Department of Veterans Affairs

Financial Policy

Volume XIV

Travel

Chapter 1

Travel Administration

Approved:

2-23-2017

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VA Financial Policies and Procedures
Travel Administration

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0101 OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies and procedures regarding travel administration and provides the authoritative reference for VA travel management. It contains VA policy and procedures for managing travel by VA personnel, invitational travelers, contractors, and witnesses. The chapter also implements and supplements those portions of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) pertaining to temporary duty travel. The FTR is the Government regulation that implements statutory requirements and Executive Branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Government expense (41 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapters 300 through 304).

The FTR is the final governing regulation for all federal employees. Union master agreements may alter the application of certain agency travel policy provisions. However, Union master agreements cannot be in conflict with the Federal Travel Regulations.

The following topics are covered in this chapter:

010201 Travel Approval, Training and Authorization
010202 Pre-Employment Interview and Invitational Travel
010203 Blanket Travel Authorizations
010204 Travel Advances
010205 Travel Reimbursement Policies and Procedures
010206 Use of the Travel Charge Card.

VA will limit the authorization and payment of travel expenses to travel that is necessary to accomplish the Department's mission and is most economical and effective. Consideration will be given to, but is not limited to, budget constraints, adherence to travel policies, environmental impact and reasonableness of expenses. VA will always consider alternatives (e.g., teleconferencing) before approving travel (FTR 301-70.1).

0102 POLICIES

010201 TRAVEL APPROVAL, TRAINING AND AUTHORIZATION

A. Approval.

1. Employees traveling on official business will have approval in writing or electronically from a direct line supervisor. [1] Delegations of Authority are required regarding certain travel-related actions in this chapter. Delegations of authority must follow the guidance

[1] NOTE: The direct-line supervisor may provide a one-time blanket approval to the employee for multiple travel episodes involving a specific project or detail. The Approving Official in the travel system is just as much responsible for the travel as the direct line supervisor.

set forth in VA Directive 0000, Delegation of Authority. The administration or staff office that delegates this authority must ensure that a copy of the delegation is kept current and resides in the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) Delegations of Authority's home page at http://vaww.dnet.webdev.va.gov/doa/.

2. No VA employee may approve his or her own travel, nor may an alternate preparer approve the travel expenses submitted on behalf of a traveler. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Staff Office Directors, the General Counsel, Inspector General, and Facility/VISN/Regional Directors will delegate the authority to approve their travel to a senior-level official in their organization.

3. Each employee who approves, directs or performs travel will exercise diligence and practice economy in all matters involving travel costs. Travel will be conducted at Government expense in accordance with statutory requirements and VA policy.

4. For additional guidance and approval when traveling to a conference, refer to VA Training Support Office (TSO) website: http://vaww.trainingevents.va.gov/.

B. Training

All employees, supervisors and approving officials are responsible for ensuring they follow VA travel policy and Federal Travel Regulations for official travel. [2]

1. Officials delegated to approve employee travel, and supervisors of employees performing the travel are required to:

a. Complete travel training offered in the Training Management System (TMS) or other similar travel training offered outside of TMS. If training is conducted outside of TMS, the employee is responsible for documenting the training in TMS to ensure centralized record keeping;

b. Ensure that their employees have taken and are current with the required travel training;

c. Instruct their subordinates of their rights, privileges and responsibilities in the performance of, and reimbursement for, official travel.

2. Officials may contact the Financial Services Center (FSC) VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group for training session(s). These sessions are available regularly with a training schedule posted on the FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel website at http://vaww.fscdirect.fsc.va.gov/egov.asp. Customers may arrange a customized on-site training session by contacting the FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group at 866-533--0188 or via email at vafscetravel@va.gov. Until the FSC training is linked or

[2] Detailed information can be found in Paragraph 0104 Roles and Responsibilities.

contained in TMS, the FSC training will need to be documented and uploaded into the employee's TMS account.

3. A 30-day grace period (beginning from the return travel date) will be granted to employees who are unable to accomplish training prior to beginning their official travel due to one of the following reasons.

- A new employee is required to go on immediate training at the start of his/her employment.

- An employee who receives short notice of his/her temporary duty travel. Short notice is defined as less than one week.

4. Approving Officials (AOs) must maintain a current training status. AOs will not have authority to approve travel authorizations if their training status is not current.

C. Authorization

1. Except in emergencies, all travel will be authorized in writing or electronically by an official who has been delegated by the Secretary and given such authority. Ordinarily, the authorization for travel is issued before travel is performed. A travel authorization is necessary for a traveler to be reimbursed for travel expenses. It identifies the purpose for travel (reference Appendix A, Purpose for Travel) and generates the travel itinerary and estimated cost of a trip. Amended travel authorities will be issued when the authority in the original authorization is insufficient for the traveler to perform official business or permit the traveler to incur allowable expenses. When prior authorization is not possible or practical, post-trip approval may be issued through an amended travel authorization or on the expense report. Failure to receive proper authorization may limit or prevent reimbursement of travel expenses.

2. Employees who travel away from their official duty station (e.g., beyond the established local travel area) are required to perform such travel under a travel authority created in VA's travel system.

3. The FTR defines official station as an area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) defines the official worksite of a telework employee as the place where they normally work, not their telework location, as long as they are regularly scheduled to be at that site at least twice each bi-weekly pay period. If a telework employee is called into the official station on a telework day, the employee is not entitled to reimbursement for travel to the official station.

a. For permanent, long-term telework arrangements (virtual employees), the official worksite will be reassigned to the telework location. The employee whose official

worksite is reassigned will receive locality pay for the telework worksite, not the original worksite (http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/html/Official_Duty_Station.asp).

b. An employee may receive travel entitlements to the official station if their worksite has been permanently changed to their virtual worksite location. In the event that the official worksite is reassigned to the virtual location, trips to the main worksite are considered "official business" and the employee is entitled to travel reimbursement as appropriate for the time and distance.

4. Local Travel. See Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*, for information on local travel policies and procedures.

5. VA Form 3036, *Travel Authority for Temporary Duty,* will be issued when travel away from the official station will be required and no travel or per diem expenses will be incurred. Refer to Appendix B, No Cost Travel Authority, for the requirements to use VA Form 3036 for no-cost temporary duty (TDY) travel authority, as well as a completed sample form. If the traveler does incur a necessary travel or per diem expense, the no-cost travel authority will be voided for that episode of travel and a new trip-by-trip travel authorization will be created in the travel system. For manual travel authorizations, the document numbering, processing and records retention must follow established fiscal procedures.

6. Whenever possible, the travel of an employee away from his or her official station will be scheduled within the employee's regular duty hours. Compensation for travel outside of the employee's regular duty hours will be in accordance with VA Handbook 5011, Hours of Duty and Leave, Part II, Chapters 2 and 3, and VA Handbook 5007, Pay Administration, Chapter 15, Compensatory Time Off for Travel. The employee's supervisor should confer with the Office of Human Resources to determine the appropriateness of any compensation.

7. VA will reduce the traveler's Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem rate to a flat rate when the travel assignment involves extended stays and the traveler is able to obtain lodging and/or meals at lower costs. The flat rate is equal to 55 percent of the M&IE per diem rate. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 2, *Travel Per Diem*, for additional information on reduced per diem.

8. Employees on extended temporary duty lasting more than 6 months may be authorized a temporary change of station (TCS). A TCS will be for at least 6 months but will not last more than 30 months. A TCS is intended to improve employee satisfaction, enhance morale, and reduce income tax liability (from extended temporary duty assignments) and overall cost to the Government. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 8, *Relocation Packages*, for additional information on both temporary and permanent changes of station.

D. Travel System.

1. Document preparers (travelers and alternate preparers) will use the travel system to prepare and route TDY travel authorizations; to make reservations including transportation, lodging, and rental car, and to process both local expense vouchers and TDY expense reports. Approving officials will use the travel system to review and approve TDY travel authorizations and approve both TDY expense vouchers and local expense vouchers. Refer to Appendix C, Procedures to Reimburse Travel Expenses via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Local expense vouchers under $10 may be prepared manually. The traveler will have an approved travel authorization for official travel prior to departure. Authorizations are not complete until the document successfully routes through the travel system. Returned authorizations will be corrected and re-signed to begin routing for approval. Printed travel authorizations are not required for record retention or audit purposes if the documents are processed electronically in the travel system. However, if the travel authorization from the direct line supervisor is not in the Electronic Travel System (ETS), the approval will be retained by the employee for audit purposes.

2. Access to the travel system is limited to VA employees and invitational travelers for official travel. Travelers will log into the travel system and submit their expense reports upon completion of their TDY. An invitational traveler may sign a hard copy of the expense report provided to them by Alternate Preparers as another option. The FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel Support Group Help Desk is available to assist organizations with preparing invitational travel documents. The help desk can be reached at vafscetravel@va.gov or at 866-533-0188.

3. Travelers may contact the travel system provider's call center at 800-356-9513 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., EST, weekdays, except on Federal holidays, for technical support with the travel system.[3] All itineraries include a toll-free telephone number the traveler may call 24/7 while in a travel status. Use of this service may incur an additional expense.

