

FINANCE

Accounts Payable

Travel – Local and Nonlocal

This regulation supersedes Regulation 5310.9.

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for approving and paying expenses for Fairfax County Public Schools (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. Additional information is in the Online Travel Best Practices document located on the Online Travel webpage.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Official Travel

All official travel considered essential to the effective operation of FCPS. Travel is classified as either local or nonlocal as follows:

1. Local Travel – travel that does not include overnight stay, air transportation, or bus/rail transportation, except Metro bus and rail. Local travel typically is used when traveling between FCPS' sites.
2. Nonlocal Travel – travel that includes overnight stay, meaning round trip travel is not completed in one calendar day. Nonlocal travel includes the use of air, bus, and rail transportation except Metro bus and rail. Nonlocal travel typically is used for conferences, training, and seminars.

B. Approving Authority

Principals, program managers, assistant superintendents, division chiefs, 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, except for itinerant teachers, is the primary work location for an employee. The base location of itinerant teachers is defined as the location where they are scheduled to spend the majority of their working hours each day. The base location is used to determine commuting miles in order to calculate travel reimbursements for mileage. Refer to section VI.B.2. for information on itinerant teachers.

D. U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Per Diem Rates

The GSA establishes per diem rates for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Lodging per diem covers the costs of lodging (excluding taxes). Meals and incidental expenses per diem cover the cost of meals including tax and tip, and incidental expenses limited to bellhop and housekeeping tips. The GSA per diem rates may be found at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

E. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Standard Mileage Rate

The IRS establishes a standard mileage rate to calculate reimbursement for operating a personal vehicle for business miles driven. The IRS standard mileage rates may be found at www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates.

F. Online Travel

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

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

All ensuing parties must carry out their assigned responsibilities.

A. Travelers

1. Ensure that expenses are necessary and reasonable.
2. Use sound judgment and advance planning to minimize expenses.
3. Provide a detailed justification for travel that clearly states the reason for travel and a description of the event attended.
4. Submit requests for travel approval and/or reimbursement in accordance with specified procedures and time frames.
5. Provide proper and valid supporting documentation for expenditures.

B. Approving Authorities

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. Ensure there is proper and valid supporting documentation for expenditures.
3. Verify expenses are necessary and reasonable. Verification includes ensuring the miles could be traveled during the suggested time and ensuring the dates traveled do not include nonwork days, Back-to-School Night, or days the traveler was on leave.
4. Depending on the circumstance, a delegate may be assigned to approve travel.

C. Department and School Finance Staff Members

1. Ensure compliance with the provisions of this regulation by confirming the availability of funding.
2. Verify the reasonableness of expenses.
 - a. Ensure the completeness and accuracy of receipts submitted as documentation of expenses and the information provided.
 - b. Retain financial records, including all original receipts, according to the FCPS records retention schedule for payment records. Provide such records to auditors as requested.

D. Department of Financial Services

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 except employees must receive approval in advance of registering for local conferences, training, and staff development.
2. Requests for local travel reimbursement must be submitted through Online Travel within three months of the travel date. Requests for reimbursement not submitted within this time frame will not be reimbursed.
3. If a stipend or salary supplement was provided for the event, reimbursement for local travel is not permitted.

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. Itinerant Teachers

Itinerant teachers may only receive mileage reimbursement when multiple trips are made on a single day.

- a. If itinerant teachers are scheduled to spend an equal amount of working hours in all locations on a single day, the base location will be defined as the first location visited.
- b. Changes in an itinerant teacher's schedule, leading to a change in base location, must be reflected in Online Travel.

3. Mileage or Meal Per Diem

Mileage reimbursement or meal per diem not to exceed \$11.50 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. Mileage reimbursement or meal per diem is not allowed for Back-to-School Night.

Mileage reimbursement and meal per diem are not allowed for the same event. The traveler must claim the actual option taken.

- a. 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. Mileage must be claimed using the actual route taken in the sequence in which each location was visited.
- b. A meal at the per diem not to exceed \$11.50 will be granted if mileage reimbursement is not sought.

