**Division of Family and Children Services**

**Travel Policy**

Table of Contents

[Travel Policies and Regulations Overview2](#travel400)

[Employee/Department Responsibility](#eedept) (updated February 2024)3

[Non-Employee/Department Responsibility](#noneedept) (updated 7-22-20)5

[Travel Policies for Division of Family and Children Services Employees6](#travel401)

[Travel Authorization Approvals](#taa)6

[Meals Reimbursement (updated 2-7-22)](#travel402)8

[Meal Rates (In-State)](#mealinstate) (updated 3-2-22)8

[Reimbursement for Meals](#reimbmeals)8

[Meals during Daily Travel (updated 2-7-22)](#mealsdailytravel)9

[Lodging](#travel403)9

[Lodging Authorization (updated 2-7-22)](#lodgauth)9

[Lodging Rates (In-State Travel) (updated 7-29-22)10](#lodgrate)

[Reimbursement for Lodging](#lodgreimb)11

[Lodging within the 50-mile radius12](#lodg50)

[Transportation (updated March 2024)](#travel404)13

[In-State Transportation Expenses (Intrastate Expense)1](#instatetran)3

Tra[nsportation by Personal Vehicle (updated March 2024)14](#tranperscar)

[Commute Cost are not Reimbursable (updated 3/13/20)15](#Commute)

[Transportation by Rental Vehicle (updated March 2024)](#tranrentcar)17

[How to complete the cost comparison form18](#costcomp)

[Monthly Rentals (Agency On-Site Vehicles)](#onsite)21

[Individual Rental (daily and/or monthly)](#indrent)22

[Prohibited Mileage Reimbursement](#prohibmile) 23

[Documentation Required for Mileage, Parking and Toll Reimbursement](#documentation) 24

[Transportation by Common Carrier](#commoncarr)24

[Other Transportation25](#othertran)

[Out of State Travel (Interstate Travel) (updated March 2024)](#travel405)26

[Miscellaneous Travel Expenses (updated 2-7-22)30](#travel406)

[Non-Reimbursable Expenses (updated 7-22-20)31](#nonreimb)

[Travel Advances](#travel407)32

[Completion of Travel Advance33](#comptrladv)

[Recovery of Travel Advances (Cash, Hotels, and Rental Vehicles)](#rectrladv)[34](#lodgrate)

[Multi-County Travel Time and Reimbursement](#travel408) 35

[Travelers with Physical and/or Medical Conditions36](#travel409)

[Policy Exceptions](#travel410) 36

[State Audit – Potential Penalties.](#travel411)37

**400.** **Travel Policies and Regulations Overview**

**Employees are expected to exercise good stewardship of funds when traveling on official business. Any expenditure disallowed by DFCS is the responsibility of the employee. An employee who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim may be subject to penalties under criminal statutes.**

**A. Purpose**

1. The following travel regulations have been developed by the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budget based on the authority of House Bill 293, passed into law during the 2005 legislative session.
2. This resolution directs state agencies, boards, and commissions to adhere to the following travel regulations unless granted an exception. These travel regulations have been established to:

* Promote economy and efficiency in state government
* Treat employees fairly and equitably
* Outline what constitutes reasonable and necessary travel expenses
* Provide uniformity among the various departments of State government
* Utilize Teleconferencing to minimize travel cost whenever possible

**B. Travel Status**

1. County Department of Family and Children Services employees (those individualsoccupying an allocated position) are subject to required travel in the course of their employment. Thus, all employees are considered to be in travel status and are eligible for reimbursement for certain travel-related expenses as defined by law, provided funds have been budgeted appropriately. The travel-related expenses include but are not limited to:

* Mileage for use of a personal motor vehicle
* Transportation expenses
* Meals associated with overnight lodging and in certain circumstances where there is no overnight lodging
* Lodging expenses
* Certain miscellaneous expenses associated with travel, such as parking and toll fees

1. Receipts are required for all expenditures except for per diem cost
2. Credit Card Slips and Statements are **NOT allowable** in lieu of a required receipt.

It should be noted that travel reimbursements must be paid by the county department where the employee’s position is allocated (where the employee’s paycheck comes from)

**C. Employee/Department Responsibility**

1. Travel is a major expense item and strict control of travel funds must be maintained. The restrictions and guidelines apply to all travel funds regardless of their fund source (federal, state or county).

1. Travel must be directly related to the activities of the County Department of Family and Children Services and must be limited to the amount considered essential to the Department’s operations.
2. Careful attention to the use of group discounts, limitations in the number of employees who attend meetings and other cost-saving measures must be employed to the maximum extent possible, such as carpooling and using the state contract with Enterprise Rental Car.
3. Cost comparisons are completed for the business travel days in order to determine the most cost- effective means of transportation.

NOTE: If more cost advantageous to use a rental vehicle and the employee is combining work and personal business, then it is the employee’s responsibility to notify Enterprise that only work days are to be charged to the state and that the personal days will be paid by the employee.

NOTE: If the employee chooses to use their personal vehicle even though it is more cost advantageous to use the rental when combining business and personal travel, they will be reimbursed for Work Related mileage at the Tier 2 rate.

1. Travelers who are combining personal travel with business travel may only do so when the personal portion does not add any cost to the State. Travel arrangements must be made to accommodate the business duties of the traveler and not personal preference.
2. Travel expense reports are required to be submitted via the SMILE web portal no later than 30 calendar days after month in which travel occurred.

* If hotel costs are incurred, regardless of if paid with a DFCS check or a personal credit card, a ZERO balance receipt must be attached. For hotel costs that are direct billed, the balance may not always be ZERO, this depends upon the hotel.
* If a rental vehicle is used, an approved rental receipt signed by the supervisor, cost comparison form (to show most cost-effective mode of transportation), travel advance form (to authorize the use of the rental) and gas receipts must be submitted.
* Receipts for Miscellaneous expenditures, such as child meals are required and must include Child’s Legal Name, County of Custody, Date of Birth, and the individual amount spent for each child if receipt is for multiple meals.
* Reimbursement for child (ren) meals is limited to $50 per day.
  + DFCS’ field employees, regardless of their employment status, i.e. Active, Family Medical Leave, Leave without Pay or Terminated, will submit travel expenses in the SMILE Web Portal. (see #10 for exception)

1. Reimbursements will be processed within 5 business days provided the expense statements are correct, all supporting documentation is attached, and all approvals have been obtained. All travel reimbursements are direct deposited so there will be an additional 3 business days before they are posted to the employee’s account.

1. Incorrect travel expense reports will be rejected and sent back to the employee.
2. If expense report is incorrect when submitted and is sent back to the employee for corrections, the submission date of the corrected travel will determine if travel is taxable.
3. Travel expense records more than 60 calendar days after the month in which the travel occurred are to be submitted via paper form, are taxable, and are included on the employee’s W-2. The travel expense record will be rejected if submitted via the SMILE web portal.

NOTE: Travel that is 60 days old cannot be reported on the same travel expense record with travel that is less than 60 days old. If combined, travel expense report will be rejected.

1. Travel Advance requests are to be submitted via the SMILE web portal unless the advance is for out-of-state travel. Out-of-state travel requires the paper form. The out-of-state travel advance form is in the SMILE web portal.
2. If travel advances are not settled with submission of travel expense records within 60 calendar days after the month in which travel occurred, Regional Accounting will recoup the full amount of the advance from the employee’s payroll check. **Advances include mileage, meals, hotels, and vehicle rentals.**

**NOTE: If funds are recouped from the employee’s paycheck for failure to submit their travel documents timely, the opportunity to submit their travel after the funds have been recouped will not be given.**

**Travel that has been processed will not be reprocessed because of omissions by the employee.**

1. Employees should not assume that all expenses listed and explained on the travel expense record will be automatically approved. The expenses will be reviewed to ensure that they are reasonable and accurate.
2. Employees are reminded to keep a copy of their travel expense record (if paper submission is required) along with any supporting documentation in the event not received by accounting.
3. The following procedures have been put in place for submitting and approving a travel expense record when submission is more than 60 days than the last day of the month in which the travel occurred OR submission is for out-of-state travel.