E. Use of the Travel System.

1. Employees will purchase transportation tickets for their official travel through VA's travel system. Some advantages of using the travel system are reporting capabilities, emergency tracking of travelers, ensuring Government rates, meeting FTR requirements and making ticket exchanging easy while on travel. The travel system may not be used for the personal travel route when combined with official travel for temporary duty travel. Personal travel is travel by an indirect route or interruption of a direct route for personal reasons. The travel system will be used for the official travel route of the temporary duty travel. There may be additional costs and penalties associated with using sources other than the travel system, which the traveler will be

[3] Travelers will attempt to resolve problems by contacting the facility travel coordinator or system administrator before contacting the travel system call center.

responsible for paying when arrangements are made or changed for personal reasons and there is no mission requirement.

2. Employees will use electronic tickets when available to reduce travel system service charges. VA Financial Policy, Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Government Travel Charge Card Program*, requires mandatory use of the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) travel card for employee transportation and fees. Travel system transportation and service charges paid by the CBA for official travel are not an itemized reimbursable travel expense directly to the traveler; however, the transportation cost will be reflected in the total cost on the expense voucher. The fee will be added to the itinerary after the authorization has been approved and the reservations have been ticketed by the travel system and will be included on the expense report under the CBA travel card. Fees incurred as a result of changes to the itinerary for personal reasons not related to emergency travel will be the responsibility of the traveler to pay. A bill of collection will be processed to recoup the fees. The employee is responsible for ensuring he or she has been ticketed prior to departure.

3. Employees may contact their local travel office if they need assistance with travel arrangements. Contacting the travel office directly, however, may result in higher fees for reservations.

4. If the travel system becomes unavailable for any reason, employees may complete travel arrangements by contacting the travel office to make reservations. The travel office will complete the travel arrangements and will enter the necessary information into a queue for later processing in the travel system to generate a travel authorization once the system becomes available. Travelers will receive a notification from the travel system to review and complete the travel authorization.

5. Reservations using commercial means available to the general public are not permitted for official travel. Use of a luxury chauffeured car service, such as a limousine, is prohibited. This luxury service does not include airport shuttle or taxi.

6. Amendments to authorization documents are required for changes to any mode of travel including common carrier, date changes that impact reservations made in the travel system or per diem entitlements, and any changes to the transportation cost. Preparers must annotate the reason for the amendment in the comment section of the authorization.

7. Approving officials or travelers will promptly cancel authorizations for cancelled trips to ensure that travel funds are de-obligated in the accounting system. Employees will promptly repay any travel advance issued for cancelled trips.

F. Exceptions for the Use of the Travel System or Online Booking Engine (OBE).

1. The head of an agency may grant case-by-case exceptions to the use of the agency's travel system when in accordance with FTR Part 301-50. In VA, requests for

exceptions will be submitted in writing to the Office of the Secretary (00) through the Office of Financial Policy (047GA3). Requests will contain a business case analysis that justifies why the travel system cannot be used. The Office of the Secretary will report agency exceptions to the Administrator, General Services Administration, 1800 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20405 with full justification and/or analysis, addressing the criteria in FTR Chapter 301.

2. Employees will use the OBE offered by the travel system to reserve transportation, lodging and official rental cars. Listed below are the extenuating circumstances in which a traveler is authorized an exception from using the OBE. Preparers should enter a comment on the travel authorization explaining the applicable extenuating circumstance.

a. When attending a conference where the conference sponsor has negotiated with one or more lodging facilities to set aside a specific number of rooms for conference attendees and, to ensure that a set-aside room is available, travelers are required to book lodging directly with the lodging facility.

b. When attending a VA-sponsored program where the agency has negotiated with an airline service, and travelers are required to book directly with the airline.

c. When traveling to a remote location and it is not possible to book lodging or rental car accommodations through the travel system.

d. When circumstance will not allow booking of travel through the OBE (e.g., travel system is down or not available).

e. When making travel arrangements for personal/unofficial travel in conjunction with official travel. Refer to Appendix D, Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel Procedures).

f. When travel is authorized under a Not-To-Exceed (NTE) travel authority.

g. When travel arrangements are provided in-kind by a non-Federal source. Refer to Appendix E, Non-Federal Sponsored Travel.

3. If none of the above circumstances apply, the traveler is responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use the travel system, including service fees, cancellation penalties or other additional costs (e.g., higher airfares, rental car charges or hotel rates). In addition, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action.

G. Temporary Duty Travel without Prior Authorization.

1. Approving officials may authorize reimbursement of an expense post-TDY travel based on the circumstances presented. Official travel performed without any prior authorization or requiring additional time to perform the travel specified in the original or

amended authorization will be supported by a justification in the travel system explaining the reason why prior authorization (or an extension of time) was not obtained. Travelers will be responsible for expenses not sufficiently justified or denied by the approving official.

2. All employee travel or travel time extensions post-travel require approval by the first line supervisor.

3. Requests for approval of unauthorized travel do not normally constitute approval to retroactively adjust a per diem or mileage rate prescribed by the FTR.

When amending the travel authorization, the per diem and mileage rates in effect during the travel episode will not be adjusted retroactively. The correction of obvious errors or adjustments resulting from mandatory FTR rate modifications is allowed.

H. Not-To-Exceed (NTE) Travel and No Cost Travel Authorization.

1. Under the Government Employee Training Act (GETA) authority, approving officials may authorize travel for all or part of the travel and/or training expenses for the period of training.

2. When the agency pays for part of the expenses, an employee may pay the remaining expense(s) with personal funds. Since NTE travel may co-mingle appropriated funds with personal funds, travel arrangements will not be made via the OBE or Individually Billed and Centrally Billed Travel Cards. Approving officials may authorize employees to attend training at no cost to VA. Refer to Appendix B, No Cost Travel Authority, for preparation.

3. An administrative determination will be made in accordance with Human Resources (HR) policy to determine whether an employee is in a duty or leave status. If the employee is in a duty status, an NTE Travel Authorization will be issued in the travel system. The travel authorization will specify the dollar amount of travel expenses to be reimbursed by VA. If the employee is in a leave or other non-duty status, a travel authorization will <u>not</u> be issued and the traveler will not be entitled to reimbursement of any travel expenses. Refer to Appendix A, Purpose for Travel, to determine whether an activity is considered a training event.

I. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

When VA employees combine personal/unofficial and official travel, properly prepared travel authorizations help the Department and travelers to determine when to charge for annual leave, when to reimburse travel expenses, and who is financially responsible if a traveler becomes ill or is injured while away from the office. Refer to Appendix D, Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel Procedures, for instructions on how to create a travel authorization that combines personal/unofficial and official travel.

J. Local Travel (See Volume XIV, Chapter 7).

K. Non-Federal Sponsored (Donated) Travel.

When a traveler has been approved to accept payment from a non-Federal Government entity (e.g., donated travel), a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authorization will be created in the travel system. This travel authorization will identify the source of payment, payment type (e.g., in-kind or reimbursed by payment from the non-Federal source) and payment amount. VA Form 0893, *Advance Review of Offer to Donate Support for Official Travel,* will be provided with the traveler's receipts, which are faxed into the travel system when submitting the expense report. Refer to Appendix E, Non-Federal Sponsored Travel, for instructions on how to create a non-Federal Sponsored Travel Authority in the travel system.

010202 PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW AND INVITATIONAL TRAVEL.

A. Pre-Employment Interview Travel.

1. The FTR does not require reimbursement for pre-employment interviews. Therefore, when an individual performs pre-employment interview(s), the hiring official may use conference calls or video conferencing. Follow-up interview travel expenses may be paid when considered necessary by the hiring official, using fiscally prudent measures. Reimbursements for pre-employment interviews do not need to be all or nothing. The interviewing official may make the decision to partially reimburse the interviewee for travel to the pre-employment interview. An interviewee may be paid the same travel expenses to which a Government employee traveling on official business is entitled. Decisions to pay any or all travel expenses of an individual candidate will be in accordance with the authority, applicability and rules of FTR Chapter 301.

2. The approving official will determine eligibility based on OPM guidelines contained in 5 C.F.R. Part 572 and VA guidelines related to Title 38 employees, contained in VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 3, paragraph 5 and as may be provided in 38 U.S.C. 7410.

3. Pre-employment interview travel will be approved on a trip-by-trip basis only. Open travel authorizations will not be used for pre-employment interview travel. Interviewees are not authorized a travel advance. Interviewees will be instructed on pertinent VA travel policy, procedures and rules and how to submit reimbursement vouchers/expense reports (Reference Appendix F, Pre-Employment Interview Procedures). The interviewee is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

4. Pre-employment travel expenses will not be approved for an interviewee/new appointee to look for a residence at the prospective duty station.

5. Travel arrangements for the interviewee may be made by the interviewing facility's alternate preparer in accordance with the FTR and VA policy. Common carrier transportation (air, rail, bus) and/or lodging expenses will be paid through the station's CBA. Interviewees must use Government city-pair contracts with airlines and Amtrak and are bound by rules outlined in the FTR and VA policy.

6. The interviewee is accountable for all transportation tickets/e-tickets issued for use in performing pre-employment travel. The interviewing facility will provide the interviewee full instructions on procedures involved with ticket exchanges and/or credit procedures. Expenses other than common carrier transportation and/or lodging will be paid by the interviewee who will be reimbursed for allowable expenses upon submission and approval of an expense report or local voucher.

7. Interviewees whose travel has been approved will be advised to keep a record and maintain receipts of all charges until their reimbursement claim is settled. Interviewee claims against the Government are forfeited if the claimant attempts to defraud the Government. The claimant is subject to disciplinary and/or criminal provisions if a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim is presented against the United States (18 U.S.C. 287 and 1001).

