

**TRAVEL GUIDE**  
**June 14, 2016 – P.T. 2016.07**

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE # 12**  
**TRAVEL GUIDE FOR DCFS EMPLOYEES**

**I. Purpose**

Administrative Procedure #12 (AP #12), Travel Guide for DCFS Employees is a resource and informational tool that supplements rules set by the Governor’s Travel Control Board (GTCB). AP #12 shall not be used in place of those rules. GTCB rules overrule any conflicting information found herein. AP #12 has been designed to provide staff of the Department with the information necessary to make their travel as problem-free and as economical as possible. For current travel rules of the GTCB please visit their webpage by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/travel/Pages/default.aspx>

AP #12 applies to all DCFS employees, other state employees whose travel is reimbursed by DCFS, members of state boards, commissions, authorities, advisory groups, wards and charges of the state. Independent contractors whose contracts contain expense reimbursement and so are reimbursed for travel expenses under their contracts are not covered by this guide.

The GTCB has negotiated a number of **discounted agreements** with travel vendors. It is important that DCFS employees take advantage of these agreements. Their use will not only help to save the state travel dollars, but will also enhance the Department’s ability to receive discounts in the future.

The GTCB website includes the **Preferred Hotel Listing** and the current rates for those hotels, a summary of any airline and car rental agreements, travel safety tips, Amtrak agreements, etc. It lists the maximum amounts that can be reimbursed to employees for travel expenses, and instructions for dealing with special circumstances.

This document is designed as a supplement to that guide and contains information that is specific to DCFS travelers. Questions regarding travel that are not covered by the GTCB rules or by this A.P. should be directed to the DCFS Travel Coordinator via email (TravCoor@idcfs.state.il.us).

**II. Definitions**

“Commuting Expense” means the cost of one round trip between an employee’s home and assigned office. Cost may include mileage, parking fees, tolls, etc. Mileage cost is determined by multiplying the commuting mileage by the current mileage reimbursement rate.

“Commuting Mileage” means the actual round trip mileage between the employee’s home and their assigned office.

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“Commute Time” means the normal time spent by the employee traveling from home to their assigned office. Normal commute time is not eligible for overtime. Employee travel before or after work hours to assigned office or area of assignment outside of assigned office must deduct normal commute time from overtime totals. Time in excess of the normal commute time may be eligible for overtime with prior approval or in accordance with the overtime supplemental agreement.

**Exception:** Upon prior supervisory approval, all time spent in travel before and/or after work hours, including commute time, shall be considered work time and compensated according to Article XII, Hours of Work and Overtime, when visiting or transporting a client, provider or licensee on the normal commute to and from work or when called out to investigate a case.

“Headquarters” means anywhere inside of the city limits of the town where an employee’s personnel identification number (PIN) is assigned. For example; if a staff’s PIN is in Chicago, then the headquarters is anywhere inside of the city limits of Chicago.

“Per Diem” means the amount reimbursed to an employee when their travel includes out-of-town lodging or when they are on travel status for eighteen hours or more. This is paid instead of meal reimbursement. Staff are paid one quarter of the per diem allowance rate for each quarter of a day of travel (00:01 – 6:00, 6:01 – 12:00, 12:01 – 18:00, 18:01 – 24:00) or any part of a quarter.

“Residence” as used in these procedures is considered to be anywhere inside of the city limits of the town where the employee’s home is located. If living in an unincorporated area of the state, then the staff’s residence is considered to be the nearest incorporated municipality to their home. For example; if an employee lives a half mile outside of Peoria, then that employee’s residence is considered to be anywhere within the city limits of Peoria.

“Travel Status” means that the employee is on official state business outside of their headquarters and their residence location.

### **III. Common Expenses of Travel**

DCFS reimburses employees for travel expenses incurred in the execution of duties required by the employees’ job functions. This does not include the expense of travel to or from their headquarters from their residence. These are considered commuting expenses and may include mileage, parking, trains, bus fares, tolls, etc. These expenses are the employee’s responsibility.

