



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

## Protocol for Employee Travel and Expense Reimbursement

Supplemental to DCS Policy: [3.16, Employee Travel and Expense Reimbursement](#)

To streamline the process for obtaining travel approvals and to ensure the appropriate reimbursement of employee expenses, employees should use this protocol as a tool for travel decisions and completing and submitting expense reports.

### **A. Procedures for Expense Report Submissions for All DCS Staff:**

1. It is strongly recommended employees utilize [CS-4289, DCS Monthly Travel Log](#) to track their monthly travel and mileage to ensure accuracy of expense reports.
2. Employee expense reports are required to be submitted within 60 (sixty) days from the date of travel. Expense reports submitted after 60 (sixty) days may be processed as taxable income.
3. Submission of qualified expenses for reimbursement in Edison more than 60 (sixty) days after occurrence may result in disciplinary action.
4. Submission of an expense report more than 60 (sixty) days after the date of travel requires the employee's immediate supervisor to provide a memo, within 30 (thirty) days of becoming aware of the delayed submission. The memo shall state the reason for the delay and is signed by the appropriate Team Coordinator and Executive Director. The memo must be attached to the employee's expense report.
5. Expense reports are to be submitted for routine job duties during the next available payroll cycle.
6. Reports for expenses incurred from the 1st through the 15th of each month, during the first pay period, will be submitted the following business day of the same month (i.e. on or after the 16th).
7. Reports for expenses incurred from the 16th through 31st of each month, during the second pay period, will be submitted the first business day of the following month.
8. Any receipts for allowable reimbursements, travel memos, travel authorizations, and, where applicable, conference/seminar/training brochures or a screen shot of the conference agenda if a brochure is not available, must be attached to the employee expense report prior to submission. Direct bill hotels must include an uploaded receipt and be itemized in the employee's expense report.
9. Expenses for third-party trainings, such as conferences, etc., must be submitted on a separate expense report in Edison from all other travel.
10. Overnight travel will be submitted on the same expense report as routine travel, except during instances in which the travel occurred across expense submission periods. In that event, the expense report will be submitted at the conclusion of the trip (i.e. a trip that begins on the 14th

Original Effective Date: 09/2025

Current Effective Date: 2/09/2026

Supersedes: 09/2025

Supplemental to: 3.16

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but ends on the 17th will have an expense report that is submitted during the second pay period on the first day of the following month).

11. To prevent the approval of inaccurate travel claims, supervisors must follow-up with the worker should any concerns about travel reporting arise. This should be done prior to approving the expense report. The supervisor is to clarify the legitimacy of the expenses reported and ensure any reasons for excess travel are documented on the report prior to providing approval. All edits/corrections/resubmissions are to be completed within 15 (fifteen) days.
  - a) Supervisors must consult with the Regional Director, or their designee, on any expense report that must be submitted for approval three (3) or more times.
  - b) If concerns regarding the legitimacy of an expense report persist, the supervisor will NOT approve the report and will make an Internal Affairs referral for further investigation.

### **B. Allowable Expenses:**

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 Executive Director. Work-related travel expenses that are reimbursable include, but are not limited to, the items listed below.

1. Work-related personal vehicle travel.
2. State-owned/leased vehicle travel.
3. Fuel and automobile rental.
4. Lodging.
5. Parking.
6. Meals and Incidentals.
7. Meals purchased by DCS employees for children in their care.
8. Air travel and airline baggage fees.
9. Taxi fares and airport transportation.
10. Promotional Materials.
11. Extended travel.
12. Telecommunications costs while on travel status.

### **C. Instructions for Commonly Used Expense Types:**

1. Work-related personal vehicle travel:

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### a) In-state point-to-point miles:

- ◆ Should be used when an employee travels outside of their assigned workstation city.
    - Example: John's official workstation city is Nashville, and he must travel to Memphis for a training.
      - If the mileage automatically generated in Edison is *less than* the actual miles driven, the employee will add a line for in-state vicinity miles to the expense report to capture the remainder of the miles. (Example: John travels one hundred (100) miles, but Edison only generates eighty (80) miles. John will add a line for twenty (20) in-state vicinity miles.)
      - In the event Edison automatically generates more mileage than was actually driven, the employee should take the following steps after consulting with and obtaining the approval of their immediate supervisor:
        - Search Edison for a community within the destination municipality that may be closer in number to the mileage driven (Example: If the destination is Nashville, look for the communities of Antioch, Berry Hill, or others).
        - If a particular community is not found in Edison, and multiple trips are planned, employees may request a work order to add the community into Edison.
- Note:** Staff will continue to use a destination municipality that may be closer in number to the mileage driven while awaiting the addition of a community into Edison, so as to not miss required expense report submission deadlines.
- If no other alternatives are available, employees may change their destination to a location closer to their point of departure and add an in-state vicinity miles line to reach the total mileage traveled for the trip, if needed.
  - All of the aforementioned action steps require the employee to provide an explanation in the comments section of the expense report.

### b) In-state vicinity miles:

- ◆ Should be used when an employee travels within their assigned workstation city.
  - Example: John's official workstation city is Nashville, and John must travel to the Nashville Juvenile Court across town to file a petition.
    - In-state vicinity miles may also be used when an employee travels outside their assigned workstation but within the same destination. (Example: John's official assigned workstation is Nashville, and he uses in-state point-to-point miles to travel to Memphis for a training. John then travels from the Memphis hotel to the training, also located in Memphis, and back to the hotel. John would add a line for

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in-state vicinity miles to capture the miles driven between the hotel and the training site each day.)