B. Invitational Travel.

1. Invitational travel involves VA paying for the travel of a non-Federal employee (e.g., consultants not under an agreement or contract with VA, volunteers, experts, private citizens, foreign visitors). These individuals are not considered to have an "official permanent duty station" within the general meaning of that term. However, these individuals may be allowed travel and transportation expenses while traveling on official business for the Government away from their home or regular place of business and while at the place of employment or service for the Government. Such travel will be in accordance with the authority, applicability and rules of FTR Chapter 301 and VA policy. Invitational travel does not apply to VA contractor employees when work is within the scope of the contract (reference Appendix G, Travel Entitlements for Unique VA Employees, for additional travel guidance). Except as described herein, invitational travel orders will be processed through the travel system.

2. Invitations may be issued to individuals to confer with Department personnel, serve as attendants for disabled persons, or serve in other capacities when it is in the interest of the Government to pay travel expenses.

3. Officials approving invitational travel will ensure that the traveler is aware that the travel arrangements will be made by VA at the time the invitational travel is extended. This is to prevent the traveler from purchasing transportation with personal funds.

a. For air reservations, the method of payment will be the CBA since the invitational traveler may not possess a Government travel charge card. Foreign visitors will be advised against making their own reservations, which may result in the unauthorized

use of a Foreign Flag Air Carrier. The travel system will make every effort to secure the ticket on a U.S. Flag Air Carrier.

b. For lodging and rental car reservations, the traveler will have to arrange their own lodging and rental car if they are authorized. Travelers will be notified of their reimbursement limitations based on the per diem entitlements for the TDY location.

4. An invitational traveler must have a valid e-mail account and Social Security Number in order to process travel documents in the travel system. At this time, the travel system may only make payments in U.S. dollars and may only make EFT payments to U.S. bank accounts. If a traveler does not hold a U.S. bank account, a paper check in U.S. dollars will be sent to the mailing address provided. If the above requirements are not met, a manual process for invitational travel authorities (VA Form 3036) will be used.

5. Invitational travel authorizations cannot be issued to contractors who receive a fee for services rendered to VA. Travel authorizations cannot be issued to individuals who have received a grant and are using the grant.

010203 BLANKET TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS.

A. Blanket authorizations will only be used for a named employee whose duties require travel of a repetitive nature. Blanket authorizations will not be used for conference travel, foreign travel, travel received from a non-Federal source (donated travel), permanent change-of-station travel, other-than-coach class travel, training-related travel or invitational travel (e.g., pre-employment interview travel, volunteer travel). Both unlimited and limited blanket authorizations will include an estimate of the travel costs to be incurred over the period covered by the authorization. Except for no-cost travel, blanket authorizations will be created using the travel system. Procedures for creating a blanket travel authority are available in the travel system online tutorial.

B. Unlimited blanket authorizations permit an employee to perform TDY travel without further authorization. Use of an unlimited blanket authorization is restricted to the Secretary and assistants; Deputy Secretary and assistants; Under Secretaries, their Deputies and Executive Assistants; and the VA Medical Inspector.

C. Limited blanket authorizations permit an employee to perform TDY travel without further authorization under certain specified conditions, which include realistic limitations on purposes, geographic areas, trip duration and costs. Any planned travel that exceeds the specific limitations will be separately authorized on a trip-by-trip authorization in the travel system. All limited blanket authorizations will be reviewed at the beginning of each fiscal year and, if it is determined that the authorization is still necessary, will be revalidated by the designated official.

D. When approved, a blanket travel authorization is used by authorized travelers to create trip-by-trip travel authorizations of 30 days or less, as long as each trip's duration

falls within the dates set in the blanket travel authorization. These individual travel authorizations are automatically approved when submitted.

010204 TRAVEL ADVANCES.

A. Employees who refuse to apply for the VA travel charge card, who are not covered by an exemption, have their card suspended or cancelled due to non-payment of their bills, or use the charge card for purposes other than those associated with official travel will not be authorized a travel advance. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card* for additional information.

B. Employees who are exempt from using the VA travel charge card (e.g., infrequent traveler, new appointee, pending application) will obtain travel advances by EFT. The traveler or alternate preparer will contact the approving official to request an advance on the travel authorization through the travel system. Approving officials approve EFT advances when they electronically sign the travel authorization.

An employee cannot receive a travel advance by check or cash from the agent cashier (reference Volume VIII, Chapter 3, *Agent Cashier Accountability Policy*).

C. The approving official will limit EFT advances to a minimum amount and will approve them only when warranted. Generally, travel advances will be limited to the estimated cash needs of the trip or “out-of-pocket” expenses, which may include:

1. Lodging, meals and incidental expenses covered by the per diem allowance or actual subsistence allowance.

2. Miscellaneous transportation expenses (e.g., local transit system, taxi fares, parking fees).

3. Gasoline and other variable expenses associated with the use of an approved rental car. Variable expenses do not include pre-paid gas (estimated cost), Global Positioning System (GPS) or Toll Collection Transponder (estimated cost).

4. Other approved miscellaneous expenses and those for which a reasonable estimate may be established before travel.

D. Travel advances will not be issued for amounts less than $50 or for one-day trips.

E. Travel advances may only be received for up to a 30-day period at a time to cover allowable expenses.

F. Travel advances will not be issued to non-Federal Government invitational travelers.

G. Travel advances will not be issued for pre-employment interview travel.

H. Travelers are responsible for liquidating EFT travel advances timely by completing expense vouchers within 5 business days of return to the official station and for paying back any excess travel advance. Refer to Appendix H, Procedures for Collecting an Outstanding Travel Advance.

I. Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Cash Advances.

Employees approved to travel and who are not exempt from the issuance of a travel card may obtain Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or bank counter advances to pay for out-of-pocket expenses. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card,* for VA policies and procedures to obtain ATM cash advances/withdrawals.

010205 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

A. Delegations of Authority. Authorizing officials are delegated the authority to approve travel authorizations and expense vouchers. Certain delegations of authority are required for reimbursement of actual expense.

1. When an employee requires actual expenses related to per diem above 150% and up to 300%, the lowest level delegation is the Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (ASM/CFO) for VACO Staff Offices, the Under Secretaries for each Administration, and the Chairman, Board of Veterans' Appeals.

2. When an employee requires actual expense related to per diem up to 150%, the lowest level delegation is the Chief Financial Officer within the organization or Administration.

3. The ASM/CFO is the lowest level for a delegation of authority to waive the requirement for travel receipts for security reasons.

B. Claiming Reimbursement.

1. Employees will submit their vouchers for reimbursement of TDY expenses into the travel system, along with all required receipts, within 5 business days of return to their official station, or every 30 calendar days if on continuous or extended TDY travel status. Failure to submit a timely expense report will prevent the traveler from creating future travel authorizations (travel system limitation). Refer to Appendix I, Receipt Requirements.

2. Claim for reimbursement of local travel expenses will be submitted with appropriate receipts on a local expense voucher in the travel system. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel,* for policy and procedures to claim reimbursement for local travel expenses.

3. Under limited circumstances (e.g., invitational travel, incapacitated employee) an alternate preparer may submit an expense report on behalf of a traveler when he or she

has been assigned the rights to do so. However, before an alternate preparer submits the expense report, the traveler or beneficiary (refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 5, *Travel Under Special Circumstances*) will certify in writing that he or she has reviewed the expense report and the expenses claimed are true and correct to the best of his or her knowledge, when an electronic signature is not available. An SF 1012, Travel Voucher – Schedule of Expenses and Amounts Claimed, signed by the traveler will suffice as a certification. The certification is a part of the receipt requirement. The alternate preparer will include/fax this certification along with all supporting documentation (e.g., receipts, approval to use other-than-coach travel, approval for actual expenses) with the expense report.

4. The employee will be reimbursed within 21 calendar days after submitting a properly prepared expense report to the agency's designated approving office.

5. Travelers who knowingly or unknowingly defraud or attempt to defraud the Government will not only forfeit their rights to reimbursement but may also be subject to criminal penalties, as authorized by 31 U.S.C. 3729, *False Claims*. The traveler's claim for reimbursement will accurately reflect the facts involved in every instance so that the traveler avoids any violation or apparent violation of applicable regulations.

C. Documentation and Review of Expenses Claimed.

1. The traveler or alternate preparer is required to attach (fax or scan) all required receipts and supporting documentation into the electronic expense report or local expense voucher in the travel system before submitting them to the approving official. Refer to Appendix I, Receipt Requirements. The traveler or alternate preparer will ensure that all receipts are attached to the electronic voucher and that the receipts are legible. A copy of the ticketed itinerary for transportation will be included as a receipt with the expense voucher, regardless of the payment method (CBA travel card, IBA travel card or employee's personal funds). Electronic documents are considered to be original documents. Travelers who fax receipts into the travel system are not required to maintain their paper receipts as the travel system will retain travel documents, receipts and other documentary evidence for 6 years .

2. When travel is approved on an actual expense basis (refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 2, *Per Diem*), the employee will itemize each expense for which reimbursement is claimed on a daily basis. In addition, the employee will include the supporting documentation that approves the actual expense for lodging and/or meal(s). Meals will be itemized separately (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner). When an approving official limits reimbursement for M&IE to 100% of the applicable M&IE rate, the approving official may waive the requirement to provide receipts and/or itemization of M&IE.