* Employee completes their travel statement then types their name on employee line.
* Employee will email their Travel Statement and all supporting documentation to their supervisor with the following attestation statement in the body of the email: ***“I attest that I have incurred the described expenses and the State use mileage while performing my official duties for the State.”***
* Once the Supervisor has reviewed the travel statement and all supporting documentation for accuracy, they will email the travel statement and all supporting documentation to the Travel-RXX email with the following attestation statement in the body of the email: ***“I attest that I have reviewed and am authorizing payment.”***
* It will be the responsibility of the employee to maintain their original travel statement and documentation.

1. **Non-Employee/Department Responsibilities (Board, Interns, Temp Agency Staff)**

* Effective July 2020, all Non-Employees will be allowed to submit their travel expenses electronically on the Bill for Services Rendered Form 5357. The following procedures have been put in place for submitting and approving Form 5357:
* Non-Employee completes their Form 5357(Bill for Services Rendered) then types their name on Payee Signature line.
* Non-Employee will email their Form 5357 and all supporting documentation to the appropriate approving authority with the following attestation statement in the body of the email: ***“I attest that I have incurred the described expenses and the State use mileage while performing my official duties for the State.”***
* Once the approving authority has reviewed the Form 5357 and all supporting documentation for accuracy, they will email the Form 5357 and all supporting documentation to their Regional Accounting contact with the following attestation statement in the body of the email: ***“I attest that I have reviewed and am authorizing payment.”***
* It will be the responsibility of the non-employee to maintain their original Form 5357 and supporting documentation.

NOTE: It is recommended that the County Directors advise all non-employees to submit travel expenses each month so that regular operating spending projections will be more accurate.

1. Board members may ask for a hotel check in advance when attending state conferences.
2. Non-IV-E Interns and Temp Agency staff are not eligible to receive travel advances or hotel checks. This must be paid up front and then reimbursed by the appropriate school or agency.
3. IV-E Interns participating in an approved internship between an accredited university and the Department of Family and Children Services are not eligible for travel reimbursements.
4. Interns and staff acquired through Temp agencies are not allowed to transport clients.
5. DFCS Job Applicants when completing Pre-Employment requirements are eligible for travel reimbursement, such as fingerprinting, drug screening, and pre-orientation. Mileage will be reimbursed for actual miles traveled with no requirement to deduct commute miles or use a rental vehicle.
6. DFCS employees on the first day of employment are eligible for travel reimbursement for actual miles traveled with the requirement to deduct commute miles. Use of rental is not required.
7. The Enterprise Rental Car program does not apply to persons not employed by the agency.

**401.** **Travel Policies for Division of Family and Children Services Employees**

**A.** **Travel Authorization Approvals**

* Within the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the following management personnel have the authority, which may be delegated, for approving travel and related expenses:

NOTE: An employee’s immediate supervisor or higher-level administrative authorities are the only employees that may be delegated as approvers.

* Regional Managers have responsibility for approving the travel of County Directors and Field Program Specialist, but they may delegate this responsibility as described above.
* County Directors have responsibility for approving the travel of county employees, but they may delegate this responsibility as described above.

NOTE: Each Month, the DFCS county office should submit an Organization Chart so that we may identify the employees who are authorized to approve travel statements.

**B. Per Diem Compensation**

1. Per Diem compensation for meals (including taxes and tips) is applicable effective October 1, 2006 for state employees.

NOTE: The employee no longer must report the actual meal expense. The employee must only fill in the amount of the per diem allowance on their travel record for any meals that the employee is eligible for. The rates are the same as the current maximum rates.

**402. Meals Reimbursement**

**A.** **Meal Rates (In-state Travel)**

1. An individual taking annual or sick leave while away from headquarters on official business is not entitled to meals for the period of leave.
2. The maximum allowable daily rate for meals is $50.00.
3. Employees traveling overnight are generally eligible for per diem amounts designed to cover the cost of three meals per day for all days in travel status.
4. Travelers traveling overnight In State are entitled to only 75% of the total per diem rate on the first and last day of travel.
5. Employees can be reimbursed for no more than 20 miles per day to/from meeting/conference and eating establishments. This is only applicable for overnight travel. Reimbursements requested for mileage exceeding 20 miles per day will require additional approval from [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eligible Meals** | **Per Diem Amount** |
| Breakfast | $ 13.00 |
| Lunch | $ 14.00 |
| Dinner | $ 23.00 |
| **TOTAL** | **$ 50.00** |

**B.** **Reimbursement for Meals**

1. Per Diems cannot be claimed when meals are provided. Only the meals that are not provided can be claimed, and a copy of the conference agenda must be attached to validate.
   * + - The time of departure and time of return are not considered for calculating the Meal Per Diem when associated with overnight travel.
2. If an employee is unable to participate in a conference meal and purchases a meal in lieu of the meal provided at the conference, receipts are required. Justification for the meal purchase must be indicated on the travel statement. This should be a rare circumstance.

**C.** **Meals during Daily Travel**

1. Employees may receive the total day’s per diem rate when travel does not require overnight stay under the following situations:

* Employee’s destination must be more than 50 miles, one way, from their residence **and** employee must be away from residence for more than twelve (12) hours.
* The employee is acting as official department representative, and the meals are a part of the scheduled, official meeting. The meeting must be with people outside of the department (non-DHS), and the meeting must continue during the meal. Employees will not receive per diem if the premises of the meeting site are vacated.
* Employees may be reimbursed for a noon meal that is included as part of the registration fee for a meeting/conference. This should not be recorded as per diem, but reported under registration fees (627.106, Other Operating).

NOTE: A copy of the agenda must be attached as supporting documentation when meals are a part of the meeting and/or meals are a part of the registration fee.

1. Employee Group Meals Policy – The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance regarding situations in which an employer might purchase meals for a group of employees when such employees may not be on travel status or otherwise eligible for payment of meals and must be approved by the DFCS Director. This policy does not allow the purchase of meals for a “lunch meeting,” in which the meal and the meeting are one and the same. (for further information, see SAO Travel Policy, Employee Group Meals, page 3)

**403.** **Lodging**

1. **Lodging Authorization**
2. The employee’s supervisor must certify the reimbursement request is necessary and proper and require documentation from the employee to substantiate the overnight lodging.
3. Employee’s destination must be more than 50 miles, one way, from their residence **and** employee must be away from residence for more than twelve (12) hours.

NOTE: The 50 miles, one-way policy, applies to reservations made via Direct Billing through Education and Training as well as hotel advance check requests via SMILE Web portal. If the employee knows that their residence is not outside of the 50-mile radius, they should contact their supervisor immediately to cancel the hotel reservation.

1. Hotel accommodations for a night prior to a meeting/training that does not start until NOON or after will not be reimbursed.
2. Hotel accommodations for a night after the conclusion of trainings, conferences or meetings must be approved in advance by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

1. Lodging expenses other than for overnight accommodations will not be allowed.
2. All lodging claims must be documented with receipts and must be at a business that offers lodging to the general public, such as hotels and motels, and not a private residence.

**NOTE:** **Lodging rentals obtained through vacation rental marketplaces such as Airbnb, HomeAway and Vrbo are not considered commercial lodging facilities and should not be used while in travel status.**

1. Lodging should be within 10 miles one-way from the work site or training location. Any exceptions must be approved by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

**B.** **Lodging Rates (In-state Travel)**

1. Whenever practical, reservations should be made in advance, informing the reservation clerk that the reservation is for a state employee or be made by using the hotel’s online reservation site and selecting the State employee rate.
2. Reservations should not be booked for lodging with non-refundable rates or rates that require a deposit unless required for conference lodging.

**NOTE:** Hotel rates over $175 per night must be approved by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) and will require the hotel confirmation email and a written justification as to the reason for the higher hotel rate.

