



Administrative Policy No: 19.10.05

Subject: Travel by air, common carrier, rental or state-owned vehicle

Contact: Office of Accounting Services (OAS)
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Authorizing Sources: State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM), [Chapter 10](#)

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Purpose

This policy describes the requirements for making travel arrangements and the reimbursement limitations when traveling by air, rental vehicle, common carrier, or state-owned vehicles.

Scope

This policy applies to all Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) employees, community compensation participant, board and commission members (unless otherwise stated in statute), and volunteers.

This policy does not apply to contractors reimbursed by specific contractual arrangements.

Additional guidance

DSHS administrative policies, subchapter [19.10](#), travel policies
DSHS administrative policy [14.12](#), accountability for state-owned vehicles
DSHS administrative policy [18.26](#), disability reasonable accommodation
[DSHS Forms picker](#)

02-752, In-state travel arrangements

03-337, Out-of-state travel arrangements

Definitions

Advantageous means direct non-financial, work-related benefits accruing to the state.

Approving manager means the approving authority responsible for the traveler's travel status and reimbursement.

Central purchasing unit (CPU) is the agency's central contact for the DSHS purchasing program, fixed asset management, fleet management, wireless program management, operational contracting, and P-Card program management.

City pair means a contracted rate between two cities that does not change for the duration of the contract.

Common carrier means a person or company that transports passengers or goods for a fee.

Community compensation participant is an agency partner who is a part of historically excluded communities who have been disproportionately impacted by government decisions. The community compensation participant provides their lived experience perspective—their personal, direct experience related to the subject matter—to agency events and workgroups where activities, policies, processes and systems are being addressed. A community compensation participant is not a volunteer. They may be compensated for their work with a stipend and reimbursed for expenses, where applicable, in accordance with 2SSB 5793 and the office of equity and DSHS community compensation guidelines.

Continental United States means all areas in the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia.

Department travel card means a purchase card issued to pay for authorized, business-related travel expenses on behalf of DSHS.

Economical means direct financial, work-related costs that occur at the least cost to the state and which the state is responsible to pay.

Local airport means the airport that offers regularly scheduled air service that is closest to the point from which travel begins. In most situations it would be the airport closest to the traveler's official residence. For out-of-state destinations, the closest airport that provides direct out-of-state flights may be considered the local airport.

Official state business means the activities performed by a state employee, volunteer, community compensation participant, board or commission member as directed by their supervisor in order to accomplish state programs or as required by the duties of their position or office.

Qualified travel provider means the approved internet travel provider, qualified travel agent, or other vendor under contract with the state to provide travel services to state employees.

Reimbursement request means the request for travel reimbursement that is submitted using the Travel and Expense Management System (TEMS).

Travel and expense management system (TEMS) is the software program used to process travel reimbursement requests and travel advances.

Traveler means any DSHS employee, officer, volunteer, community compensation participant, board or commission member traveling on official state business.

Policy

A. Air transportation

1. Travel arrangements must be made by either:
 - a. Contacting the airline directly;
 - b. Using a state contracted travel agency or internet travel service provider (contract #[02219](#)).
2. The fully refundable airfare contract (contract #[00919](#)) must be used except when:
 - a. The destination is not covered by the contract;
 - b. The flight does not leave or arrive to meet the agency's time requirements; or
 - c. There is a lower published fare to the destination.

The need to purchase a non-refundable fare is at the discretion of the approver. If a non-refundable ticket is purchased, the approver must consider that there may be additional costs incurred if the traveler needs to reschedule their flight. If the flight must be cancelled, the cost of the non-refundable ticket must be charged to state only dollars as the federal government will not pay for a cancelled ticket.

3. When purchasing airfare off-contract (for one of the reasons listed above) the maximum reimbursement for airfare is limited to:
 - a. The city pair amount listed in the contract when a city pair exists;
 - b. The lowest applicable airfare not to exceed tourist class or its equivalent, when a city pair exists and all the seats for the desired destination have been sold; or
 - c. The lowest applicable airfare not to exceed tourist class or its equivalent

when there is no city pair.