3. Travel card holders will ensure that the total outstanding authorized charges made to their travel card are designated for split disbursement at the time of completion of the temporary duty expense report (refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*).

4. Adjustments may be made to a travel document until it is approved. The person making the adjustment is prompted to sign the adjustment. Reasons for making the change will be noted in the adjustment comment section or the remarks section. Once approved, the expense report is complete, and no further action can be taken on the original expense voucher. The traveler may submit supplemental expense reports for additional expenses incurred during a trip if the original expense report has already been paid. The expense report is not paid until the approving official reviews and approves the expense report (voucher) and required receipts.

5. Expense reports will be examined and approved by the approving official having knowledge of the facts involved in the travel. Final approval of properly prepared expense reports will be completed to ensure payment within 21 calendar days. Approving officials will approve or return erroneous or incomplete expense reports to travelers within 3 business days after the traveler signs/submits the report. If the expense report is returned for correction, the timelines start over. Organizations may further restrict these timelines based on written procedures. Approving officials will abide by this time frame to prevent interest charges from accruing on the traveler's reimbursement and to ensure funds are split timely to the travel card to avoid delinquencies (5 C.F.R. Part 1315, *Prompt Payment*). Approval signifies that the travel and expenses are in order and administratively approved for payment.

6. Procedures will be established by each authorizing official to ensure that reimbursement of expenses is properly administered and controlled to prevent abuse. An appropriate review of the justification for travel on an actual subsistence expense basis will be made. Expenses claimed by an employee will be reviewed by the authorizing official to determine whether the expenses are reasonable, allowable and necessarily incurred in connection with the travel assignment.

D. Post-Payment Expense Report Audit.

The VA FSC will perform post-payment audits on a randomly-selected sample of electronically-routed expense reports and 100% of expense reports with monthly payments of $7,500 and over. As part of the expense reviews, the Office of Business Oversight's Management Quality Assurance Service (MQAS) may perform judgmental reviews of expense vouchers for timeliness and appropriateness on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) facilities. Travelers or Approving Officials must be prepared to provide the necessary documentation for up to 6 years to support the travel reimbursement when travelers fail to electronically attach receipts with their expense reports. Travelers may submit amended expense vouchers for underpayments and may receive a Bill of Collection for any overpayment.

010206 USE OF THE TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

Employees are required to use the Government-sponsored, contractor-issued Travel Charge Card in accordance with the FTR and VA policy. Refer to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card,* unless otherwise exempt.

0103 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

010301 5 U.S.C. 4109, Expenses of Training

010302 5 U.S.C. 5514, Installment Deduction for Indebtedness to the United States

010303 5 U.S.C. 5705, Advancements and Deductions

010304 31 U.S.C. Chapter 37, 3711-3720(E), Collection and Compromise[4]

010305 31 U.S.C. 3729, False Claims

010306 38 U.S.C. 7410, Additional Pay Authorities

010307 5 C.F.R. Part 550, Pay Administration

010308 5 C.F.R. Part 572, Travel and Transportation Expenses; New Appointees and Interviews

010309 5 C.F.R. Part 1315, Prompt Payment

010310 5 C.F.R. Part 2635, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch

010311 31 C.F.R. Part 901, Standards for the Administrative Collection of Claims

010312 38 C.F.R. 1.914, Collection in Installments

010313 38 C.F.R. 1.980(c), Scope

010314 41 C.F.R. Chapters 301-304, Federal Travel Regulation

010315 OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs

010316 VA Travel System Tutorial

010317 VA's Forms Web Site

010318 Office of Financial Policy

010319 U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Official Worksite for Location Based Pay Purposes

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[4] Includes the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, Public Law 104-134.

010320 OPM/GSA, Official Worksite, Travel and Related Policies for Telework

010321 Executive Order 13589, Promoting Efficient Spending (November 9, 2011)

010322 VA Directive 0000, Delegations of Authority, September 9, 2009

010323 VA Handbook 5007, Pay Administration, Part VIII, Chapter 15, Compensatory Time Off For Travel

0104 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

010401 As required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and 38 U.S.C. 309, the Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department's programs and operations. Specific responsibilities include the direction, management and provision of policy guidance, and oversight of VA's financial management personnel, activities and operations. The CFO establishes financial policy, systems and operating procedures for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.

010402 Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Chief Financial Officers, Finance Officers, Chief Accountants, Chiefs of Finance Activities and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter.

010403 The Office of Finance, Office of Financial Policy (OFP) is responsible for developing, coordinating, reviewing, evaluating, and issuing VA financial policies, including those that impact financial systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations. OFP is also responsible for working with the Office of Inspector General's independent contract auditors on VA's annual Consolidated Financial Statements audit and preparing and reviewing Consolidated Financial Statements, Notes and Required Supplementary Information.

010404 Approving officials will:

A. Take and complete required travel training every three years.

B. Approve travel for employees under their authority in advance of the travel.

C Determine if the travel is essential for the purpose of carrying out the mission of VA.

D. Ensure all travel is approved and performed consistent with the FTR, 41 C.F.R. 301-304, VA travel policy and any other Department-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).

E. Ensure adequate funds are available before approving travel.

F. Ensure all travel is performed in the most economical and prudent manner.

G. Ensure VA's travel system is used to prepare, process, approve, and route travel authorizations and vouchers for official TDY, including the requirement to use the travel system for making reservations, unless a policy exception applies.

H. Examine expense vouchers to ensure the justification, supporting documentation, and receipts are attached; travel expenses for which reimbursement is claimed were performed as approved, and split disbursement was used to pay for all approved expenses charged to the IBA travel card.

I. Ensure travel outside of a traveler's regular duty hours is minimal.

J. Ensure travelers under their authority complete vendorizing forms for establishment in VA's travel system. The travel system is used to process travel payments electronically, file expense reports with electronically attached receipts, and comply with the travel card program guidelines.

K. Comply with the rule on segregation of duties. The approval official cannot approve documents that they have created/submitted in the role of an employee or as an alternate preparer on behalf of an employee.

010405 Employee travelers will:

A. Be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).

B. Minimize costs of official travel by exercising the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business will not be reimbursed and are not acceptable under this standard. Employees will be responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience (e.g., higher air fares, additional unauthorized baggage, exchange fee on restricted airfares, airport parking in excess of lowest available or outside local office policy, or taxi when complimentary shuttle is available).

C. Ensure travel is approved by first line supervisor prior to departure.

D. Arrange travel using VA's travel system, including reservations for transportation, lodging and rental cars, unless an exception applies.

E. Cancel transportation and lodging reservations timely.

F. Where applicable, claim and obtain exemptions of tax imposed on hotel accommodations in locations listed in the Federal Acquisition Service's GSA Smart Pay

State Tax Information (https://smartpay.gsa.gov/about-gsa-smartpay/tax-information/state-response-letter). Only certificates issued by the locality granting the exemption may be used.

G. Return to VA any refund, credit or compensation payment obtained where the carrier fails to provide confirmed airplane accommodations (e.g., denies confirmed reserved seat).

H. Submit claim for reimbursement for expenses into the travel system within 5 business days of return to the official station. Travelers in an extended travel status will submit expense vouchers every 30 calendar days. Local expense vouchers may be submitted monthly.

I. Account for travel advances when filing the expense report. In the event travel was cancelled or the advance exceeded the authorized expenses, payment will be received from the employee by check or cash at that time.

J. Be aware of ethical guidelines on the acceptance of unsolicited gifts when various vendors provide free gifts or give-away items at training conferences. Refer to 5 C.F.R. Part 2635 for further explanation.

K. Comply with VA's Travel Charge Card Program guidance in Volume XVI, Chapter 2.

L. Take required travel training every three years.

010406 Alternate preparers will:

A. Be knowledgeable of the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices, newsflashes).

B. Assist employees by creating and/or submitting travel authorizations on their behalf.

C. Assist employees by creating expense vouchers on their behalf. The alternate preparer cannot submit the expense voucher in the travel system on behalf of the employee except in limited situations (refer to paragraph 010205A(3)).

D. An alternate preparer cannot approve a document which they have prepared and/or submitted, as it violates segregation of duties.

E. A VA contract employee may be established in the travel system as an alternate preparer with limited capabilities. The contractor cannot submit or approve any document, as a contract employee cannot be an accountable official.

0105 PROCEDURES

This section provides detailed procedures in the related appendices. The chapter refers back to the corresponding policy paragraphs.

010501 TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION AND APPROVAL.

A. Authorization and Approval.

- Appendix A: Purpose for Travel.
- Appendix G: Travel Entitlements for Unique VA Employees.

B. Travel System

- Appendix C: Procedures to Reimburse Travel Expenses via EFT.

C. No Cost Travel Authority.

- Appendix B: No Cost Travel Authority.

D. Non-Federal Sponsored Travel

- Appendix E: Non-Federal Sponsored Travel.

E. Local Travel. Refer to Volume XIV, Chapter 7, *Local Travel*.

F. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

- Appendix D: Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel.

G. Pre-employment Interview Travel

- Appendix F: Pre-employment Interview Procedures

010502 TRAVEL ADVANCES.

- Appendix H: Procedures for Collecting an Outstanding Travel Advance. For procedures other than collecting travel advances, refer to 010204.