**EXCEPTION:** If a hotel rate is over $175 due to being the host hotel for a conference, then the registration form validating the hotel rate should be attached to justify the higher rate and will not require the approval from the DFCS-Travel-Waiver Unit.

1. Request commercial, government, or minimum rates and a standard room.
2. “Deluxe” or “Luxury” hotels and motels should be avoided.
3. Some hotels include a charge for “resort” or other fees. These are not tax-exempt fees and are reimbursed as an eligible lodging expense**. These fees are not advanced.**
4. If an employee chooses to make a reservation for a SUITE or stay in a deluxe/luxury hotel, unless the rates are the same, DFCS will only reimburse for the standard room rate. The employee will be responsible for paying the difference.
5. Proper identification and **tax-exempt forms are required upon check-in.**

**C. Reimbursement for Lodging**

1. Lodging will be reimbursed for reasonable actual costs. An employee should seek the least expensive option available considering proximity to their business destination and safety.

* Daily lodging expenses, whether paid by DFCS check or a personal credit card must be itemized on the travel expense statement and substantiated by an original receipt, showing a “0.00” balance. For hotel costs that are direct billed, the balance may not always be ZERO, this depends upon the hotel.
* If there is a balance due from the hotel, the employee’s reimbursement will be reduced by said amount and it is their responsibility to recoup from the hotel.
* Effective January 12, 2015, all hotel reservations required because of attendance in a classroom course offered by the Education and Training Unit, must be made through the course’s registration site. Accounting will no longer process hotel checks for these types of hotel stays. Hotel reservations through the site must be made, at the minimum, three (3) business days prior to the first night of lodging.
* Hotel checks processed thru Regional Accounting require the following items:
* Completed and Approved Travel Advance record via SMILE web portal
* Hotel confirmation
* Training Itinerary/Schedule or Training Registration Confirmation Email
* Copy of the last-minute notification if it is for training through Education and Training’s IOTIS system.
  + - * These checks will be mailed to the employee’s home (if time permits) or to the DFCS office as designated by the employee. If an employee chooses to pick up their hotel advance, mileage cannot be claimed.
* The only acceptable circumstances that the state will allow reimbursement to an employee for “no-show” expenses are inclement weather and unexpected changes in job responsibilities.
* Nonrefundable rates cannot be changed or cancelled; therefore, the traveler is accepting the risk of a non-reimbursable cancelation fee.
* “No-show” expenses for other reasons will be taken from either the employee’s or supervisor’s paycheck.

**The employee will be responsible for the charges if they cannot provide a copy of an email where they notified their supervisor of the need to cancel the hotel reservation.**

**The supervisor will be responsible for the charges if they cannot provide documentation where they completed the cancellation request in IOTIS.**

**D. Lodging within the 50 mile radius**

Lodging may be reimbursed when the destination is within the 50-mile radius of the employee’s residence with appropriate justification and prior approval from the DFCS Travel Waiver Unit.

EXCEPTION RULE: Request for exception to the 50-mile rule must be sent to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) for consideration. DO NOT obtain lodging and expect the state to cover costs if you have not received a response from the unit. If the exception request is approved, the email will need to be submitted with the travel expense record.

**E. Shared Lodging**

1. When a room is shared with other employees on travel status, employees have a choice of the following reimbursement options:

* If one employee pays for the room, that employee will put the charges on their travel record. The paying employee must include the employee’s name (s) and their ERS number(s) with whom room was shared. Any other charges appearing on the bill will be notated with the name(s) of employee(s) who incurred the expense.
* The non-paying employee(s) will indicate on their travel record the name(s) of the employee’s and their ERS number (s) with whom room was shared.

If an employee is accompanied by a non-state employee while on travel status, they are entitled to reimbursement at the single room rate only.

1. A paid original receipt with a “0.00” balance must be submitted with the travel expense record for reimbursement. The exception would be if the cost is being direct billed; sometimes the hotel will not give a “0.00” balance receipt.

**F. Taxes Applied to Lodging Expenses**

1. It is the responsibility of the employee to submit the **State Sales Tax Form** <http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/GA%20Tax%20Exempt.pdf>

AND THE

**Local Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Form** (AKA: county or municipal excise tax or

Occupancy tax)

<http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/hotel-motel_tax_exemption_form.pdf>

at check-in to the hotel.

NOTE: Exemptions for these taxes (Georgia State Sales Tax and the Local Hotel/Motel

Excise Tax) do not apply when staying at an out-of-state hotel/motel.

Some hotels include a charge for “resort” or other fees. These are not tax-exempt fees and are reimbursed as an eligible lodging expense**. These fees will not be advanced.**

**G. County and Municipal Excise Taxes**

1. Section 48-13-51 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated exempts Georgia state and local government employees and officials, who are traveling within the state on official business, from paying the local hotel/motel excise tax (AKA: county or municipal excise tax or Occupancy Tax) on lodging.

All State, local government officials and employees traveling within the state will be responsible for paying a $5 Hotel fee that is effective July 1, 2015. This fee is to fund the new HB 170 (GA Transportation Bill). State employees are not exempt from this fee.

NOTE: For hotels that are direct billed, the hotel includes the $5 hotel fee as part of the nightly rate. Employees do not need to request an advance for this fee.

1. All state, local government officials and employees traveling in Cobb County will be responsible for paying the $3 cost associated with the new Braves Stadium.
2. The local hotel/motel excise tax (AKA: county or municipal excise tax or Occupancy Tax) form should be submitted upon check-in even if payments are being made with a DFCS check, personal credit card or cash.
3. If tax exemption forms are submitted, but the hotel/motel refuses to accept the forms at check-in, the employee should attempt to resolve the issue with hotel management before checking out at the end of their stay. If the matter is not resolved by the time the employee checks out, the employee should pay the tax, and include the expense as part of the nightly lodging rate.
4. When the payment method being used is either direct billed to the agency or an agency check, the lodging is eligible for exemption from GA sales tax.
5. If the employee uses their personal credit card, and is charged GA Sales Tax, they will be reimbursed.

**404. Ground Transportation**

**A. In-State Transportation Expenses (Intrastate Expense)**

* 1. Travel to points within Georgia required for the accomplishment of official business shall be regarded as in-state travel.
  2. The most cost-effective method of transportation that will accomplish the purpose of the travel should be selected.
  3. For employees who live out-of-state, reimbursable mileage begins at their housing county.
  4. An employee cannot choose to claim personal miles in lieu of actual miles to avoid being reimbursed at the TIER 2 RATE.

**B. Transportation by Personal Vehicle**

Employees traveling on DFCS business in any rented vehicle or their personal vehicle are covered by the state’s liability policy which provides full liability coverage and personal immunity for the employee for damages and injuries the employee may cause to others.

For this reason, employees should maintain the GA Liability Card <http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/StateLiabilityInsuranceCard.pdf> in these vehicles at all times.

The State, however, does not provide coverage for damages to your personal vehicle. Cost of repairs to a personal vehicle, whether or not they result from the employee’s acts, are not reimbursable.

* The mileage reimbursement rate for business use of personal vehicle (pursuant to Section 50-19-7 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated) is tied to the rate established by the United States General Services Administration (GSA).

NOTE: The cost comparison tool on the DFCS Enterprise Rental Car site needs to be completed to determine the most cost-effective means of transportation (refer to Section 404-C Transportation by Rental Vehicle below).

* It is MANDATORY that the cost comparison form be completed for EACH day that travel is more than 75 business related miles. If multiple days have the same number of miles, one cost comparison form can be done with the dates traveled written on the cost comparison.

The cost comparison tool can be found on the DFCS Enterprise Rental Car site at:

[**http://www.enterprise.com/car\_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=028&refId=DFCSSTGA**](http://www.enterprise.com/car_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=028&refId=DFCSSTGA)

**NOTE**: The cost of a Rental vehicle cannot be charged to DFCS when an employee’s personal vehicle is unavailable for them to perform their duties, i.e., the employee does not own a vehicle, the employee’s vehicle is in the shop, has been wrecked, is a leased vehicle with limited mileage allowances or their personal vehicle is being used by another family member.