Employees are required to travel by the most economical means possible considering travel time and work requirements. This requires that employees travel by the most direct route; expenses resulting from deviation from the most direct route for convenience shall be borne by the employee. This also includes using state vehicles when available. The least costly airline fares should be chosen as well as least costly train fares. Where special fares have been negotiated for state employees, such as those on Amtrak between Chicago and Springfield, they must be used.

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If it is necessary to rent a vehicle, any special rates that have been negotiated for state employees must be used. Please refer to the GTCB website (hyperlink below) for current arrangements. The collision damage waiver and personal accident insurance on rented vehicles is not reimbursable. All rental agreements under the state rental contract include loss/collision damage waiver provisions.

Most employees travel using their private vehicle. Employees are required to file a statement with DCFS certifying that they are duly licensed and carry at least the minimum insurance coverage before engaging in state travel with a private vehicle.

Mileage in excess of employee's commute is reimbursed at a rate that is determined by the GTCB. These rates can change frequently. Lodging is reimbursed up to the maximum rate applicable for each specific county as determined by the GTCB. To see the most current rates visit:

<http://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/travel/Pages/default.aspx>

Other required costs of travel, such as tolls, parking, taxis, taxi tips, airline baggage fees, etc. are reimbursed at the actual amount that paid, although must provide a receipt for claims over ten dollars. Please do not combine expenses, such as tolls, but instead list them separately. This avoids the possibility that their aggregate total will exceed ten dollars.

DCFS may also reimburse breakfast or dinner expenses when on travel status well before or well after the employee's regular shift. For example, the regular shift is from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. If the employee has to leave their residence at 6:00 AM and travel directly to see a client in a city that is not their residence or headquarters; the employee is eligible to receive reimbursement for breakfast because they were on travel status more than two hours before the beginning of their regular shift. Likewise, if the employee's regular shift is from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and they leave their headquarters to see a client in a city that is not their residence or headquarters and return directly to their residence arriving at 9:00 PM; they are eligible to receive reimbursement for dinner because they were on travel status more than two hours after the end of their regular shift. DCFS does not reimburse lunch as a travel expense.

The agency head may authorize use of a private aircraft on state business. Please refer to the GTCB website for restrictions and information on reimbursement.

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**IV. Lodging Expenses**

In order for an employee on travel status to qualify for overnight lodging the following criteria must be met:

For employees living in Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry and Will counties, their headquarters or residence, whichever is closer, must be 35 miles or more from the overnight location.

For employees living Downstate (outside the Cook Metro area), headquarters or residence, whichever is less, must be 45 miles or more from the overnight location.

Exception: If an employee on travel status encounters inclement weather and is closer than the qualifying mileage from headquarters or residence, employee must notify his or her supervisor for permission to obtain lodging. When preparing the travel voucher, the employee would indicate “inclement weather” in comments.

For Department provided or sponsored training activities, i.e. conferences, any training sessions (mandated and in-service), etc.: In order for an employee to qualify for overnight lodging the NIGHT BEFORE the training begins the following criteria must be met:

If the training delivery begins at or before 9:00 a.m., the employee’s headquarters or residence, whichever is closer, must be 75 miles or more from the training location.

If the training delivery begins at 10:00 a.m., the employee’s headquarters or residence, whichever is closer, must be 120 miles or more from the training location.

For lodging for the nights in between multiple day training, the above criteria for overnight lodging while on travel status will be followed.

DCFS will reimburse the cost of lodging up to a maximum daily rate established for each county. These rates are found on the GTCB website. Although required costs, such as taxes, municipal fees, parking fees, etc., are reimbursable, extraneous costs are not. These include late check-in fees, room service, room safe, and any other non-required expense of lodging. DCFS will not reimburse valet parking. If “Valet Parking” appears on the traveler’s lodging receipt, the entire amount for parking will be disallowed.

Travelers should contact the hotels listed on the GTCB website as “Preferred Hotels”. These businesses have made arrangements with the GTCB to accept the state rate. Be sure to specify the amount of the published state rate when making reservations for that hotel to ensure that they are offering a “state rate” rather than a “government rate”. These are often different rates. Always present state employee identification at check in.