010503 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

- Appendix I: Receipt Requirements. For procedures relating to the documentation and review of expenses claimed, refer to 010205B.

010504 USE OF THE TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

- Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*.

0106 DEFINITIONS

010601 Alternate Preparer. An individual with the authority to prepare travel documents for other employees or individuals.

010602 Approving Official (AO). An employee with authority to approve or direct travel for official Government business by the agency head.

010603 Audit. A formal examination of an organization or individual's accounts or financial situation.

010604 Authorization (see "Travel Authorization").

010605 Automated Teller Machine (ATM). An electronic device which allows cash advances from participating banks.

010606 Automated Teller Machine Cash Advance. Monies obtained from a Travel Card via ATM or bank teller. Cash advances will be obtained in limited amounts commensurate with official travel.

010607 Bill of Collection. A written "validation notice" telling an employee how much money he or she owes the Government. This notice will also include the name of the creditor to whom the employee owes the money and how to proceed if the employee wishes to dispute the bill.

010608 Common Carrier Itinerary/Receipt. A valid receipt will show the transportation provider's name, class of service, the date(s) of service, the total cost of service plus taxes and fees, the date, amount and method of payment. This may be an "Itinerary/receipt" or "receipt" provided by email or via a website using the traveler's name and booking number that shows that the transportation has been ticketed, lists the transportation company, the itemized costs, the total amount paid and the method of payment. If the traveler was not provided a receipt, the traveler may request one from the ticket counter or kiosk when checking in at the transportation terminal. An itinerary/invoice showing that air or rail transportation has been booked is **not** a valid receipt because it only includes anticipated costs and does not substantiate an actual payment. A travel card statement is **not** a valid receipt because it does not show the class of service or date of service provided.

010609 Conference. A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term "conference" also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.

010610 Delegation of Authority. Delegation of Authority grants authority for a specific function to a subordinate. The authority must be well-defined. The top level

management has greatest authority. The delegation does NOT relieve the granting authority of the accountability for the end result. The delegation of authority letter must be signed, on file, and current with the position the authority has been delegated.

010611 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The transfer of funds, other than a transaction originated by cash, check or similar paper instrument that is initiated through an electronic terminal, telephone, computer or magnetic tape, for the purpose of ordering, instructing or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account. The term includes, but is not limited to, Automated Clearing House and Fedwire transfers.

010612 Employee. An appointed officer or employee of an agency, including a special Government employee. This definition also includes an individual employed intermittently in the Government service as an expert or consultant and paid on a daily when-actually-employed (WAE) basis and an individual serving without pay or at $1 a year (also referred to as “invitational traveler”).

010613 Expense Voucher. A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel, including permanent change of station (PCS) travel.

010614 Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). The FTR enumerates the travel and location policy for all Title 5 Executive Agency employees. The Code of Federal Regulations is available at www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/.

010615 Government-contract Rental Automobile. An automobile obtained for short-term use from a commercial firm, as specified in the Federal Travel Directory, under the provisions of an appropriate General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Schedule contract.

010616 Government-furnished Automobile. An automobile owned by VA, assigned or dispatched to VA on a rental basis from a GSA Interagency Fleet Management Center, or leased by VA for a period of 30 days or longer from a commercial firm.

010617 Valid Hotel Receipt. A valid hotel receipt will show the traveler’s name, lodging facility name, specific dates of lodging, the unit price, any additional charges (e.g., hotel taxes, city taxes) and total amount billed to the room. A “zero balance” is required. Travelers may get an invoice when they check out of the lodging facility, have it sent to them, or obtain online.

010618 Invitational Travel. Authorized travel of individuals either not employed or employed intermittently (under 5 U.S.C. 5703) in the Government service as consultants or experts and paid on a daily when-actually-employed basis, and individuals serving without pay or at $1 a year when they are acting in a capacity directly related to or in connection with official activities of the Government. Travel allowances authorized for

such persons are the same as those normally authorized for employees in connection with temporary duty.

010619 Local Travel. Travel performed within an established local radius of the official duty station. The standard local radius will be 50 miles from the official station and employee's or virtual employee's residence. A VA station may establish a local radius specific to their station based on counties or nearby cities (geographic boundaries). This local radius will be established in writing and approved by the facility director. For virtual employees, the local radius will be 50 miles from the permanent worksite (residence or alternate worksite).

010620 Miscellaneous Expenses. Other miscellaneous travel expenses are those expenses described in 41 C.F.R. which are directly attributable and necessary to the travel and temporary duty as authorized and performed. When authorized or approved, these expenses are reimbursable in addition to the per diem allowance and transportation expenses.

010621 Official Station. Per the FTR, an area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business (see §301-1.2). The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain, provided no part of the area is more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or from an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. If the employee's work involves recurring travel or varies on a recurring basis, the location where the work activities of the employee's position of record are based is considered the regular place of work.

010622 Official Travel. Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee's official station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.

010623 Online Booking Engine (OBE). An Internet-based system that permits travelers to make their own reservations for transportation (e.g., air, rail and car rental) and lodging while using the travel system.

010624 Not-to-Exceed (NTE) Travel. Travel which is limited to a specific dollar amount and must adhere to the requirements of the Government Employees Training Act.

010625 Payment. Funds paid for travel, subsistence and related expenses by check or similar instrument or payment in-kind.

010626 Per Diem. A per diem allowance (also referred to as a subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses.

010627 Valid Receipt. A valid receipt is a written acknowledgement that indicates the amount paid for goods or services. It will show the name of the traveler, the date of the transaction and the company providing the goods or services. A credit card statement is not a receipt.

010628 Valid Rental Car Receipt. A valid rental car receipt will show the rental car agency name, specific dates of service, itemized unit costs, any additional charges (e.g., airport concession fees, taxes) and total amount actually paid. The receipt is provided by the rental car company when the traveler returns the rental car or may be sent to the traveler when using an express return. A contract for rental car services signed when renting a car is **not** a valid receipt because it only shows estimated charges and does not show the amount actually paid.

010629 Remote or Isolated Location. A geographic area that is inaccessible or difficult to travel due to limited infrastructure (roads, navigable waterways, telecommunications, etc.) or temporary conditions due to acts of nature. The area may also include locations that are more than 100 miles from the nearest population center having year-round access.

010630 Residence. A dwelling from which the employee commutes daily to the permanent work site (official station or virtual work site). For example, an employee works at VA Central Office, rents an apartment in Washington DC, and commutes to and from the apartment to VACO for work. The employee also owns a home in Atlanta, Georgia. The residence for travel entitlements would be the apartment in Washington, D.C. The home in Atlanta, Georgia would be considered a second residence.

010631 Segregation of Duties. Key duties and responsibilities divided or segregated among different people to reduce the risk of error or fraud. This will include separating the responsibilities for authorizing transactions, processing and recording them, reviewing the transactions, and handling any related assets. One individual may not control more than one key aspect of a transaction or event.

010632 Serious Illness or Injury. A grave, critical or potentially life-threatening illness or injury; a sudden injury such as an automobile accident where the exact extent of injury may be undetermined but is thought to be critical or potentially life-threatening based on the best assessment available; or other situations involving less serious illness or injury of a family member in which the absence of the employee would result in great personal hardship for the immediate family.

010633 Service Charge. An amount of money levied for the use of a service. Charge may also be called a transaction fee, exchange fee or service fee.

010634 Split Disbursement. A payment process allowing payments to be made to the Travel Card Contractor by the agency on behalf of the cardholder. At the cardholder's direction and in accordance with agency policy, disbursement is split. The bank

receives a direct payment by the agency of the cardholder specified/claimed amount. The rest of the payment is disbursed to a cardholder account or directly to the cardholder. Split disbursement is an effective tool to reduce delinquency and improve refunds paid to the agency.

010635 Transportation Expenses. Expenses include commercial bus, air, rail or ship fares and are reimbursable in addition to the per diem allowance. Transportation expenses also include local transit system and taxi fares, cost of commercial rental cars and other special conveyances, and mileage and other allowances to cover operating expenses for use of privately owned conveyances, including fees for parking, ferries, etc.

010636 Travel Advance. Pre-payment of estimated travel expenses paid to an employee in the form of electronic funds transfer. An employee cannot receive a check or cash from an agent cashier for official travel expenses.

010637 Travel Authorization. Written permission to travel on official business and may be Unlimited open, Limited open or Trip-by-trip.

010638 Travel Card (Government Travel Charge Card). A convenient method for Federal agencies and their employees to make payments for official Government travel and travel-related expenses. There are two types of accounts available under the GSA SmartPay contract – an individually billed account (IBA) and a centrally billed account (CBA).

010639 Travel System. The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service Web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement and travel management reporting.

010640 Traveler. An individual, as defined by the FTR, who is authorized to perform official Government travel.

010641 Temporary Duty (TDY) Location. A place outside the official duty station's local travel radius and employee's residence, where the employee is authorized to travel.

010642 Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel. Travel by an employee on official business, as authorized by the employee's approving official through a travel authorization.

0107 RESCISSIONS

010701 VA Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XIV, Travel; Chapter 1, *Travel Administration,* February 2011.