1. Mileage rates will change ONLY upon notification from the State Accounting Office and the Office of Planning and Budgets; new rates should not be applied based solely on GSA or IRS updates.

NOTE: Historical rates for mileage reimbursement are:

* + January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 was $0.58
  + January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 was $0.575
  + January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021 was $0.56
  + January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022 was $0.585
  + July 1, 2022 December 2022 was $0.625
  + January 1, 2023 to December 2023 was $0.655
  + January 1, 2024 to current is $0.67

1. The current reimbursement rate per mile includes all expenses, such as gasoline, oil, flat tires, towing fees, vehicle insurance, etc., incurred in the operation of a personally owned, rented, or leased vehicle. This includes insurance deductibles in the event of an accident while on duty
2. Reimbursement for business use of a personally owned vehicle is calculated per mile, from point of departure after deduction for normal commuting mileage.
3. During the workweek, when departing from your residence without reporting to your county where housed, commute miles must be deducted. When returning home without reporting to your county where housed, commute miles must be deducted.

NOTE: If an employee makes a visit on their way to work or on their way home, personal commute miles must still be deducted.

Examples:

The employee’s normal commute mileage is 60 miles round trip (RT).

* 1. The employee leaves in the morning from his/her Residence to make a home visit and then returns to their Residence. The total distance traveled is 40 miles RT. The employee’s total (business) miles (40) are less than the normal round-trip commute miles (60), so there is no reimbursement for business mileage.
  2. The employee leaves in the morning from his/her Residence to make a home visit 40 miles away and returns to his Residence, afterwards. The total distance traveled is 80 miles RT. The employee’s reimbursable business mileage is 20 miles (80 miles traveled less 60 miles normal commute mileage = 20 business miles.)

NOTE: The direction of the meeting or home visit from the employee’s Residence is not factored into the reimbursement. The normal commute miles must always be subtracted when an employee travels from their Residence to a training, meeting, conference, or home visit. If the total miles traveled exceed the employee’s round trip commute miles, the miles in excess of his/her normal commute are eligible for reimbursement.

1. **[Commuting costs are not reimbursable](F:\\RO-TRAVEL Trainings\\Commute).**

Any location other than a DHS/DFCS workplace is considered the alternate worksite, not the primary.  The DHS/DFCS workplace is the primary work location.

Every employee must have a designated DHS/DFCS workplace.

For all employees, including those who live out of state, their work mileage will begin at their designated DHS/DFCS workplace.

**When teleworking 5 days a week:**

* If alternate worksite is the employee’s home and 100% of job duties are performed at home, employee should not incur any mileage expenses.  If this employee should have to report to DHS/DFCS **primary** workplace for any reason, miles from home to that workplace are considered commute miles and therefore not reimbursable.  If this employee should have to report to DHS/DFCS workplace **other than his/her primary**, then commute miles would have to be deducted from the total miles to arrive at reimbursable miles.
* If alternate worksite is the employee’s home but most job duties are performed at locations other than home, reimbursable miles would begin from the employee’s DHS/DFCS workplace.  Miles from home (alternate worksite) to the DHS/DFCS designated workplace are considered commute miles and therefore not reimbursable. If this employee should have to report to DHS/DFCS workplace other than his/her primary, then commute miles would have to be deducted from the total miles to arrive at reimbursable miles.

**When teleworking occasionally:**

* Miles from home (alternate worksite) to the DHS/DFCS designated workplace are considered commute miles and therefore not reimbursable. If this employee should have to report on their telework day to DHS/DFCS workplace other than his/her primary, then commute miles would have to be deducted from the total miles to arrive at reimbursable miles.

NOTE: An approved telework agreement must be on file with your local regional accounting office. Telework forms must be updated yearly.

**EXCEPTIONS** to Commute Travel Policy:

* If travel occurs on the weekend or holiday outside of the normal work schedule, mileage is calculated from the point of departure with no reduction for normal commuting miles
* If an after-hour’s call (on-call) is received, and the employee has already completed their workday and is home, normal commute miles are not deducted.
* Mandatory requirement to work over the weekend when not part of normal work hours **AND** employee is not receiving paid overtime compensation.

1. The current reimbursement rates for the business use of a personal motor vehicle are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Determination Based upon usage of Cost Comparison Form when applicable.**  **Cost Comparison Form MUST be attached to travel statement** | **Tier 1 Rate** | | | **Tier 2 Rate**  $0.21 | **Exceptions** |
| $0.67 | $0.65 | $1.76 |
| Automobile | Motorcycle | Aircraft |
| Personal vehicle is most advantageous to State and used | X | X | X |  |  |
| Leased or Agency On-Site Rental vehicle is available and most advantageous to State, but personal vehicle is used |  |  |  | X |  |
| Enterprise Rent-a-Car is most advantageous, but personal vehicle is used |  |  |  | X |  |

Travelers who are combining personal travel with business travel may only do so when the personal portion does not add any cost to the State. Travel arrangements must be made to accommodate the business duties of the traveler and not personal preference.

NOTE: If more cost advantageous to use a rental vehicle and the employee is combining work and personal business, then it is the employee’s responsibility to notify Enterprise that only Workdays are to be charged to the state and that the Personal Days will be paid by the employee.

NOTE: If the employee chooses to use their personal vehicle even though it is more cost advantageous to use the rental when combining business and personal travel, they will be reimbursed for Work Related mileage at the Tier 2 rate.

1. If an employee is not eligible to rent a vehicle, whether for personal or business purposes, and the cost comparison form has deemed it the most cost-effective means of transportation, they will only be reimbursed at the TIER 2 RATE when using their personal vehicle.
2. **Transportation by Rental Vehicle**
3. Enterprise Rent-a-Car is the primary contractor for in-state travel.

1. Employees are not allowed to get a gas card from the Enterprise locations. If an employee accepts a gas card, these charges will be taken from their payroll check.
2. The cost of a Rental vehicle cannot be charged to DFCS when an employee’s personal vehicle is unavailable for them to perform their duties, i.e., the employee does not own a vehicle, the employee’s vehicle is in the shop, has been wrecked, is a leased vehicle with limited mileage allowances or their personal vehicle is being used by another family member.
3. Employees traveling on DFCS business in any rented vehicle or their personal vehicle are covered by the state’s liability policy. For this reason, employees should maintain the GA Liability Card <http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/StateLiabilityInsuranceCard.pdf> in these vehicles at all times.
4. The state liability policy is only in effect while the employee is using the rental vehicle for official state business. For this reason, personal use of the vehicle including allowing friends or family members to ride in a state rental vehicle is prohibited.
5. In the event of an accident, Risk Management should be contacted at 1-877-656-7475 and contact your local Enterprise Rental Location.
6. Damages to Enterprise Vehicles - Enterprise needs a police report when damage happens to the vehicle to include what caused the damage and the date and time the damage was identified.
7. Express Lane Tolls should not be used while in a rental vehicle.
8. Regardless if you own, borrow, lease, or rent a vehicle, the cost comparison form on the DFCS Enterprise rental site should be completed to determine the most cost-effective means of transportation.
9. If an employee is not eligible to rent a vehicle, whether for personal or business purposes, and the cost comparison form has deemed it the most cost-effective means of transportation, they will only be reimbursed at the TIER 2 RATE if personal vehicle is used instead.
10. The cost comparison form MUST be **completed** **based on a compact vehicle** size and be attached to the Travel Record when submitted for reimbursement. **If the cost comparison form is not attached, the travel record will be returned for corrections.** The website to access the Cost Comparison tool and to make rental reservations for DFCS field employees is:

[**http://www.enterprise.com/car\_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=028&refId=DFCSSTGA**](http://www.enterprise.com/car_rental/deeplinkmap.do?bid=028&refId=DFCSSTGA)

1. All reservations for DFCS field employees must be made through this **dedicated DFCS** **Enterprise Online Reservation Site. Reservations should not be made by phone.**
2. Renting from airport locations should be avoided unless the rental is being picked up out-of-state **OR** non-airport locations in-state have **no** available inventory.
3. Hertz is the primary contractor when picking up a rental vehicle out-of-state. Travel Incorporated will handle car rental reservations in conjunction with air travel reservations.
4. **0 to 75 miles**: When traveling 75 business miles or less per day, the employee’s personal vehicle or the Agency On-Site Rental Vehicle, if available, should be used.
5. **76 miles and over**: When traveling more than 75 business miles per day, the employee must complete the Cost Comparison Form to determine the most cost-effective means of transportation but can use the Agency On-Site Rental Vehicle if available. Personal vehicle must be the most cost-effective method of transportation to receive Tier 1 reimbursement.

