


<b>3.16, Employee Travel and Expense Reimbursement</b>	
<b>Application:</b> All Employees of the Department of Children's Services	
<b>Authority:</b> Rules of the Tennessee Department of Human Resources	<b>Standards: COA:</b> PA-Fin 1, 3.04, 4.02, 4.03, & 4.04.
<b>Commissioner:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 01/09/2026
Original Effective Date: 12/31/1999 Current Effective Date: 02/09/2026	Supersedes: 06/03/2025 Last Review Date: 07/24/2025
<b>Glossary:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <u>Child-Specific Travel</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work-related travel that involves a child or family served by DCS (i.e. transports, visits, court, and any other case specific travel).</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ <u>Non-Child Specific Travel</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work-related travel that does <i>not</i> involve a DCS child or family (i.e. trainings, conferences, seminars, etc.).</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ <u>Travel Memo</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Internal DCS memo used to determine mode of travel and request approval for travel. Not required for emergency child-specific travel.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ <u>Travel Authorization</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Travel request entered in the Edison System</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ <u>Cluster</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A group of counties from one region that a specific group of case managers and teams serve.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**Policy Statement:**

All Department of Children's Services (DCS) employees will follow the travel reimbursement procedures outlined by the [Department of Finance and Administration Comprehensive Travel Regulations - Policy 8](#).

**Purpose:**

The Department of Children's Services maintains both owned and leased vehicles across the state for work-related use. This policy provides the associated travel regulations and expense reimbursement requirements. Exceptions to the travel requirements outlined in

this policy will be made, in conjunction with the employee's line of supervision, for child-specific emergency situations only.

**Procedures:****A. Travel Requirements for DCS Staff**

1. It is required that DCS staff utilize a state-owned/leased/pool vehicle for all work-related travel.
2. DCS employees assigned a state-owned/leased vehicle must utilize their assigned vehicle. **Employees assigned a state-owned/leased/pool vehicle may not submit a request for mileage reimbursement in Edison.**
3. Should a state-owned/leased vehicle be unavailable, the employee is required to use a rental vehicle if either of the conditions listed below apply:
  - a) The employee must travel outside their assigned cluster and the trip will be more than 150 (one hundred fifty) miles round trip from the employee's assigned workstation. (For example, if a worker is doing home visits in their assigned cluster and will drive 200 miles in one day, they may use their personal vehicle if a state vehicle is not available. If a worker is completing a visit outside their cluster and the trip only is 100 miles (round trip), they may use their personal vehicle if a state vehicle is not available.)
  - b) The employee is not assigned to a cluster, and the trip will be more than 150 (one hundred fifty) miles round trip from their assigned county.
4. If neither a state-owned/leased vehicle nor rental vehicle is available for use, as noted above in number three (3), the employee will need to develop an alternate travel plan with the Director or Executive Director in their line of supervision.
5. Exceptions to this policy are listed below.
  - a) In a work-related emergency during business hours, if no state vehicle is available and obtaining a rental would cause a safety risk to a child, employees may use their personal vehicle. Attempts to secure a state vehicle and rental must be documented in Edison when requesting reimbursement for personal mileage. Employees who have been personally assigned a state/leased vehicle must use that vehicle, even in emergency situations.
  - b) New employees traveling for pre-service training will follow the travel instruction provided by their training lead.

**B. Travel Memos and Travel Authorizations**

1. Travel Memos:

A travel memo is required for all in-state and out-of-state travel that includes an overnight stay (lodging), purchase of airline tickets, or is for a work-related conference/seminar/training.

- a) The completed travel memo will be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor promptly upon becoming aware of the need for travel.
- b) For travel that includes an overnight stay of less than three (3) nights, the travel memo must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor and Director.
- c) For travel that includes an overnight stay of three (3) or more nights, the travel memo must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor and Executive Director.
- d) Travel memos completed for out-of-country travel will require approval from the employee's immediate supervisor, Executive Director, Office of the Commissioner, and Finance and Administration. Out-of-country travel must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the travel date.
- e) Travel memos for conferences/seminar/trainings or airline tickets must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor, Executive Director, and Deputy Commissioner or Commissioner.
- f) When five (5) or more employees travel to the same event requiring an overnight stay, a travel memo must be submitted and approved by the employee's immediate supervisor, the Executive Director, and the Deputy Commissioner or Commissioner. One travel memo with all participants listed or attached may be submitted for approval.

## 2. Travel Authorizations:

Travel authorizations are required for any out-of-state travel, all airline travel, as well as for all conferences/trainings/seminars, both in-state and out-of-state.