0108 QUESTIONS

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed to:

VHA	VHA CFO Accounting Policy (10A3A) (Outlook)
VBA	VAVBAWAS/CO/FINREP (Outlook)
All Others	OFP Accounting Policy (Outlook)

0109 REVISIONS

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
Appendiex I	Removed B1 – receipt requirements for baggage.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
Overall	Removed FedTraveler and replaced with VA travel system.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
Overall	Updated NARA document retention requirements form 6 years and 3 months to 6 years.	OFP (047G)	February 2017
010201A Travel Approval, Training and Authorization	A.1. Added verbiage on Delegation of Authority. Included NOTE regarding blanket approval.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201A Travel Approval, Training and Authorization	A.4. Added TSO website	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201B. Training	Added Training section; outlines training requirements for employees, supervisors and approving officials.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201C. Authorization	C.6. Reworded note that compensation for travel outside of employee's regular duty hours will be in accordance with HR policy	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201D. Travel System	D.1. Added reference to Appendix C. and verbiage to mandate traveler must retain TA's that are not in the travel system	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201E. Use of the Travel System	E.2. Language added referring to VA Policy requiring CBA cards be used for employee transportation and fees.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201F. Exceptions for the use of the Travel System or Online Booking Engine (obe).	F.2. Inserted requirement to enter note in TA explaining extenuating circumstances. F.2.e. Inserted link to Appendix D. F.2.g. Inserted link to Appendix E	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010201H. Not-To-Exceed (NTE) Travel and No Cost Travel Authorization.	H.2. Added reference to Appendix B. H.3 Added reference to Appendix A	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201I. Personal/Unofficial Travel Combined with Official Travel	Added reference to Appendix D	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201J. Local Travel	Removed paragraphs discussing local travel policy and replaced with reference to Local Travel policy chapter (Chapter 7)	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010201K. Non-Federal Sponsored (Donated) Travel	Added reference to Appendix E	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010202A. Pre-Employment Interview Travel.	A.3. Added reference to Appendix F	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010204. Travel Advances.	A. Added reference to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*. H. Added reference to Appendix H	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010205B. Claiming Reimbursement	B.1. Added note on travel system limitation regarding travel authorizations B.3. Inserted reference to Volume XIV, Chapter 5, *Travel under Special Circumstances*.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010205C. Documentation and Review of Expenses Claimed.	C.1 Inserted language requiring a copy of the ticketed itinerary with the expense voucher.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010404 Approving officials will	A. Inserted training requirement	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010405 Employee Travelers will	L. Inserted training requirement	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010501 Travel Authorization and Approval	A. Added links to Appendix A/G B. Added link to Appendix C C. Added link Appendix B D. Added link to Appendix E F. Added link to Appendix D G. Added link to Appendix F	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

Section	Revision	Office	Effective Date
010502 Travel Advances.	Added link to Appendix H	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010503 Travel Reimbursement Policies and Procedures.	Added link to Appendix I	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
010504 Use Of The Travel Charge Card	Added link to Volume XVI, Chapter 2, *Travel Charge Card*.	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix B	Inserted example for clarity	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix D	Added language requesting brochure be attached to TA	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix F	Added additional verbiage for clarity	APPS (047GA)	May 2013
Appendix G	Added additional verbiage for clarity	APPS (047GA)	May 2013

APPENDIX A: PURPOSE FOR TRAVEL

All travel authorizations will specify the purpose of the travel requested. The travel purpose on the authorization will specify one of the following five "general purpose" categories. Associated travel system purpose code is also listed.

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
Employee Emergency	Emergency Travel	Travel related to an unexpected occurrence/event or injury/illness that affects the employee personally and/or directly that requires immediate action/attention. Examples: Traveler is incapacitated by illness or injury, death or serious illness of a family member or catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster that directly affects the employee's home. Emergency travel also includes travel for medical care while employee is TDY away from official duty station, death of employee/immediate family member when performing official duties away from the official duty station or home of record, medical attendant transportation, assistance travel for an employee with special needs, and travel for an employee who has been threatened and needs protection.
Mission (Operational)	Patient Care Site Visit Information Meeting Invitational Travel Speech/Presentation Detail May Need SF52	Travel to a particular site in order to perform operational or managerial activities. Travel to attend a meeting to discuss general agency operations, review status reports or discuss topics of general interest. Examples: Employee's day-to-day operational or managerial activities, as defined by the agency, to include, but not be limited to: hearings, site visit, information meeting, inspections, audits, investigations and examinations.

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
Special Agency Mission	Special Mission	Travel to carry out a special agency mission and/or perform a task outside of the agency's normal course of day-to-day business activities that is unique or distinctive. These special missions are defined by the head of agency and normally not programmed in the agency annual funding authorization. Examples: agency-defined special missions details, security missions and agency emergency response/recovery such as civil, natural disasters, evacuation, catastrophic events, technical assistance, evaluations or assessments.
Conference--Other Than Training	Conference	Performed in connection with training. Consultation or exchange of information or discussion. Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Training below). Examples: To participate in a planned program as a speaker/panelist or other form of presentation, host, planner or others designated to oversee the conference or attendance with no formal role or as an exhibitor.
Training	Training	Travel in conjunction with educational activities to become proficient or qualified in one or more areas of responsibility. Title 5 U.S.C. 4101(4) states that the term 'training' means "the process of providing for and making available to an employee and placing or enrolling the employee in a planned, prepared and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative or other fields which will improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance

Purpose for Travel	Associated Travel System Purpose Code	Use When
		goals." The term `conference' may also apply to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 C.F.R. 410.404, which states that ``agencies may sponsor an employee's attendance at a conference as a developmental assignment under section 4110 of Title 5, United States Code, when: (a) The announced purpose of the conference is educational or instructional; (b) More than half of the time is scheduled for a planned organized exchange of information between presenters and audience which meets the definition of training in section 4101 of Title 5, United States Code; (c) The content of the conference is germane to improving individual and/or organizational performance and (d) Development benefits will be derived through the employee's attendance. Agencies have to distinguish between conference and training attendance and use the appropriate identifier (see Conference--Other Than Training above). Examples: Job required training, Internships, Inter Governmental Personnel Act and forums.

APPENDIX B: NO COST TRAVEL AUTHORITY

Use of VA Form 3036 for No-Cost TDY Travel. VA Form 3036, *Travel Authority for Temporary Duty Travel*, will be used to authorize no-cost temporary duty travel (TDY). Each VA Form 3036 will identify the purpose, itinerary and estimated cost of the trip (e.g., $0.00).

VA Form 3036 will be used when more than one person will travel on a single round trip to the same destination for the same purpose, within the same period and on the same itinerary at no cost to the VA. The names of all travelers, their addresses and titles will be attached to the completed VA Form 3036. Each traveler will be furnished a copy of VA Form 3036 and attachment.

VA Form 3036 will be immediately void for any episode of travel when it is known that the named employee(s) will not travel or will incur expense under it. A new travel authority will be created in VA's travel system for that episode of travel if unforeseen circumstances cause the traveler(s) to perform round trip travel lasting more than 12 hours or incur a travel or per diem expense.

VA Form 3036 may be authorized on a yearly basis (e.g., blanket) by entering appropriate remarks on the form. Example: This travel authority is valid during fiscal year 20XX.

Local management will establish the necessary controls and records retention required for employee no-cost travel authorizations prepared and issued.

See *Example 1B-1, Sample No Cost Travel Authority*.

Example 1B-1: Sample No-Cost Travel Authority

Department of Veterans Affairs

TRAVEL AUTHORITY FOR TEMPORARY DUTY

1A. NAME AND LOCATION OF STATION: VA Medical Center, Anywhere, USA

1B. STATION NO.: 777

2. NAME AND TITLE OF TRAVELER: VA Traveler, Director

3. RESIDENCE ADDRESS *(Number and street, city, State, and ZIP Code)*: 123 Main Street Anywhere, USA 12345

You are authorized to perform travel as indicated below and to be reimbursed for necessary expenses of travel as provided in Federal Travel Regulations, as amended, and in VA Travel directives. Please see copy five for ticket refund procedures.

POINTS OF TRAVEL *(List official temporary duty sites only)*

4A. FROM: Anywhere, USA

4B. TO: Somewhere, USA AND RETURN TO Anywhere, USA

5. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL: Mission (Operational)

6. TRAVEL TO BEGIN ON OR ABOUT: 10/01/2010

7. NO. OF DAYS: 1

8. MODE OF TRAVEL: ☐ RAIL ☐ AIR *(Lowest cost available)* ☐ PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE ☒ GOVERNMENT OWNED ☐ OTHER *(Specify)*

(X)	BASIC FOR REIMBURSEMENT	
☐	9A. YOU ARE ALLOWED THE FOLLOWING PER DIEM RATE IN LIEU OF SUBSISTENCE ▶	PER DIEM RATE $
☐	9B. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL ON AN ACTUAL SUBSISTENCE EXPENSE BASIS AND BE REIMBURSED IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THE FOLLOWING AMOUNT PER DAY ▶	AMOUNT PER DAY $
☐	9C. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE *(administratively determined to be most advantageous to the Government)* AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE ▶	MILEAGE RATE CENTS
☐	9D. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE *(administratively determined that common carrier transportation is the preferred method of travel but employee wishes to use privately owned conveyance as a matter of personal preference)* AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE *(total allowable amount is limited to total constructive cost of common carrier transportation including constructive per diem by that mode of transportation).* ▶	MILEAGE RATE CENTS
☒	9E. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY GOVERNMENT - OWNED AUTOMOBILE	
☐	9F. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE *(Government-owned automobile would be more advantageous to the Government but employee requests and is authorized to use a privately owned conveyance)* AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE ▶	MILEAGE RATE CENTS
☐	9G. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL BY PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE *(Government-owned automobile is available and employee who would not ordinarily be authorized the use of a privately owned conveyance nevertheless requests and is authorized the use of a privately owned conveyance)* AND BE REIMBURSED AT THE FOLLOWING MILEAGE RATE ▶	MILEAGE RATE CENTS
☐	9H. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED THE FOLLOWING EXCESS BAGGAGE WHICH WILL ☐ BE OBTAINED ON SF 1169, U.S. GOV'T TRANSPORTATION REQUEST ☐ BE PAID FOR BY YOU IN CASH, WITH REIMBURSEMENT TO BE OBTAINED ON YOUR SF 1012, TRAVEL VOUCHER ▶	WEIGHT AUTHORIZED LBS. / NO. PIECES AUTHORIZED

10. REMARKS *(Continue on reverse)*

No-cost Travel. Should your official duties require more than 12 hours of travel time, or should you incur necessary travel or per diem expenses, this travel authority shall be void for that episode of travel. This travel authority is valid during fiscal year 2011.