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If rooms are not available at any of the hotels at the agreed rate, the employee must contact all other hotels in the desired area in an effort to obtain the maximum published rate or less. If no hotels offer lodging at or below the state rate, lodging may be booked at the best possible available rate. Staff must report the names of the hotels that were contacted (minimum of three, or five in Cook or Sangamon County) for each night of the stay as well as the date contacted when seeking lodging reimbursement at the higher rate.

When attending a conference or seminar in the course of state business, staff must stay in the lowest priced room available at the location of the conference or seminar or in accommodations arranged by the conference/seminar organizations, and shall be reimbursed for actual lodging expenses. Travel vouchers must indicate that lodging was conference lodging.

Conference fees up to a maximum of \$50 may be reimbursed on a travel voucher. When the conference provides breakfast or dinner, the value of these meals must be deducted from the travel reimbursement based on the GTCB meal reimbursement rates.

State employees on travel status may stay in employee owned or controlled (rented, leased, etc.) property including motor homes and shall be reimbursed, upon request, for the cost of lodging not to exceed 75% of the applicable lodging rate per day. Lodging reimbursement shall not exceed the mortgage, installment or rental payment made by the employee. Please see the GTCB website for current maximums and limitations. The total reimbursement for the fiscal year shall not exceed the mortgage, installment or rental total of that fiscal year. Exceptions to the monthly mortgage, installment or rental payment allowed may be granted by the Board upon written request from the Agency Head. Once that amount is reached, further lodging reimbursement shall not be given for travel to the city or work site containing the employee owned or controlled housing. Each agency shall monitor expenses to ensure compliance with this Part and shall report to the Board when the maximum reimbursement is reached. Agencies shall report quarterly to the Board fiscal year to date expenses of employees receiving reimbursement under this provision. Prior to receiving reimbursement a statement giving the address of the property, mortgage, installment or rental payment and distance from the work site must be filed with the Board. This option is not available if other costs such as mileage would make this a more expensive alternative.

**V. Out of State Expenses of Travel**

DCFS will reimburse travel expenses for travel outside of the state of Illinois without requiring any special authorization when it does not include any out-of-state overnight lodging, such as traveling to St Louis, MO to board a plane to fly to Chicago.

When traveling out of state on “ward related” business, such as ward placement or retuning a ward to the state, and overnight lodging is required, staff must first obtain approval from the responsible Deputy Director. Contact the travel coordinator for the proper authorization forms.

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When traveling out of state on non-ward related business such as a conference, and the trip will require overnight lodging, authorization must be obtained from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB) before such travel can be allowed. Request for prior approval should be made thirty days in advance of the travel. Please contact the travel coordinator for the proper authorization forms.

All travel outside of the United States requires prior approval from GOMB. Request for prior approval should be made 45 days in advance of travel. Please contact the travel coordinator for proper authorization forms.

Copies of all approval forms for out of state travel must be attached to a travel voucher when they are submitted for reimbursement.

The GTCB website lists lodging maximum rates for common out of state destinations as well as meal reimbursement rates and per diem allowances. Since specific cost information is required when requesting prior approval for out of state and out of country travel, staff must always have this information before requesting and arranging out of state travel.

**VI. Exceptions**

The requirement to deduct commuting costs from all travel is waived for all travelers covered by the travel guide under the following circumstances:

- Staff traveled to work on their regular day off with supervisor's permission.
- Staff has not officially been assigned headquarters, such as contractual employees whose residence is their headquarters.
- The requirement to deduct commuting costs from all travel is waived for travelers covered by the AFSCME contract under the following circumstances:
  - Staff was required to return to work on Call-Back after departing work at the end of their regular work schedule.
  - Staff did not travel through headquarters at any time on the day of travel. (Per arbitration decision between AFSCME and CMS signed 11/6/14.)