4. The economy fare or its equivalent may be exceeded only when necessary for:
 - a. The health and safety of the traveler; or
 - b. A person with a disability who needs an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation (and a personal care attendant, if necessary for the person with a disability to travel) who is required to travel.
5. The department travel card must be used to pay for all non-emergency airfare.
 - a. In emergency situations when the department travel card is unavailable, the traveler's own personal financial resources may be used.
 - b. When reimbursing the traveler, a comment by the approving manager must be included in the TEMS reimbursement request stating:
 - i. Airfare was purchased by the traveler due to an emergency and the department travel card was unavailable;
 - ii. Receipts have been received; and
 - iii. Amount claimed is within the maximum amount allowed by policy.
6. Travelers are expected to use their local airport unless it is determined to be more economical or advantageous to the state to use an alternative airport.
 - a. The traveler must provide documentation to support a decision to use an alternative airport.
 - b. If the traveler chooses another airport for reasons other than most economical or advantageous to the state, they must pay any excess costs.
7. If personal travel is involved, see [DSHS administrative policy 19.10.12 – general travel provisions](#).

B. Rental vehicle

1. A commercial rental vehicle may only be used for official state business under the following conditions:
 - a. A state-owned vehicle (agency or motor pool) is not available; or
 - b. The use of the rental vehicle is more economical or advantageous to the state than driving a state-owned vehicle.
2. Travel arrangements must be made by either:
 - a. Contacting the contracted provider directly ([Enterprise Rent-A-Car](#) - contract [#05619](#));
 - b. Using a state contracted travel agency or internet travel service provider (contract [#02219](#)).

3. Vehicles must be rented through the state mandatory contract (contract [#05619 – Enterprise Rent-A-Car](#)). The only exceptions are when:
 - a. The traveler must rent a vehicle at a destination that does not have an Enterprise location: or
 - b. There are no available cars at the Enterprise location.
4. The mandatory contract provides for insurance coverage. Travelers who choose to purchase additional insurance will not be reimbursed.
5. When renting a vehicle through a non-contracted rental company, the additional insurance coverage offered by the rental company must be purchased and will be reimbursed.
6. Travelers are not allowed to use rental vehicles for personal travel as the mandatory contract does not authorize vehicles to be used for other than official state business.
 - a. It is expected that travelers who couple a personal vacation with official state business will execute a personal contract to rent a motor vehicle for the vacation portion of the trip.
 - b. In those instances where the occasional incidental personal use is unavoidable, the traveler must document and pay for all personal miles driven.
7. Transporting unauthorized passengers is prohibited. Unauthorized passengers include, but are not limited to, family members, relatives, friends, pets, and other state employees not on official state business.
 - a. The state of Washington will not provide excess liability protection to any unauthorized passengers in the event of an accident.
8. The department travel card must be used to pay for vehicles rented through the state mandatory contract ([Enterprise Rent-A-Car](#)) and must be used, whenever possible, when renting off-contract.
 - a. In emergency situations, when renting vehicles through the mandatory contract, the traveler's own personal resources may be used if the department travel card is unavailable.
9. Rental vehicles must be refueled prior to returning, using the department travel card, or the traveler's own personal financial resources. A receipt for the fuel costs must be turned in by the traveler to receive reimbursement or to support the department travel card bill.
10. Travelers may request a specific sized rental vehicle with written approval from their supervisor. Any additional costs will be approved and paid for by the

administration if the request is considered necessary by the traveler's supervisor.

C. Common carrier (bus, train, ferry, etc.)

1. The maximum reimbursement is not to exceed the lowest class fare. This reimbursement limitation may be exceeded only for:
 - a. The health and safety of the traveler: or
 - b. A person with a disability needing an ADA accommodation (and a personal care attendant, if necessary for the person with a disability to travel) who is required to travel.
2. The department travel card is the preferred method of payment for common carriers.
 - a. In situations when the department travel card is unavailable, the traveler's own personal resources may be used.
3. Staff may pay for common carriers prior to a scheduled trip if the following conditions are met:
 - a. It is determined that the agency can save money by taking advantage of discounts offered by a common carrier;
 - b. Tickets are purchased using the department travel card; and
 - c. The agency retains control of the ticket or e-ticket authorization number(s).
4. If personal travel is involved, see [DSHS administrative policy 19.10.12 – general travel provisions](#).

D. State-owned vehicles (agency or fleet operations)

1. Policies regarding agency owned or DES fleet operations vehicles are outlined in [DSHS administrative policy 14.12 - accountability for state-owned vehicles](#)
 - a. CPU is responsible for the management of state-owned vehicles used by travelers.
 - b. [Vehicle coordinators](#) are appointed in each administration and are the primary point of contact for questions relating to state-owned vehicle policies and procedures.

- F. If the traveler requires a reasonable accommodation due to a disability for (work related) travel that would require an exception to travel policies, they must work with their supervisor or manager and Human Resources prior to travel expenses being incurred.**

Procedures for [claiming reimbursement through TEMS](#) are posted on the [travel website](#).

ⁱ Housekeeping to update links and add community compensation participant.

DSHS Official