I certify that the travel herein was reviewed and determined to be essential to the accomplishment of VA programs and missions.

11. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL

DATE

13. TRAVEL AUTHORITY NO.

14. TRANSPORTATION REQUEST NO.(S)

17A. FUND CERTIFICATION: The services listed on this request are properly chargeable to the following allotments, the available balances of which are sufficient to cover the cost thereof, and funds have been obligated.

15. ESTIMATED COST, LIMITATION .001 *(Show round figures)*

15A. GSA CAR RENTAL	15B. ALL OTHER MISCELLANEOUS	15C. TOTAL
$ 0.00	$ 0.00	$ 0.00

16. ESTIMATED COST, LIMITATION .007 *(Show round figures)*

16A. TRAVEL TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OR MEETING	16B. ALL OTHER EMPLOYEE ADMINISTRATIVE TRAVEL	16C. TOTAL
$ 0.00	$ 0.00	$ 0.00

17B. APPROPRIATION AND ACCOUNTING SYMBOLS: N/A

17C. OBLIGATED BY

17D. DATE

VA FORM DEC 1992 (R) **3036** Adobe Forms Designer 6.0 1

APPENDIX C: PROCEDURES TO REIMBURSE TRAVEL EXPENSES VIA EFT

A. Overview

The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-134) mandates Federal payments to recipients by EFT. The only exception is written certification that the recipient does not have an account with a financial institution or an authorized payment agent.

These procedures apply to all VA employees requesting reimbursement(s) relating to Temporary Duty (TDY) travel and to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) travel.

B. TDY Procedures

1. The traveler's local travel system administrator will provide guidance and assistance to travelers in completing the proper form to establish EFT travel reimbursement. A traveler normally designates the same bank or financial institution for EFT travel reimbursement that he or she has already designated for payroll Direct Deposit (DD)/EFT.

2. The local ETS administrator will forward the appropriate forms to the Financial Services Center (FSC), which will provide the traveler with a personal vendor code. VA's Financial Management System (FMS) uses a vendor code to identify each traveler in the system. When FMS processes a travel document for reimbursement, FMS uses the vendor code to provide the Department of the Treasury with the instructions on where to send the payment. The vendor code references information about the bank or financial institution, which had been designated by the traveler on the EFT travel reimbursement form.

3. For TDY travel, the local travel system administrator will enter the traveler's vendor code into VA's travel system for the traveler as part of their user profile. The traveler's vendor code will be established prior to creating any travel documents in the system.

4. If a traveler changes the bank or financial institution designated for EFT travel reimbursement, the traveler will notify the FSC Vendorizing Team and complete the appropriate form.

C. Form

To designate the financial institution for EFT reimbursement, the traveler will complete Standard Form 3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form.

APPENDIX D: PROCEDURES FOR COMBINING PERSONAL/UNOFFICIAL TRAVEL WITH OFFICIALTRAVEL

A. Creating a Travel Authorization

1. Create a travel authorization to include inclusive dates of both official and personal travel.

2. Only include the TDY location(s) when building the itinerary. A personal trip is not a TDY location. For example, if you are traveling from Washington, DC to Denver and stopping in Chicago for 2 days of personal travel after completing your TDY, you would only show Denver as the TDY location and explain on the authorization that you stopped in Chicago for 2 days on personal travel.

3. Indicate leave/personal travel days as appropriate within the per diem entitlements section by “excluding” those days from per diem.

4. Select flights for the official route using VA’s online booking engine. Travel system will automatically include this cost for the official travel portion.

5. Select flights from the “Travel Research” module for the personal travel portion of your trip and make a screen print to attach to your authorization in the receipts section. Then, enter the amount of the personal flights/fare in the Other Transportation section under Travel in your authorization. Note: The cost of the personal route is limited to the direct one-way YCA fare. If there are no contract (YCA) fares available, the lowest Government unrestricted fare will be used.

6. Make other travel arrangements using commercial means as desired for personal travel only. Save the invoice and attach it into your expense report later. The receipt is required as reimbursement is limited to YCA fare or actual cost, whichever is the lower cost.

7. Book rental car and hotels for official travel dates only. Make sure you change the dates accordingly on the search criteria before searching for rental cars and hotels.

8. Complete the travel authorization by adding your expenses, accounting code, etc. Enter a comment to the approving official stating your leave dates and destination. Save and proceed to the digital signature page and sign to book the reservations.

9. When attending conferences or training, attach a brochure which reflects the conference or training dates. The approving official should compare these dates to the authorized TDY dates to ensure travelers are not claiming reimbursement for official TDY combined with personal travel dates. If reimbursement is claimed for departure dates greater than 1 day prior and 1 day post TDY, approval will be documented.

B. Creating an Expense Report

1. Create an expense report from the travel authorization.

2. Use a Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet to compare official travel to official/personal travel. You may need to edit some expenses to this worksheet. Do not make changes on the authorization. At the bottom of the worksheet, your reimbursable amount is determined and will match the amount on the expense report. This worksheet will be reviewed as the cost comparison by your approving official.

3. Edit the expense report to enter actual expenses incurred up to the reimbursable amount from the worksheet.

4. Print the itinerary received from the Travel Management Center with official travel reservations and attach it as a receipt. Do the same with your personal travel reservations.

5. Fax into the receipts section all other required receipts and supporting documentation (e.g., Authorization for Business Class travel, Advance Review of Payments from a Non-Federal Source)

6. Sign/submit the expense report to begin the routing process.

APPENDIX E: NONFEDERAL-SPONSORED TRAVEL

Procedures: Employees who are authorized to accept payments from a nonFederal source will be in an official duty status, as opposed to leave or excused or authorized absence and will create a nonFederal source travel authorization to perform such travel.

Following are the steps to create a travel authorization in the travel system when a nonFederal source provides payment for travel expenses:

1. On the **My Travel Desktop** page, select the **Non-Fed Sponsored Travel** menu option.

2. On the **Travel Authorization** page, enter your travel destinations and make your reservations.

3. Select the **Complete Authorization** button to go to the **Financial Summary** page.

4. On the **Financial Summary** page, click the **plus sign (+)** to expand the **Summary of Expense Categories** box and then click the **binoculars icon (** **)** next to the Expense Category the sponsoring Agency is funding.

5. On the **Sponsored Travel** page, enter the **Reimburse Agency** or **Payment in Kind** amount the sponsor is funding for each expense item listed.

6. You may enter any helpful remarks in the **Additional Comments** field.

7. Complete the **Sponsoring Organization Information**. Required fields are indicated by a red asterisk.

8. When finished, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the page.

9. To exit, select the **Financial Summary** menu option.

10. Verify that the amount in the first line in the **Enter Your Trip Allocations** table equals the Allocable Total amount in the **Summary of Expense Categories** box.

11. If VA is responsible for any amount, reallocate expenses in the **Trip Allocations Table,** as necessary.

12. When finished, submit the **Travel Authorization** by selecting the **Submit Document** menu option.

APPENDIX F: PRE-EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

In order to reduce travel expenses per Executive Order 13589, Promoting Efficient Spending (November 9, 2011), initial pre-employment interviews should be performed using conference calls or video conferencing. Follow-up pre-employment interview travel expenses may be paid when considered necessary by the authorizing official.

The VA facility performing the interview has the option to reimburse for travel expense for pre-employment interview, whether the interviewee is a current VA employee or a non-VA employee. Pre-employment interview travel expenses are discretionary expenses, not mandatory reimbursement expenses per the FTR. If authorized for VA employees, the reimbursement will be manually completed (outside of the travel system) for the following reasons:

1. The travel system is only to be used for VA official travel.

2. When a VA employee is on pre-employment interview travel, they are in a non-duty status as they are not performing official travel for the VA in their current position.

3. The office or station approving the pre-employment travel and authorized expenses is the interviewing office. The employee's current supervisor is not involved in the approval process for the travel expenses. If a travel authorization is created in the travel system, the approving official would be the employee's current office, not the interviewing office.

A VA employee's travel system profile will not be moved under the interviewing station's office for pre-employment interview travel.