It is MANDATORY that the cost comparison form be completed for EACH day that travel is more than 75 business related miles. If multiple days have the same number of miles, one cost comparison form can be done with the dates traveled written on the cost comparison.

**How to complete the Cost Comparison Form:**

* + Select **ENTERPRISE** (in-state)
  + Enter the Number of Business Miles based on a computer-generated map program
  + When staying overnight, include **up to 20 miles per day** as part of your business miles for days other than day of departure and day of return to cover travel between your training/conference, hotel, and eating establishments. Reimbursements requested for mileage exceeding 20 miles per day for will require additional approval from [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).
  + Enter the Number of Commute Miles (please include the number of miles that you will have to drive to pick up and return the rental vehicle, round trip)
* Enter Number of days you plan to rent (remember that if you must pick up the vehicle on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday for a Monday departure, you will need to include those days in your calculations)

**NOTE**: If you are renting for three (3) or more weeks back-to-back, then you will need to complete the Individual Monthly Rental Waiver. The waiver must be completed (with all applicable signatures) and sent for review and approval at least 7 but no more than 30 business days prior to date of need. These requests are to be emailed to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov). Vehicles should not be picked up until approval is received.

* Access to a vehicle provided by DFCS, always answer NO
* Select Vehicle Size, you must ALWAYS select COMPACT, this does not mean that is what you will rent, but for the comparison it is MANDATORY
* At this point, Print your cost comparison, and do not choose Reserve Enterprise Car.
* Return to the previous screen and choose the region/county that you are paid from to make your reservation.

**For consecutive day travel:** If traveling for consecutive days in a row to attend trainings, meetings, or conferences, the employee must combine miles for all days when completing the Cost Comparison Form to determine the most cost-effective means of transportation.

If the Cost Comparison states it is most cost effective to rent a vehicle, and the employee chooses to drive their personal vehicle, they will be reimbursed at the TIER 2 Rate for work related mileage.

NOTE: Time spent arranging and picking up a rental vehicle is not a prevailing factor when determining the most cost-effective means of transportation.

When renting a vehicle, the employee should remember to adhere to the following:

* All reservations must be made through the dedicated **Enterprise Online Reservation Site** for DFCS employees and not by phone.
* Rental vehicles under the Enterprise Statewide Car Rental Vendor Contract should be returned with the same amount of gas that it had when it was picked up. Travelers should pay close attention to the fuel amount when they pick up the vehicle to ensure there are no overcharges for gas upon return of the rental vehicle.
  + - * If there are fuel charges reported on the Enterprise receipt, those charges will be recouped from the employee’s paycheck
* Liability coverage should be declined
* Loss Damage should be declined

* Collision Damage should be declined, unless traveling outside of the United States
* Roadside assistance is included in the contract with Enterprise
* Express Lane Tolls should not be used while in a rental car. If fees are received by the agency, those fees will be recouped from the employee’s paycheck.
* Approved vehicle rental sizes are: Compact, Intermediate or Full-Size bearing in mind that is mandatory that cost comparison is completed using the Compact selection.

**NOTE**: Rental of other vehicle sizes require a business-related justification and must be

approved by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) **before** renting.

1. **MONTHLY RENTAL (Agency On-Site Rental Vehicles)**

If your agency requires an onsite rental vehicle, pre-authorization must be obtained from by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov)

The Agency Monthly Rental Waiver must be completed (with all applicable signatures) and submitted to request an initial or additional agency on-site rental for your agency. This request will be submitted to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) for them to determine cost effectiveness and approve/deny. The approved Agency Monthly Rental Waiver will be emailed from [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) to the DFCS agency car custodian, with a CC to Regional Accounting.

Vehicles should not be picked up until approval is obtained.

Approvals will be for periods beginning on the first day of a month and ending on the last day of a month due to the invoicing cycle of the rental company.

Requests for vehicle sizes larger than a full size require a business-related justification and must receive approval from [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) **before** renting.

When utilizing Enterprise rental vehicles as an agency “motor pool”, rental of such vehicles will be made by the employing agency, rather than the individual employee (refer to Agency Monthly Rental Waiver on the FFS Website). Employees will be required to fuel out of pocket when using the onsite rental vehicles.

NOTE: The fuel receipt along with the agency rental mileage log page must be submitted with the employee’s travel record to receive reimbursement.

Employees traveling on DFCS business in any rented vehicle are covered by the state’s liability policy. Employees should maintain the GA Liability Card

<http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/StateLiabilityInsuranceCard.pdf> in these vehicles always.

Rental vehicles under the Statewide Car Rental Vendor Contract should be returned with the same amount of gas that it had when it was picked up. Travelers should pay close attention to the fuel amount when they pick up the vehicle to ensure there are no overcharges for gas upon return of the rental vehicle.

1. **INDIVIDUAL RENTAL (Rental needed for three (3) or more consecutive weeks)**

If an employee requires a rental for three (3) or more consecutive weeks and qualifies for use, the Individual Monthly Rental Waiver must be completed (with all applicable signatures) and submitted along with training confirmation, hotel confirmation (if applicable), cost comparison form, and any other justifiable documentation to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

Requests must be submitted at least 7 business but no more than 30 calendar days prior to date of need. Cost effectiveness will be determined and the request will be approved or denied. Approval/Denial will be emailed to the requester with a CC to Regional Accounting. Vehicles should not be picked up until approval is obtained.

Express Lane Tolls should not be used while in a rental vehicle. If the agency should receive a bill for such fees, those fees will be recouped from the employee’s paycheck.

Employees traveling on DFCS business in any rented vehicle are covered by the state’s liability policy. Employees should maintain the GA Liability Card

<http://ffs.dhs.ga.gov/ffs/information/travel/StateLiabilityInsuranceCard.pdf> in these vehicles always.

The cost of a Rental vehicle cannot be charged to DFCS when an employee’s personal vehicle is unavailable for them to perform their duties, i.e., the employee does not own a vehicle, the

employee’s vehicle is in the shop, has been wrecked, is a leased vehicle with limited mileage allowances or their personal vehicle is being used by another family member.

When an employee is renting an individual vehicle, whether it is direct billed or charged to their credit card, the employee must itemize all mileage on their Travel record as if they were using their own personal vehicle.

When multiple employees share an individual rental vehicle, the costs associated for the rental and fuel must be assigned to one individual.

When picking up the rental vehicle, please notify Enterprise that there will be multiple drivers. This ensures liability coverage for all drivers.

Rental vehicles under the Statewide Car Rental Vendor Contract should be returned with the same amount of gas that it had when it was picked up. Travelers should pay close attention to the fuel amount when they pick up the vehicle to ensure there are no overcharges for gas upon return of the rental vehicle.

If there are fuel charges reported on the Enterprise receipt, those charges will be recouped from the employee paycheck.

1. **PROHIBITED MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENTS**
2. Travel between an employee’s residence and primary work location during the regular work week
3. When there is a mandatory requirement for an employee to work over the weekend and they are receiving paid overtime compensation
4. Mileage incurred to drop off or pick up travel statements, travel checks or payroll checks from regional accounting
5. Personal mileage incurred while on travel status
6. **PARKING AND TOLL FEES**

Tolls (does not include Express Toll Lanes) and reasonable parking charges incurred while on official State business will be reimbursed, in addition to the mileage allowance.