- a) All travel authorization requests must be submitted in Edison at least 30 (thirty) days in advance of traveling.
- b) Employees will upload a signed travel memo to their submitted expense report in Edison.

- c) For travel authorizations that include a conference, seminar, or training, the employee will upload a brochure, or a screen shot of the agenda if a brochure is unavailable, from the event to be attended, as well as the completed travel memo, to the travel authorization request in Edison.
- d) A fully approved travel authorization is required prior to the employee traveling.

**C. In-State, Out-of-State, and Out-of-Country Travel****1. In-State Travel:**

In-state travel is considered any travel that occurs within the borders of the state of Tennessee. The exception would be the fifty-mile border rule, as stated below.

- a) Fifty-Mile Border Rule: Travel less than 50 (fifty) miles into any state that borders Tennessee is considered in-state travel, provided the employee does not practice social work and/or does not stay overnight in that state. This type of travel does not require a travel memo prior to traveling.
  - ◆ States bordering Tennessee include Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

**2. Out-of-State Travel:**

- a) Any travel outside the state of Tennessee, during which the employee practices social work and/or stays overnight, is considered out-of-state travel. Out-of-state travel requires a Travel Memo, a Travel Authorization, and Commissioner Office approval. A Travel Authorization is required in Edison for all travel, regardless of the funding source.

**3. Out-of-Country Travel:**

- a) Out-of-Country travel is considered any travel that occurs outside of the United States. Out-of-Country Travel requires a Travel Memo, A Travel Authorization, Commissioner Office, and Finance and Administration approval.

**D. Reservation of Rental Vehicles, Airline Tickets, and Lodging**

DCS staff are required to choose the reservation most fiscally responsible and cost-effective for DCS while also remaining in compliance with this policy.

**1. Rental Vehicles:**

Information regarding the reservation of rental vehicles may be found at [State Travel Reservation Information](#).

- a) If an employee is required to reserve a vehicle through a vehicle rental company, employees must rent the vehicle through a state-approved vendor and follow the vendor's process for vehicle reservation.

2. Airline Tickets:

DCS staff may not reserve airline tickets for work-related travel and will use the process listed below.

- a) To reserve airline tickets, employees will complete and submit a travel memo to the Central Office point person at least 21 (twenty-one) days prior to the planned travel.

3. Lodging:

In the performance of DCS duties, travel that results in the need for lodging for an overnight stay may be required. Any overnight lodging must adhere to the following regulations:

- a) Overnight lodging is allowed only if the travel destination is 75 (seventy-five) miles or more one way from the employee's assigned workstation.
- b) A fully approved travel memo must be obtained prior to any overnight travel or lodging.
- c) DCS will only reimburse overnight lodging for the amounts listed [at U.S. General Services Administration](#), per [Department of Finance and Administration Comprehensive Travel Regulations](#). If lodging costs exceed these rates, written permission from the Commissioner's office is required in advance. Employees are required to utilize a direct bill hotel for any lodging needs while on official DCS business, if available. The current direct bill hotel list may be found on the DCS intranet at [Overnight Travel](#).

## **E. Allowable Reimbursements and Requesting Reimbursements**

1. Allowable Reimbursements:

- a) Receipts, if applicable, for allowable reimbursements *must* be uploaded as an attachment to the employee's expense report in Edison.
- b) Employees should *not* exceed the allotted state rates for *any* expense, as outlined by the [U.S. General Services Administration](#), without written approval from the division Assistant Commissioner.

2. Requesting Reimbursement:

All employee expense reimbursement reports must be submitted for approval electronically via the [Edison System](#).

**F. Applicable Policy**

1. All work-related travel will adhere to the following DCS policies, as well as the [Rules of the Tennessee Department of Human Resources](#), in addition to the [Department of Finance and Administration Comprehensive Travel Regulations – Policy 8](#):
  - a) [31.15, Guidelines for Transportation of Children/Youth by Regional Employees](#).
  - b) [1.13, Assignment, Use, Maintenance, and Responsibilities of Operating State Owned/Leased Vehicles](#).
  - c) [4.9, Employee Disciplinary Actions and Mediation Process](#).
  - d) [4.8, Drug Free Workplace](#).

**G. Travel Resources**

1. For more information regarding specific requirements, deadlines, and approval processes, review the [Protocol for Employee Travel and Expense Reimbursement](#).
2. [Department of Finance and Administration Travel Information](#)
3. [DCS Travel Information](#)

**Forms:**

[CS-4292, Travel Justification Memo](#)

[CS-0600, Acknowledgement of Payroll Deduction for Reimbursement of Assigned State Property](#)

**Collateral Documents:**

[Protocol for Employee Travel and Expense Reimbursement](#)