<u>Manual Procedures for VA Employees</u>: VA Form 5575, Travel Approval Request, may be used for obligating the authorized travel entitlements. The form will cite which travel entitlements are authorized and estimated costs. For example, transportation (e.g., air) may be authorized but not per diem (e.g., lodging, meals and incidental expenses). The interviewing office's cost accounting line would be cited in the "comment" section. The finance office would obligate the funds using a manual travel authorization number.

VA Form 1358 cannot be used for travel expenses (reference VA Financial Policy Volume II, Chapter 6, 1358 Obligations, for approved uses).

The centrally billed account (CBA) travel card of the interviewing office may be used to purchase the airline ticket (if authorized) by contacting the Travel Management Center. The TMC will need the manual travel authorization number for ticketing purposes.

The employee cannot use their individually billed account (IBA) VA travel card for pre-employment interview travel as they are in a non-duty status and not on official travel status.

Standard Form 1012, Travel Voucher, may be used for filing expenses after the travel is completed. Receipts are required for the authorized expenses.

APPENDIX G: TRAVEL ENTITLEMENTS FOR UNIQUE VA EMPLOYEES

VA Federal employees are entitled to travel entitlements regardless of grade or status (part time, full time, term or temporary employees). Other VA employees may or may not be entitled to travel reimbursements based their program assignment with VA.

Without Compensation (WOC) Employees/Invitational Travelers: As defined by Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), an individual "without compensation" would be considered an "invitational traveler" for TDY entitlements. If the VA required official travel by WOC employees, they could be paid as invitational travelers.

Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Employees: Per VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, details of these employees may be made on a reimbursable, non-reimbursable, or a shared cost basis. Costs associated with an IPA assignment must include pay provisions with specific salary rate(s), any provisions for cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), fringe benefits, travel and relocation expenses, and income derived from certain private consulting work (usually considered as part of the pay of university employees). The Optional Form 69, Assignment Agreement, issued by OPM, will be completed by the requesting official and signed by the employee (see attached). Part 12 of Optional Form 69, Travel and Transportation, indicates: (1) Whether the Federal agency or State or local agency will pay travel and transportation expenses to, from, and during the assignment as specified in Chapter 3344 of the Federal Personnel Manual, and (2) which travel and relocation expenses will be included. Based on the agreement, if VA were responsible for the travel and transportation, the federal employee would be established in VA travel system and paid accordingly for any TDY costs.

Fee Basis Employees: Per VA Handbook 5007, Part II, Appendix F: "Compensation for fee-basis employees will be made on a lump sum basis for each visit. The fee will be determined on the basis of the actual service rendered, plus the cost of transportation, if required, including per diem at the applicable rate if travel is required." The travel costs are part of their fee and not a separate travel reimbursement.

Contract Employees: Travel entitlements for contractor employees falls under the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) (which relies in large part, on each contractor's own travel rules). Some contracts include a special clause that addresses travel costs. The contractor needs to speak with the Contracting Officer or Contracting Officer Representative if it isn't known what rules apply to the individual contract. Contract employees are not reimbursed travel expenses through VA's Travel System.

APPENDIX H: PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING AN OUTSTANDING TRAVEL ADVANCE

An outstanding travel advance issued to an employee for TDY expenses is an amount due to the Government, until it is offset or paid back. No bill of collection will be issued for an outstanding advance, as it also establishes another debt owed to the Government. For example, if you have an outstanding travel advance for $1,000 and you establish a bill of collection for $1,000, there would now be two separate debts of $1,000 each showing as owed to the Government.

An outstanding unliquidated travel advance is recoverable by offset from current pay, retired pay or other amounts owed the employee by the United States Government. A travel advance debt is excluded from the Federal Salary Offset provisions under 5 U.S.C. 5514 because salary offset to recoup a travel advance is specifically provided for in 5 U.S.C. 5705 (also see 38 C.F.R. 1.980(c)). This means that prior notice of certain administrative rights, such as the right to dispute the debt, is not required before commencing salary offset. However, the employee will be officially notified of these rights at the time of offset or as soon as possible after salary offset or collection has begun. For additional information, refer to chapters in Volume XII, *Debt Management.*[5]

Once an outstanding unliquidated travel advance has been confirmed, the VA Financial Services Center and the facility making the advance will work together to ensure the outstanding travel advance is repaid by the employee. Authorizing officials will counsel employees with an outstanding travel advance. An advance is for a specific purpose and will be returned immediately, if not used for that purpose. Title 5 U.S.C. 5705 does not contain a restriction on the amount that may be recouped to recover a travel advance from current pay, retired pay or other amounts owed the employee by the United States Government. Therefore, the entire amount of any unliquidated travel advance will be recouped at once, i.e., within two pay periods or 30 days. If collection is not accomplished within 30 days, interest and other late payment charges will be assessed. For additional information, again refer to chapters in Volume XII, *Debt Management.*[6] The Federal Claims Collection Standards (31 C.F.R. 901.8) and VA regulation 38 C.F.R. 1.914 (formerly 38 C.F.R. 1.917) also authorize the use of repayment plans. There is no prohibition in 5 U.S.C. 5705 against establishing a repayment plan to recoup the travel advance. However, repayment agreements may only be used when it is determined that collection in one lump sum would create an undue financial hardship and will be set up to recoup the advance as soon as possible.

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[5] For additional information on authorized uses of salary offset, refer to Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XII, Chapter 1D, *Salary Offset for Federal Employees Indebted to U.S*.
[6] For additional information on authorized uses of salary offset, refer to Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XII, Chapter 1A, *Interest, Administrative Costs & Penalty Charges*.

A debt arising from an outstanding unliquidated travel advance is not subject to waiver consideration under 5 U.S.C. 5584 and 38 C.F.R. 1.963a. This is because the unliquidated advance issued to the employee is not an erroneous payment. Only an erroneous liquidated travel advance is appropriate for waiver consideration. Such requests for waiver of a liquidated travel advance will be submitted to the Committee on Waivers and Compromises (COWC) of jurisdiction in accordance with VA financial policies and procedures in Volume XI, *Committee on Waivers and Compromises*.

However, in accordance with Comptroller General Opinion B-226842 (June 28, 1988), a waiver will only be granted by a COWC if:

- The advance was made to cover expenses erroneously authorized;

- The employee relied on the authorization as proper; and

- The employee actually spent the advance on the duly authorized, but erroneous travel orders.

In addition, a waiver is only appropriate to the extent that the employee is indebted to the Government for repayment of only the amount of the advance still owed after legitimate expenses have been claimed and the total authorized and claimed amount has been applied to the advance.

APPENDIX I: RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS

A. Receipts will be attached as supporting documentation to the expense voucher into the travel system. Where it is impracticable to furnish receipts, the failure to do so will be fully explained on the expense voucher. Mere inconvenience in the matter of asking for receipts will not be considered.

B. Receipts are required for all other travel expenses only when the amount is in excess of $75 or when required by the approving official.

C. Receipts are required for the following expenses, regardless of amount, and authorization or approval is required by the official who authorized the travel:

1. Authorized excess baggage (exceeding weight, size or number of pieces carried free by the carrier); and

2. Transfer, checking and storage for handling Government property – receipt will show that storage was solely on account of official business and that charges or tips at transportation terminals are for handling Government property.

3. Common carrier transportation – ticketed itineraries for the use of commercial air, rail or bus service. Note: Itineraries used for booking purposes do not remain in the travel system for the required period of 6 years and will be submitted as a receipt with the expense report. The itinerary must show the price of the ticket and confirmation of payment.

4. Commercial communications services (pre-paid phone cards, cell phones, Internet connections, long-distance calls when Government services are not available) – receipt will show total amount paid and a justification that services were used for official business. When a cell phone is used for official communication, each call will be documented showing additional cost incurred outside of the normal usage covered in the cell phone contract.

5. Dry-cleaning and laundry – reasonable costs for personal laundry, dry-cleaning and/or pressing of clothing incurred during TDY travel (not after returning to/arriving at official station) are a separately reimbursable expense when travel within the Continental United States (CONUS) requires at least 6 consecutive nights of lodging. A receipt is not required for coin-operated dry-cleaning and laundry machines.

6. Foreign travel

- Fees for cashing U.S. Government checks or drafts reimbursing traveler for travel expenses only incurred in foreign countries.

- Commissions for conversion of currency in foreign countries.

- Fees in connection with issuance of official/diplomatic passports and visas; costs of photographs for passports and visas; costs of birth, health and identity certificates; affidavits; and inoculation which cannot be obtained at a Federal dispensary.

7. Lodging – to support all lodging costs for which an allowance is claimed under the lodgings-plus per diem system. A statement instead of a receipt may be accepted for the fee or service charge incurred for the use of Government quarters.

8. Professional Administrative Services – include clerical assistance, computers, printers, fax machines, scanners, room rental, guides, and interpreters.

9. Rental car – all rental car costs for which an allowance is claimed, including gasoline and insurance for travelers who are on temporary duty in foreign countries, but only when the foreign country requires such insurance. The cost of the rental car (including taxes and fees) will be input as a total amount in the travel system under transportation/rental car. Other authorized expenses (e.g., gasoline and/or authorized insurance for foreign TDY) will be included as a separate miscellaneous expense.

10. Shipments of government property by freight or express – when property needed by the traveler exceeds the baggage allowance (e.g., if a Government Bill of Lading is not used), the traveler will explain the circumstances for the use of freight or express. The receipt will show the original point of shipment, destination, the number of packages, the contents and separate weight of each package, and the rate and amount(s) paid.