4. Meal Reimbursement – Other

Reimbursements for meals charged, where an employee is required to attend an official function representing FCPS, will be allowed up to the prevailing GSA meal per diem.

5. 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. 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 website) will be accepted.

VII. NONLOCAL TRAVEL

A. General

1. Nonlocal travel requires preapproval from an approving authority prior to travel. The traveler must obtain prior approval consistent with the provisions of this regulation prior to departure and before incurring any financial obligations on behalf of FCPS. FCPS may not be responsible for any obligations incurred by the traveler prior to receiving approval from the approving authority.
2. All nonlocal travel must have a travel request in Online Travel. This includes travel where the traveler is not going to be reimbursed. It also includes mileage and registration fees for conferences, training, and seminars in the greater Washington metropolitan area.
3. Requests for preapproval of nonlocal travel must be submitted and approved through Online Travel prior to departure.
4. Requests for preapproval of nonlocal travel must be approved by the approving authority, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Lodging (excluding taxes) exceeding 150 percent of the prevailing GSA rate must be approved by the department assistant superintendent, or the school's region assistant superintendent.
 - b. Travel exceeding \$2,000 for any single event must be approved by the department assistant superintendent or the school's region assistant superintendent.
 - c. Travel outside the 48 contiguous states must be approved by the Superintendent.
5. Requests submitted in the current fiscal year, may include travel that occurs in the first three months of the next fiscal year. Requests beyond three months into the next fiscal year must be preapproved by the assistant superintendent, Department of Financial Services.
6. No reimbursement requests for nonlocal travel will be processed before a reconciliation of actual to estimated expenses is submitted through Online Travel. The reconciliation must be submitted within 30 days of the return date.

Travelers who fail to submit the reconciliation within the allotted time must receive immediate approval from their department or region assistant superintendent. Reimbursement requests will not be processed if approval from the department or region assistant superintendent is not granted within 45 days of the return date.

7. The reconciliation and accompanying documentation of all actual expenses is reviewed by department or school finance staff members and approved through Online Travel. If actual expenses exceed estimated costs by 10 percent or \$100, whichever is lower, the reconciliation and accompanying documentation must also be reviewed by the approving authority and approved through Online Travel. To monitor compliance, the Department of Financial Services may request that travel receipts be scanned and submitted to the Department of Financial Services. Departments and schools are required to provide receipts when requested.

B. Allowable Expenses for Nonlocal Travel

1. Registration Fees

Registration fees related to attendance at conferences, seminars, training, or similar programs are allowed. An FCPS procurement card (PCard) must be used to pay registration fees. If the vendor will not accept an FCPS PCard, 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 (including applicable taxes) are allowed. If the lodging rate (excluding applicable taxes) exceeds 150 percent of the prevailing GSA rate, secondary approval from an assistant superintendent is required. An FCPS PCard must be used to pay lodging expenses. An original itemized receipt is required. Charges other than lodging, including phone, mini-bar, dry cleaning, and movies, are not reimbursable.

3. Meals and Incidental Expense Per Diem

Reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses will be provided at the prevailing GSA per diem rate. An FCPS PCard 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 if it is the most economical mode. 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 website) will be accepted.

- c. Air or rail transportation purchased at the lowest available coach rate is allowed. An FCPS PCard 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, if necessary. An FCPS PCard 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 usually not provided. When provided, the guidelines below are to be followed.

- 1. Travel advances may be made for 75 percent of meals and incidental expenses per diem.
- 2. Travel advances for less than \$200 will not be issued.
- 3. Requests for per diem advances must be received by the Department of Financial Services at least ten business days before the departure date.
- 4. Travelers must pay back any unused travel advance to FCPS within 30 calendar days of return date. Unused travel advances should be forwarded to the Department of Financial Services, Office of the Comptroller.

VIII. USE OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL-OWNED VEHICLES

Individuals using FCPS-owned vehicles must adhere to the guidelines set forth in the current version of Regulation 5660, Taxable Use of Employer-Provided Vehicles.

IX. EXPENSE SETTLEMENT

All travel advances and reimbursements will be paid via direct deposit to the account established for payroll purposes.

See also the current version of: Regulation 5660, Taxable Use of Employer-Provided Vehicles