. Department of Financial Services must:

1. Ensure compliance with the provisions of this regulation by overseeing the travel program.
2. Ensure prompt payment of authorized official travel expenses.

VI. LOCAL TRAVEL

A. General

1. Local travel does not require prior approval.
2. Requests for local travel reimbursement must be submitted through Online Travel within three months of travel date. Requests for reimbursement not submitted within this time frame will not be reimbursed.
3. Requests for local travel reimbursement must be approved by one approving authority through Online Travel.

B. Allowable Expenses

1. Mileage

Mileage reimbursement is allowed for employees who use personal vehicles for official travel and do not receive a car allowance. Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS standard mileage rate for miles traveled in excess of the round-trip daily commute between the traveler's residence and base location. Distances will be calculated through Online Travel using the fastest route option.

2. Mileage or Meal Per Diem

Mileage reimbursement or meal per diem is allowed for employees who are required to attend authorized meetings or work-related activities outside normal duty hours for which they do not receive a salary supplement, with the exception of Back to School Night. Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS standard mileage rate for miles traveled between the traveler's residence and the meeting or activity location, or a meal per diem of \$11.50 will be granted. Mileage reimbursement and meal per diem are not allowed for the same event.

3. Meal Reimbursement--Other

Meal reimbursement is allowed for employees who are required to attend official or other work-related functions in conjunction with local travel and are charged for a meal served as part of the function. Reimbursement will be allowed for the actual cost of the meal. An original itemized receipt is required. Reimbursements for meals related to attendance at training, conferences, seminars, etc. in conjunction

with local travel are not allowed unless purchase of a meal is a prerequisite for participating in the function.

4. Parking Fees, Taxi Fares, Tolls, and Public Transportation Costs

Reimbursement is allowed for employees who incur parking fees, taxi fares, tolls, and public transportation costs while on official travel.

VII. NONLOCAL TRAVEL

A. General

1. Nonlocal travel requires prior approval.
2. Requests for prior approval of nonlocal travel must be submitted and approved through Online Travel prior to departure.
3. The traveler must obtain prior approval consistent with the provisions of this regulation before incurring any financial obligations on behalf of FCPS and, in all cases, prior to departure. Any obligations incurred by the traveler prior to receiving approval may be the responsibility of the traveler.
4. Requests for prior approval of nonlocal travel must be approved by one approving authority, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Lodging (excluding taxes) exceeding 150 percent of the prevailing (GSA) rate must be approved by an assistant superintendent.
 - b. Travel exceeding \$2,000 for any single event must be approved by an assistant superintendent.
 - c. Travel outside the 48 contiguous states must be approved by the Superintendent.
5. After nonlocal travel is completed, reconciliation of actual expenses to estimated expenses must be submitted through Online Travel within 30 calendar days of return date. Travelers who fail to submit reconciliation of actual expenses to estimated expenses within 45 days of return date must receive approval from an assistant superintendent before reimbursement requests will be processed.
6. If actual expenses are within 10 percent or \$100 of estimated expenses, whichever is less, the reconciliation and accompanying documentation will be reviewed by department or school finance employees and approved through Online Travel. If actual expenses exceed estimated expenses by 10 percent or \$100, whichever is less, the reconciliation will also be approved by the approving authority through Online Travel.

B. Allowable Expenses

1. Registration Fees

Registration fees related to attendance at conferences, seminars, training, or similar programs are allowed. An FCPS credit card must be used to pay registration fees. If the vendor will not accept an FCPS credit card, FCPS will issue a check to the vendor. An original itemized receipt or invoice is required.

2. Lodging

Lodging expenses at the prevailing GSA rate plus applicable taxes are allowed. If necessary, travelers can exceed the prevailing GSA rate (excluding applicable taxes) by up to 50 percent. If the lodging rate (excluding applicable taxes) exceeds the prevailing GSA rate by more than 50 percent, secondary approval from an assistant superintendent is required. An FCPS credit card must be used to pay lodging expenses. An original itemized receipt is required.

3. Meals and Incidental Expense (M&IE) Per Diem

Reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses at the prevailing GSA per diem rate is allowed. An FCPS credit card may not be used to purchase meals. If meals are provided as part of the function being attended, reimbursement for such meals is not allowed. Receipts are not required.

4. Transportation

Travelers are required to use the most economical mode(s) of transportation during nonlocal travel.

- a. Mileage reimbursement is allowed for employees who use personal vehicles for official travel. Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS standard mileage rate.
- b. Reimbursement for parking fees, taxi fares, shuttle service, tolls, and public transportation costs is allowed. Original receipts are required for parking fees, taxi fares, and shuttle service fares. When an original receipt is not available, official proof of fee or fare (e.g., printed schedule from web site) will be accepted.
- c. Air or rail transportation purchased at the lowest available coach rate is allowed. An FCPS credit card must be used to pay air or rail transportation expenses. An original itemized receipt is required.
- d. Car rental purchased at the lowest available rate is allowed. An FCPS credit card must be used to pay car rental expenses. An original itemized receipt is required.

C. Nonlocal Travel Advances

Travel advances for meals and incidental expenses per diem are not provided, but travelers may receive an exception. Travel advances may be made for 75 percent of meals and incidental expenses per diem. Travel advances for less than \$200 will not be issued. Requests for per diem advances must be received by the Department of Financial Services at least ten business days before departure date.

VIII. EXPENSE SETTLEMENT

All travel advances and reimbursements will be paid via direct deposit.