Costs are reimbursable for travel in both state-leased, rented, or personal vehicles.

**H.** **DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR MILEAGE, PARKING AND TOLL REIMBURSEMENT**

1. Odometer readings must be recorded on the travel expense record for which reimbursement will be made.
2. Personal mileage should be deducted to determine the actual official business use miles.
3. Mileage should be based on the most direct route from point of departure to destination. Any deviations from the most direct route should be explained on the expense record and be approved by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).
4. Parking and toll expenses (does not include Express Lanes Tolls) should also be recorded on the travel expense statement. Receipts are required when obtainable.

**I.** **TRANSPORTATION BY COMMON CARRIER**

When an employee is traveling out-of-state, they must receive prior approval using the Interstate Travel Request Forms 5354-Employee, Form 5354-Child, or Out of State Travel Request Form (refer to Out-of-State Travel Policy on FFS Website or Section 405 of this policy).

1. Reimbursement for air, rail, or bus fare is limited to actual coach fare; substantiated by receipt, ticket stub, or other documented evidence of costs, attached to the employee travel expense statement.
2. Employees who require air travel should contact Travel Incorporated, Account # is 127XX00YYY (XX is 2-digit region, and YYY is the county number) and provide your employee id number

The phone numbers for Travel, Inc. are:

Reservations (770) 291-4200

Toll Free 1-800 241-0944

FAX (770) 291-5175

1. This process should not slow down the DFCS County office from getting rapid service. The use of electronic tickets will be used, and cost is charged to an account established by the State Office Travel Unit.
2. Baggage Cost related to Common Carrier Travel

* Most airlines are now charging for checked luggage and for curbside check-in. In the event there is a charge for checking the traveler’s first piece of luggage, the State will reimburse for that charge.
* If there is no charge for the first piece of luggage, the State will not reimburse for additional pieces of checked luggage unless an appropriate business purpose explanation is provided.
* Baggage charges incurred for excess weight will not be reimbursed unless an appropriate business purpose explanation is provided.

**J. TRANSPORATION BY RAILROAD**

When an employee is traveling out-of-state, they must receive prior approval using the Interstate Travel Request Forms 5354-Employee, Form 5354-Child, or Out of State Travel Request Form (refer to Out-of-State Travel Policy on FFS Website or Section 405 of this policy).

1. Employees may be reimbursed for the actual cost of rail transportation provided the appropriate personnel authorized the travel expense in advance.
2. Employees traveling by rail are encouraged to obtain the lowest possible fare.
3. There is not a statewide contract for transportation by rail.

**K.** **OTHER TRANSPORTATION**

The most cost-effective method of transportation that will accomplish the purpose of the travel should be selected.

1. Uber/Lyft services for business destinations while on travel status are reimbursable. Receipts are required.

If cost comparison determines that personal vehicle is most cost effective based on a Web Based Map Program, then Uber reimbursement will be at the TIER 1 rate for business miles claimed, but no more than the actual receipt amount.

If cost comparison determines that rental vehicle is most cost effective based on a Web Based Map Program, then Uber reimbursement will be at TIER 2 rate for business miles claimed, but no more than the actual receipt amount.

Reimbursement of business travel on MARTA will be paid at $2.50 per one-way commute. Receipts are required.

**405.** **Out of State Travel (Interstate Travel)**

Employees are considered traveling outside Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at an out-of-state location.

Employees who are working in Georgia but spending the night in a bordering state are not considered to be traveling outside of Georgia.

Proposed out-of-state travel must receive prior approval using the Interstate Travel Request Forms 5354-Employee or 5354-Child when transporting children, or the Out of State Travel Request when traveling to conferences/meetings.

**Procedures for Out of State Travel – Child Related**

1. Employee should determine who will need to travel, just the child(ren), depending on age, or the child(ren) and a DFCS case manager.
2. The Forms 5354-Employee and 5354-Child that are required to transport children to and from another state must be completed and then approved by the following:

* Employee
* Supervisor
* County Director
* Regional Director
* District Director

**EXCEPTION:** In emergency situations, the county director can approve out-of-state travel, but the Interstate Travel Request Forms 5354-Employee and 5354-Child should still be submitted to the applicable approving authorities as soon as possible for approval.

1. The DFCS case manager should contact Travel, Inc. to obtain the best rates for the travel accommodations needed.
2. Airfare – Travel, Inc. can be contacted by calling (770) 291-4200 or 1-800-241-0944. Travel, Inc. will ask the agency to provide them with the arrival date and time, Organization Number (4270000000) and/or County DFCS to be charged.
3. Vehicle Rental - If a vehicle needs to be rented to transport the child from the airport to their destination, Hertz Rental should be used. Hertz is the primary contractor when using a rental vehicle for out-of-state travel. The account # is 44052615.
4. If the employee needs a Travel Advance, the approved 5354-Employee form must be submitted with the manual travel advance form. The 5354-Children form will not be required until the manual Travel Expense Statement is submitted.

1. If the employee is not requesting a Travel Advance, the approved 5354-Employee and 5354-Child forms will be submitted along with the manual Travel Expense Statement when requesting reimbursement.

NOTE: A manual travel expense statement must be completed regardless of whether the employee owes the agency, the agency owes the employee, or there is no balance due.

**GOOD TO KNOW TIPS:**

* In the event a DFCS caseworker or colleague cannot transport the child (ren), then the county should seek assistance from an approved WRAP provider. Pay from WRAP (518).
* If there are unusual circumstances that dictate the need to have a CCI or CPA case manager transport an RBWO child (ren), a waiver approved by the Fiscal Services Program Director is required and must be attached to the Travel, Inc. itineraries and all other supporting documentation when submitted to Regional Accounting to pay from state funds (504).
* Travel, Inc., and all other associated cost for any non**-**employee, such as a parent, who travels with a DFCS child must be charged to county funds.

**Procedures for Out of State Travel – Non-Child Related**

1. For any travel out-of-state other than transporting children, the manual Out of State Travel Request form is required and must be approved by the following:

* County Director
* DFCS Division Director
* Fiscal Operations Manager for budget approval
* Ethics Officer if 3rd party is paying travel expense

1. The DFCS case manager should contact Travel, Inc. to obtain the best rates for the travel accommodations needed.
2. Airfare – Travel, Inc. can be contacted by calling (770) 291-4200 or 1-800-241-0944. Travel, Inc. will ask the agency to provide them with the arrival date and time, Organization Number (4270000000) and/or County DFCS to be charged.
3. Vehicle Rental - If a vehicle needs to be rented, Hertz Rental should be used. Hertz is the primary contractor when using a rental vehicle for out-of-state travel. The account # is 44052615.
4. If the employee needs a Travel Advance, the approved Out-of-State Travel Request form must be submitted with the manual travel advance form.
5. If the employee is not requesting a Travel Advance, the approved Out-of-State Travel Request form will be submitted along with the manual Travel Expense Statement when requesting reimbursement.

NOTE: A manual travel expense statement must be completed regardless of whether the employee owes the agency, the agency owes the employee, or there is no balance due.

**Meal rate (Out-of-State Travel)**

1. Employees should make every effort to stay within the prescribed meal limits.
2. Reference should be made to the federal per diem rates to determine appropriate meal limits.

* Per Diem Rates for United States <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>
* Per Diem Rates for Outside United States <https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp>

1. For out-of-state trips involving multiple travel destinations, please reach out to the DFCS-Travel-Waiver unit to assist you in determining the correct per diem rate to be claimed.
2. Please remember that the GSA website per diem rates include an incidental charge which is not to be included as part of your per diem allowance.

1. An individual taking annual or sick leave while away from headquarters on official business is not entitled to meals for the period of leave.