Upon prior supervisory approval, employees shall be allowed to claim mileage reimbursement at the appropriate rate for all miles when visiting or transporting a client, provider or licensee on their normal commute to and from work or when called out to investigate a case. All such time spent in travel shall be considered work time and shall be compensated according to Article XII, Hours of Work and Overtime. Supervisory approval shall not be unreasonably denied. This exception requires completion of the **CFS 1428, Commute Mileage Reimbursement Request form.**

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- Client Related Travel

Client related travel includes case management activities that specifically involve children or their families. Acceptable examples include visiting a child or family home, transporting a child or family, investigation with a child or family. Non-acceptable examples are testifying in court even though the child or family may be present (unless worker provided transportation) or a visit while investigating a case or any other visit that does not have a client present.

If a traveler's route exceeds the most direct route available, the traveler must explain in the comments section of the travel voucher the reason for the discrepancy, such as road construction, inclement weather, etc., for the excess mileage to be considered for reimbursement. In some cases, a statement of approval from the supervisor will be required.

If the traveler is unable to provide a receipt for expenses over ten (10) dollars, the traveler must indicate in writing:

1. the location where the expense was incurred;
2. the amount of the expense;
3. the date that the expense was incurred; and
4. the fact that the receipt is not available.

This document must include all of the above elements, and be printed and signed by the traveler. Alternatively, the traveler may produce an email indicating these four points. The email must be attached to the travel voucher for the expense to be considered for reimbursement.

Exceptions to the specific provisions of GTCB rules may be granted in advance by the Chairman of the Governor's Travel Control Board when necessary to meet special or unavoidable circumstances and when in the best interest of the State. Exceptions are to be requested in writing by the Agency Head and submitted sufficiently in advance to allow meaningful consideration. These exceptions are granted to specific individuals or specified groups or individuals in a single agency.

Exceptions to the specific provisions of GTCB rules may also be granted after the fact by the Chairman of the Governor's Travel Control Board when necessary to meet special or unavoidable circumstances and when in the best interests of the State. Exceptions are to be requested in writing by the Agency Head. The affected employee may request an exception if the Agency Head will not do so. The request must state in detail the nature of the request, the reasons for noncompliance, and why the request should be granted. Requirements and forms can be found on the GTCB website.

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**VII. Miscellaneous**

The following text is from the agreement between AFSCME and CMS regarding commute mileage when meeting with a client, provider or licensee on the normal commute to and from work or being called out to investigate a case after their shift:

“Employees of the Department of Children and Family Services, upon prior supervisory approval, shall be allowed to claim mileage reimbursement at the appropriate rate for all miles when visiting or transporting a client, provider or licensee on their normal commute to and from work or when called out to investigate a case. All such time spent in travel shall be considered work time and shall be compensated according to Article XII, Hours of Work and Overtime. Supervisory approval shall not be unreasonably denied. This side letter supersedes the side letter on DCFS travel signaled July 2000.”

Most issues with the travel system can be quickly resolved by contacting the travel coordinator. Please contact the travel coordinator before contacting the help desk to resolve travel system issues.

As a general rule, DCFS does not allow direct billing. Travelers are expected to pay travel costs themselves and request reimbursement after the fact.

Please note that a receipt is required for all wards’ meals and snacks claimed on a travel voucher regardless of the amount of purchase. When claiming for a ward’s meal or snack on a travel voucher, indicate the initials of the child’s first and last name and the child’s ID number on the receipt. The Department will not reimburse for a ward’s meals or snacks without the receipt. See the GTCB website for reimbursement rates and time restrictions for wards’ meals or snacks.

When the mileage reimbursement rate includes a fraction of a cent, rounding errors will occur. The DCFS travel system uses the calculation method mandated by the Illinois Office of the Comptroller (IOC). When the sum of the sub-totals of the columns does not equal the total for the voucher, the total for the voucher shall be used.

**VIII. The DCFS Travel System**

It is assumed that all information entered on a travel voucher is accurate and that the travelers are providing honest travel reimbursement claims. It is also assumed that the supervisors signing these vouchers are carefully examining these claims and that their signature verifies that the information provided is known to them to be accurate. Disciplinary action up to and including discharge may be pursued against any employee who falsifies records.

DCFS uses an online travel system that automates as many of the GTCB travel rules as is practical. All employees who have access to this system must use it to create travel vouchers. The DCFS online travel system may be accessed by clicking on the “DCFS Travel System” link found under the “State Travel” tab on the DCFS D-Net.