### 2. Lodging:

- a) The allotted state rates for lodging reservations may vary by month, and employees should verify they are receiving the correct rate with the lodging source prior to completing a reservation.
  - ◆ Employees should review their lodging receipt for accuracy upon check-out and upload the receipt to the associated travel expense report.
    - Taxes: DCS employees are exempt from state taxes on lodging when the stay is for conducting official DCS business.
      - Local hotel or locality taxes are not tax-exempt expenses.
      - Direct bill lodgings must be marked as non-reimbursable on the employee's expense report.
      - If a direct bill hotel is unavailable, employees can still be reimbursed for the cost; however, the employee MUST have prior approval from their supervisor to book the lodging.
      - Any costs above the amount allotted by the **U.S. General Services Administration** will be the responsibility of the employee.

### 3. Meals and Incidentals:

- a) Per diem reimbursement for meals and incidentals is only allowable for overnight stays.
  - ◆ Each geographical location will have its own allotted reimbursement rate. Employees are encouraged to check these rates prior to submitting an expense report to ensure accuracy. Rates may be located at U.S. General Services Administration.
  - ◆ Employees are only eligible for three-fourths (3/4<sup>th</sup>) of the reimbursement rate for the day of departure and the day of return.
    - Example: The total reimbursement rate for Memphis is \$74 per day. John leaves Nashville on Monday for a trip to Memphis and returns to Nashville on Friday. For Monday and Friday, John will only claim \$55.50, or three-fourths (3/4<sup>th</sup>) of \$74. For Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, John will use the total rate of \$74.
      - If breakfast, lunch, or dinner is provided by the lodging source, DCS, or other provider, the allowable rate for the meals provided will be subtracted from the total allowable per diem rate.
      - Example: On Tuesday, John took advantage of the free continental breakfast at his hotel. As such, John will subtract the breakfast per diem rate of \$18 from the

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total daily rate of \$74. Thus, John will claim a total of \$56 on his expense report for Tuesday.

### 4. Parking:

- a) It is preferred that employees park where it is free to do so; however, in instances where free parking is unavailable, employees *may* be eligible to receive reimbursement for parking expenses while traveling on official DCS business.
  - ◆ Receipts must be attached to the associated expense report. Parking expenses are NOT reimbursable to the employee for routine parking at an employee's assigned workstation.

### 5. Automobile rental and fuel:

- a) Employees are eligible for fuel reimbursement for vehicles rented for official DCS business.
- b) Employees will retain all fuel receipts and attach to the associated expense report when requesting reimbursement.
- c) When employees utilize a state owned or leased vehicle, they must use the fuel card assigned to each vehicle to pay for fuel.

### 6. Meals purchased by DCS employees for children in their care:

- a) It is preferred that employees utilize their local DCS Central Accounting representative, as well as any readily available donations, to purchase meals for children served by DCS.
  - ◆ In the event of an emergency, if no other options are available, employees may purchase meals for children and request reimbursement with written approval from their supervisor.
    - To request reimbursement for meals purchased, employees will retain their receipt and attach it the expense report. Meals purchased should be at a reasonable amount for the age of each child.
    - The employee may submit an expense report in Edison for meal reimbursements on a separate expense report or with their routine travel expense report.
    - If the expense report is submitted separately in Edison, the mileage associated with the meal purchased should be submitted on the same report.

## **D. General Steps for Completing an Expense Report in Edison:**

1. Sign into the [Edison System](#), navigate to the Travel and Expense Center, and choose Create/Modify an Expense Report.
2. Choose a Business Purpose from the drop-down box.
3. Enter the Report Description.

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4. Enter the city of your official workstation in the Reference box.
5. Enter the dates of travel (i.e. beginning to end of month if doing a full month's travel and beginning of travel to end of travel if not doing a full month's travel).
6. Add any receipts by choosing Attach Receipt.
7. Choose Add Expense Lines from the Expense Report Action drop-down box.
8. Choose an Expense Type from the drop-down box, and enter the required information, such as date, expense type, description, payment (cash), amount, and billing type (standard), location (originating location and end location), etc., depending on expense type chosen.
  - a) For child-specific travel, use the information listed below for the Description section.
    - ◆ Any travel that is child(ren) specific should include the Electronic Record person ID number(s), along with the reason for the travel, such as home visit, transport, court, etc. in the description.
    - ◆ To protect client confidentiality, do not put names, either first or last, in the description.
9. If calculating mileage, manually enter the miles traveled for in-state vicinity miles into the box. For in-state point-to-point miles, first enter the originating location and end location under Additional Information prior to clicking Calculate Mileage, which will auto-calculate the miles for the user.
10. For all non-reimbursable expenses, check the box labeled non-reimbursable.
11. To add a line, click the plus (+) sign, and to delete a line, click delete, both located to the left of the page.
12. When ready to submit, click Summary and Submit.
13. Check the box to certify expenses submitted are accurate and comply with policy.
14. Click submit expense report.

### **E. Steps to Complete a Travel Authorization Request in Edison:**

1. Sign into the [Edison System](#), navigate to the Travel and Expense Center, and choose Create Travel Authorization.
2. Choose a Business Purpose from the drop-down box.
3. Enter the Report Description
4. Choose a Travel From and Travel To. Search for a destination by clicking the magnifying glass to the right of the box.
5. Enter the dates of travel (i.e. from and to)
6. Fill in the requested information and click the plus (+) sign to add a new line.

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7. Click attachments to add any documents to the request.
8. When all information has been entered and attachments uploaded, click Submit to send the request for approval.

**Note:** An approved travel memo *must* be submitted with the travel authorization.

### **F. Resources:**

For further information or examples, employees may access the resources listed below.

1. [Edison System](#) (navigate to Travel and Expense and click View Overview to access Edison resources and guides).
2. [Department of Finance and Administration Comprehensive Travel Regulations - Policy 8](#)
3. [U.S. General Services Administration](#)