**GOOD TO KNOW TIPS:**

* Reimbursement for child (ren) meals are limited to GSA rates for the area to which they are traveling.

**Meals during Overnight Travel outside of Georgia**

1. Per Diem compensation for meals is to be reported via the manual Travel Expense Statement, Form 726, by date, location, and amount.
2. Employees traveling “Out of State” overnight are generally eligible for per diem amounts designed to cover the cost of three (3) meals per day for all days on travel status **other than** the day of departure and the day of return.
   * 1. Travelers are eligible for 75 percent (75%) of the total per diem rate on the first and last day of travel.
        1. For example, if the per diem rate allows a *$54* total reimbursement, *$41.00* would be allowable on a travel departure or return day *($54 X 0.75 = $41*.) As a result, the time of departure and time of return are not considerations for calculating the Meal Per Diem when associated with overnight travel.
3. Per Diems cannot be claimed when meals are provided. On the travel departure or return day, the per diem reimbursement rate is reduced by the amount of the provided meal(s) after the 75% proration is calculated.
   * + 1. For example, if the per diem allows a $54 total reimbursement, and lunch was provided at no cost on a travel departure or return day, the total allowable reimbursement for that day would be $26 *($54 X 0.75= $41 less $15 lunch = $26.00*).

**Reimbursement for Lodging**

1. Lodging will be reimbursed for reasonable actual costs. An employee should seek the least expensive option available considering proximity to their business destination and safety.
2. All lodging claims must be documented with receipts and must be at a business that offers lodging to the general public, such as hotels and motels, and not a private residence.

**NOTE:** Lodging rentals obtained through vacation rental marketplaces such as Airbnb, HomeAway and Vrbo are not considered commercial lodging facilities and should not be used while in travel status.

1. Daily lodging expenses will either be paid by cash or personal credit card and must be itemized on the manual travel expense statement and substantiated by an original receipt, showing a “0.00” balance.
2. Cash Advances for lodging can be processed by Regional Accounting. The following items are required:

* Manual travel advance form
* Hotel confirmation
* Authorized Form 5354-Employee or Out-of-State Travel Request Form

NOTE: These checks will either be mailed to the employee’s home, to the DFCS office as designated by the employee, or the employee can choose to have the advance direct deposited into their bank account. If an employee chooses to pick up their travel advance, mileage will not be reimbursed.

**Other Transportation**

1. The most reasonable and customary means of transportation should be used when traveling.
2. The State will reimburse for shuttle or airport vans to and from airports and railroad stations when such service is not included in air and rail fares, and where public transportation is not practical.

NOTE: Although receipts are recommended, for employees to be reimbursed for tips receipts will

be required for travel by mass transportation, shuttle services and airport vans. Point-to-point explanation is required for each item reimbursed.

1. Taxi services between business destinations while on travel status are reimbursable, receipts are required.
2. Uber services between business destinations while on travel status are reimbursable receipts are required

**Transportation by Automobile**

1. If the use of an automobile for out-of-state travel is economically advantageous, the employee shall be entitled to:

* Reimbursement of mileage at the allowable state mandated rate for miles traveled in the performance of official duties.

**406.** **Miscellaneous Travel Expenses**

Expenditures unrelated to traveling that should be processed via the normal Purchasing procedure will not be reimbursed if included on the Travel Expense record. Exceptions will need to be sent to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) for approval.

Travelers must always obtain receipts.

Reimbursable expenses while on official travel status include, but are not limited to, the following:

* + - Business office expenses (copy services, postage, and supplies)
    - Business related phone calls, faxes, and internet usage charges and fees
    - Transportation costs from lodging or businesses to restaurants (domestic travel only)
    - Conference/Registration fees
    - Costs related to passports and travel visas when necessary to accomplish the official business purpose of the trip
    - Costs related to vaccinations required and/or recommended for international business travel
    - Currency conversion fees
    - Baggage handling services, only, not to exceed $5 per day
    - Laundry or cleaning expenses on trips lasting seven (7) calendar days or more
    - Client Expenses
    - Tips for Taxi, Shuttles, and Ride Share Services (Uber/Lyft) are allowed up to 20% total cost of the service. Receipts are required.

1. While in travel status, an employee may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in providing meals, lodging and other reimbursable expense (s) for clients.
   * The cost associated with an employee having to stay overnight with a foster child due to the inability to find a placement will be paid from state funds (UAS 522)
   * Other reimbursable expenditures such as a foster child’s meals, clothing, medical, etc. incurred while the child is with an employee are paid from County funds
2. The employee’s travel expense record is to be used to record these expenses; an employee should not ask for reimbursement for these expenses out of petty cash.
3. Cost associated with client expenditures should be reported in section E of the travel expense record. Receipts must be attached, listing each child’s full name, date of birth, child’s legal county of residence, and individual amount spent for each child if receipt is for multiple meals.
4. Reimbursement for child (ren) meals is limited to $50 per day.

**Non-Reimbursable Expenses**

Non-reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

* + - Airline, vehicle, and card membership dues and club fees
    - Airline reserved/priority seating fees, Travel upgrade fees (air, rail, vehicle)
    - Alcoholic beverages, Mini-bar charges
    - Bank charges for ATM withdrawals, except on international travel
    - Childcare costs
    - Clothing or toiletry items
    - Commuting between Residence and Primary Workstation
    - Country Club dues
    - Expenses related to vacation or personal days taken before, during or after a business trip
    - Express Lane Tolls
    - Haircuts and personal grooming
    - Incidental travel expenses are included in International Per Diem Rates and are not separately reimbursed.
    - Laundry, cleaning, pressing costs for trips of less than seven days
    - Loss Damage Insurance when State agency contract rate vehicle is available, and another rental car agency is utilized
    - Loss or theft of cash advance money, airline tickets, personal funds, property, or baggage
    - Luggage or briefcases
    - Medical expenses while traveling (Exceptions may be made to accommodate ADA compliance; see Sec. 7.10)
    - No-show/Cancellation fees or fees related to hotel late check-out (unless business or weather related)
    - Personal reading materials (magazines, newspapers, etc.)
    - Personal vehicle maintenance (including car washes),
    - Personal entertainment, Movies or Recreational expenses
    - Personal Pet care
    - Rental vehicle maintenance (including car washes)
    - Saunas, massages
    - Shoeshines
    - Souvenirs or personal gifts
    - Tips covered by per diem allowances
    - Traffic citations (moving violations), parking tickets, court fees and other fines, Travel accident insurance premiums, liability insurance deductibles
    - TSA Pre-Check application fee for airport pre-screening convenience service
    - Valet services for parking, when self-parking options are available, unless there are valid security reasons

NOTE: If an employee is in an accident while on state business, whether driving their personal vehicle or a rental vehicle, the state provides full liability coverage and personal immunity for the employee for damages and injuries the employee may cause to others and their property. It does not provide coverage for damages to the employee’s vehicle.

**407.**  **Travel Advances**

**A**. **Employee and Agency Accountability of Funds Advanced**

Travel Advance requests are to be submitted via the SMILE web portal unless the request is for

out-of-state travel.

Handwritten documents will not be accepted.

Estimated cost for mileage and meals must total $100 or more in order qualify for a travel advance.

Travel advance must be submitted to DFCS/Regional Accounting a minimum of 14 business days prior to travel but no more than 30 business days prior to travel.

Travel advance checks can be mailed to the employee’s home, mailed to the employee’s county where he/she is housed or be direct deposited.

An employee’s immediate supervisor or a higher-level administrative authority are the only employees that may be delegated as approvers.

Note: Travel advances are not authorized for normal day-to-day travel-related expenditures.

1. Travel advances are not required by state law or by these regulations but are left at the discretion of the county director or designee.
2. Travel Advance requests should be completed and approved prior to the advance of travel funds. This includes cash advances, hotel checks and rental vehicles.

NOTE: Cost of parking at hotels is a reimbursement item and will not be advanced.

Resort fees are reimbursed and not advanced.