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Employees are personally responsible for their own travel reimbursements, including the accuracy of the entries and timeliness of their vouchers. The fact that clerical staff often enter employee travel does not absolve the traveler of these responsibilities.

When entering trip “header” information, do not enter regular shift hours as the beginning and ending of the trip. The actual beginning and ending time of the trip must be entered using military (24 hour) time entries of the entire trip. Do not enter each individual leg of the trip. Only by following these instructions can the system properly enforce embedded business rules.

General categories and specific reasons within those categories are provided in the system drop down menus. These choices are known to be acceptable to the IOC and should be used whenever possible. The travel system is not designed to be a detailed employee itinerary but a system for legally seeking reimbursement of travel expenses. The IOC will not accept acronyms on a travel voucher.

When entering header information, specify if the travel took place outside of headquarters or city of residence and specify if the travel will be paid from training funds. Staff must also choose if any part of the travel took place outside of the state of Illinois. Employees will not be able to enter any out of state location if they have not done so.

When entering miles, choose “Mileage” if the trip left the city limits of the point of origin during the travel. If not, use “Vicinity” to make the entry. Specify actual travel begin and end times for each entry within a trip.

If headquarters and residence are both in the same city, employees must use either “headquarters” or “residence” for their point of origin or destination rather than the city name. The IOC requires this to determine if commute policy is being properly applied.

When using residence city or “Residence” as origin or destination on a travel voucher, unless employees choose one of the commute policy exemption reasons, they must “show their work” when entering the commute deduction. Employees may not simply reduce the number of miles claimed since this will not allow the IOC to determine that the commute policy has been properly applied.

If the mileage claimed for a trip is exceeded by the required commute deduction, the commute deduction should be reduced to the amount of miles claimed. The miles deducted can never exceed the miles claimed.

When entering lodging, the default setting is that the lodging is reimbursable. If it is not, employees must uncheck the proper box to specify that. Then they must choose the reason (direct bill or conference lodging). When entering lodging amounts, employees must enter two amounts, the base rate for their lodging and the total of all allowable additional lodging costs. If the base rate exceeds the amount allowed by the GTCB, the travel system will ask to enter the names of the hotels contacted and the date that they were contacted in an attempt to obtain the state rate. This information must be entered for every night that lodging exceeded the state rate.

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Other travel expenses, such as train fare, must be entered under “Transportation” when travel took place outside of the city limits (such as a commuter train) or entered under “Expenses” when the travel took place within the city limits (such as a taxi). Only those costs found in the system’s drop down menus are allowed.

When entering the cost of a client meal under “Expenses”, do not enter the name of the client. This is a violation of confidentiality.

After all travel entries are completed, employees must click on the action link “Lock” on the travel home screen to lock the travel voucher for printing. If changes to a voucher are needed before it is printed, employees must click on the action link “Unlock” on the travel home screen to unlock the travel. After the voucher is locked, employees can choose “Print Voucher”. Employees may view an unofficial version by choosing either “View Voucher Online” or “View Training Voucher Online”. When ready to print the voucher, employees must choose either “Print Final” or “Print Training Final”.

Employees must not change the print settings for the travel system. The provided settings ensure that the total for the voucher will always print on the same page as the signature lines. Changing the print or view settings often cause these elements to print on separate pages making the voucher unpayable.

The IOC must be able to determine that a traveler’s signature is original. A signature using black ink is indistinguishable from a photocopied signature. **Travelers must sign their travel vouchers on the specified line in blue ink.**

**IX. Timely Submission of Travel Vouchers**

DCFS employees must submit travel vouchers in a timely fashion. “Timely” is defined as the travel voucher having been printed **within 60 days of the last date of travel**. Both of these dates are stored by the travel system. If a travel voucher is returned for correction and must be reprinted, the original print date is retained and used to determine timeliness. If the entire voucher is deleted, reentered, and reprinted resulting in the new voucher being flagged as late, a copy of the original voucher should be attached to the new voucher to verify timeliness.

**Note:** Travelers submitting late travel vouchers may be subject to progressive and corrective disciplinary action up to and including discharge.