1. Hotel checks processed through regional accounting require the following items:

* Completed and Approved Travel Advance Authorization form
* Hotel confirmation
* Training Itinerary/Schedule or Training Registration Confirmation Email
* Copy of the last-minute notification if it is for a training through Education and Training’s IOTIS system

Employees are responsible for **ALL** funds advanced to them and shall account for the funds in accordance with the DFCS Travel Regulations. A travel expense record must be completed regardless of whether the employee owes the agency, the agency owes the employee, or there is no balance due. Proper documentation validating all expenditures, including lodging (plus $5 hotel fee) and rental vehicle, if applicable, must be submitted on the travel expense record.

1. Employees are liable for any advanced funds which are lost, stolen, or not used for requested purposes.
2. Employees will be short paid on their travel statement for any hotel refunds due back to the state. It is the responsibility of the employee to collect this refund from the lodging establishments.
3. Neither state law nor these regulations relieve the county director or designee from the responsibility of accounting for all funds expended for travel purposes.

**Completion of Travel Advance**

* + Provide the estimated cost for meals, lodging, registration, and mileage, after the determination is made of whether it is more cost effective to use Enterprise Rental or personal vehicle.
  + Each request will be reviewed to determine if circumstances described warrant the issuance of an advance.
  + Travel advance checks can be mailed to the employee’s home, mailed to the employee’s county where he/she is housed or be direct deposited.

**REMINDER:**  If the funds are direct deposited, employees must understand they will not post to their bank account until three (3) business days after the check is processed.

* + Regional Accounting can only issue two weeks’ worth of Travel Advances. Before additional advances can be issued, an employee must reconcile their outstanding Travel Advances.

**Submission of Travel Statement**

* + The advance payments must be recorded on the employee’s Travel record so that the advance will be deducted from the travel reimbursement when processed.

**B.** **Recovery of Travel Advances (Cash, Hotels and Rental Vehicles)**

* + - 1. Travel advances must be settled by submitting a Travel Expense record. If travel advances are not settled via submission of travel record within 60 calendar days after the month in which travel occurred, Regional Accounting will:
  + Establish a repayment agreement with the employee to recoup their travel advances which includes mileage, meals, hotel, and rentals. 15% of gross pay will be deducted each payday from the employee’s payroll check until the total advance is recouped.
  + If the state has to recoup an employee’s travel advance, hotel advance or rental expense from their payroll check, they will not be eligible for another Travel Advance for one (1) year.
  + If funds are recouped from the employee’s paycheck for failure to submit their travel documents timely, the opportunity to submit their travel after the funds have been recouped will not be given.
  + If the employee leaves DFCS employment, and does not submit travel expense to reconcile their travel advances, hotel advances or rental expense, travel advances will be deducted from the employee’s final pay check and/or terminal leave payout.

**TRAVEL EXPENSES SUBMITTED MORE THAN 45 DAYS AFTER THE LAST DAY OF EMPLOYMENT WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED**.

Reimbursements will be processed within 5 days provided the expense records are correct, all supporting documentation is attached, and all approval signatures have been obtained. All travel reimbursements are direct deposited and there will be an additional 3 days before they post to the employee’s account.

1. Incorrect travel expense reports will be rejected and sent back to the employee.
2. Unused portions of a travel advance are recouped (deducted) from the employee’s next paycheck.
3. When the actual travel expenses exceed the amount of the travel advance, the expense record will be audited in the usual manner and reimbursement will be made to the employee via direct deposit.
4. In the event of cancellation or indefinite postponement of authorized travel, any cash advances which were made will be refunded from the employee to the Lead County Department immediately.
5. If the employee received hotel checks, these would need to be marked VOID and returned to Regional Accounting.
6. If recoupment is not possible, Regional Accounting will contact Office of Planning and Budget to put a LIEN against all funds due the employee (i.e., refunds from state taxes, or refunds due from Employee Retirement System or Teacher’s Retirement System)

**408a.** **Multi-County Travel Time (As It Relates to Fair Labor Standards Act Covered Employees)**

Time traveled Round-trip between your Residence and your Primary Workstation is considered personal commuting time and should not be reported as work time. Anything over normal commute time would be counted as work time.

Refer to OHRMD for clarification.

**408b. Multi-County Travel Reimbursement**

Multi-county workers are subject to travel in the course of their employment.

* If the employee is assigned to multiple counties, the county where they are housed is considered their primary work location.
* Round-trip mileage between your Residence and your Primary Workstation is personal commuting expense and is not eligible for travel reimbursement.

1. An employee leaves in the morning from his/her Residence headed to a work location other than their primary work location and then returns to their Residence, reimbursable mileage would be total round-trip miles less normal round-trip commute miles.
2. An employee leaves in the morning from his/her Residence headed to a work location other than their primary work location and then returns to their Primary Work location, reimbursable mileage would be total round-trip miles less normal one-way commute miles.
3. An employee leaves in the morning from his/her Residence headed to their primary work location and then to a location other than their primary work location and returns

to their primary work location, reimbursable mileage would be total round-trip miles. No commute miles would be deducted.

NOTE: The direction of the work location from the employee’s Residence is not factored into the reimbursement. The normal commute miles must always be subtracted when an employee travels from their Residence to a location other than their primary work location. If the total miles travelled exceed the employee’s round trip commute miles, the miles in excess of his/her normal commute is eligible for reimbursement.

**409.** **Travelers with Physical and/or Medical Conditions**

The impact of travelers with physical and/or medical conditions, while on State travel, should be referred to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is mandatory.

Each department has the authority to provide reasonable accommodations during State travel for travelers with disabilities.

All State employees are to be afforded equal opportunity to perform travel for official State business even if the travel costs for disabled travelers will exceed what would normally be most economical to the State.

For example:

* + - * When a traveler uses a wheelchair, it may be necessary to pay more for an airline ticket so the traveler can fly on a larger airplane that accommodates the wheelchair.
      * When a traveler with a physical and/or medical condition rents a vehicle while on travel, a non-standard vehicle size may be required.
      * When a traveler has hearing or vision impairments, there may be a cost of providing auxiliary aids and services to enable the traveler to successfully accomplish the purpose of the travel.

1. **Policy Exceptions**

Requests for exceptions to the DFCS Travel Policy can only be granted by [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov).

[DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) will generally not grant exceptions to travel policy when it appears that, with proper planning and reasonable effort, the additional costs could have been avoided.

Repetitive requests for similar exceptions, particularly after-the-fact requests, will be carefully reviewed and, when circumstances warrant, denied.

Employees should not consider approved exceptions to be a blanket waiver of the travel regulations.

* 1. Exceptions are only granted for an individual or individuals participating in a scheduled event and are only allowable for the specified dates of the event
  2. Procedures for Requesting Travel Exceptions
* Employees requesting travel exceptions should submit their request via email to [DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DFCS-Travel-Waiver@dhs.ga.gov) with as much advance notice as possible.
* All email requests must come from the employee or regional accounting and should be submitted **prior** to the expected travel date.
* All written requests should include the following:

1. The name(s) of the person(s) for which the exception is requested
2. Payroll County (housing county)
3. An explanation of the request for exception
4. An email will be provided to the requesting employee and regional accounting travel staff indicating whether the request was approved or denied.

**411.** **State Audit - Potential Penalties**

1. All statements submitted for travel reimbursement are subject to state audit and must reflect only actual job-related expenses incurred while on official duty, in accordance with the limitations contained in this Policy. Supporting documents must be attached when applicable.
2. Any activity which would result in employee travel that may be in violation of the provisions of this policy is prohibited.
3. Employees claiming reimbursement for travel-related expenses must be made aware of the following statement which has been extracted from the travel regulations published by the State Auditor:

**"I do solemnly swear, under criminal penalty of a felony for false statements subject to punishment by fine of not more than $1,000 or by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years, that the above statements are true and I have incurred the described expenses and the state use mileage in the discharge of my official duties for the state."**