

# Supreme Court of Virginia- Office of the Executive Secretary Judicial System Travel and Meals Policy



**I. PURPOSE:** The following lodging and meal guidelines have been adopted for individuals traveling on behalf of the Judicial System.

**II. APPLICABILITY** This policy applies to Judicial System personnel or entities for which the Office of the Executive Secretary has direct control or administrative responsibility.

## **III. DEFINITIONS:**

Base Point	Primary location, office or building where the traveler performs duties on a routine basis. Multiple base points are not allowed.
Commuting Mileage	Round-trip mileage traveled routinely by the employee between his/her residence and base point.
Traveler	Anyone incurring expenses while traveling for the Judicial System that may qualify for reimbursement by the Office of the Executive Secretary. Travelers may include, but are not limited to: justices, judges, employees, vendors, contractors, clerks, magistrates, court-appointed counsel, guardians ad litem, and hearing officers.

## **IV. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LINKS**

- [Chart of Allowances](#)
- [Delegation of Authority](#)
- [Extradition Cost Reimbursement Guidelines](#)
- [Form DA-02-041 Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher](#)
- [GSA Per Diem Rates](#)
- [Travel Authorization Request Form](#)

## **V. GUIDELINES:**

### **A. General Provisions**

1. The Office of the Executive Secretary will reimburse travelers for reasonable and necessary expenses while traveling on official business. It is the responsibility of the traveler to reduce cost and find the most cost-beneficial means of travel. Travel costs are limited to only those expenses that are necessary for providing essential services to the Commonwealth's citizens. These policies must be followed by all travelers except where otherwise addressed by the Code of Virginia or Chart of Allowances.
2. All requests for payment of fees or for travel or other expenses should be submitted to Fiscal Services no later than thirty (30) days after the service or travel is completed. For court-appointed counsel, each time limit is measured from the completion of all proceedings in the court for which the request is being submitted and is governed by Code of Virginia § 19.2-163.

### **B. Exceptions**

1. Extradition- Travel expenses for extraditions are governed by the Extradition Cost Reimbursement

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guidelines pursuant to Code of Virginia § 19.2-112 and the Chart of Allowances.

2. Vendors and Contractors- Vendors and contractors will not be reimbursed for travel expenses unless included as part of the contract.
3. Chart of Allowances- Travel expenses for official business such as witnesses of the Commonwealth, out-of-state witnesses, jurors, extraditions, and compensation of experts are subject to the Chart of Allowances.
  - Reasonable travel expenses incurred by court-appointed counsel, including guardians ad litem, must be approved by a judge and are subject to the guidelines in this policy.
4. Involuntary Mental Commitment (IMC) hearings- Travel expenses for commitment hearings for involuntary admissions are reimbursed pursuant to Code of Virginia § 37.2-804.
5. Any other exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Chief Justice, Executive Secretary, or Fiscal Director.

## C. Allowed Expenses

- Lodging, Meals, and Transportation in accordance with guidelines listed below
- Lodging taxes, fees, and surcharges (Occupancy tax, city fee, tourism fee, etc.)
- Business Telephone Calls
- Internet Access, Hotel Business Center Charges, and Facsimiles
- Tolls and Parking
  - If the reimbursement claim exceeds \$20.00 a receipt is required.
- Gratuities for taxis, shuttle vans, and other ride-sharing services up to 20% of the fare

## D. Disallowed Expenses

- Tips in excess of the \$5 daily per diem (See Section H.1-Meals and Incidentals) allowance for valets, porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff
  - Gratuities for meals are included in the Meals and Incidental Expenses per diems
- Booking fees charged by third-party websites (e.g. Travelocity, Expedia, Priceline, etc.)
- Lost or stolen articles
- Alcoholic beverages
- Damage to personal vehicles, clothing, or other items
- Services to gain entry to a locked vehicle
- Movies charged to hotel bills
- All expenses related to the personal negligence of the traveler, such as fines
- Entertainment expenses
- Travel Insurance (Personal injury or loss, trip interruption / cancellation, etc.)
- Fees to upgrade from self-parking to valet parking
- Towing charges
- Expenses for children, spouses, and companions while on travel status

## E. Travel Planning and Authorization

1. Travelers other than justices, judges, and the Executive Secretary must receive prior authorization in

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accordance with the Delegation of Authority Policy for any proposed overnight travel that will exceed \$1000 in reimbursement expenses. Travelers attending conferences and training sessions that are sponsored or presented by SCV or OES are not required to have pre-approval before attendance, regardless of estimated travel expenses. Examples of these sessions include magistrate certification schools, judicial management programs for new clerks, judicial conferences, pre-bench advisory committees, drug treatment court advisory committee meetings, forms committee meetings, mentor judge programs, etc. Travel expenses for local court employees will not be reimbursed for conferences or training outside of SCV or OES sponsored events.

2. Approval requests may be submitted on the Travel Authorization Request Form and must include information about the proposed trip such as employee name, department, destination, trip start and return date, purpose of trip, hotel name and location, mode of travel, and estimated cost. The estimated cost of the trip should include mileage, lodging, meals and incidentals, plane or rail tickets, and registration fees. Documentation of pre-authorization must be included with the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher. Any overnight travel outside the Commonwealth by OES employees must be pre-approved by the Executive Secretary and Department Director prior to travel regardless of amount.
3. Travel Involving Multiple Employees

Blanket pre-authorizations may be approved for multiple employees traveling to the same event if reimbursed expenses are expected to be greater than \$1000 for each traveler. A list of attendees must be included with the pre-approval and submitted with the individual Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher to substantiate supervisor approval. Travel Expense Reimbursement Vouchers must still be completed to be reimbursed for expenses incurred during travel.

In planning for a conference, the guidelines in these regulations should be used as a measure of reasonableness and organizers should be prudent in selecting the most cost-effective option available.

#### F. Travel Reimbursement Requirements

1. All travel expense reimbursement requests must be submitted by completing a Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher (Form DA-02-041). By signing the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher, the traveler is certifying the accuracy of all information, the legitimacy of the travel, and the appropriateness of the expenses. Meals and incidentals will be reimbursed on a per diem basis and other expenses will be reimbursed on an actual expense basis. Travelers are not permitted to redeem points or other incentives to pay for travel expenses then subsequently request monetary reimbursement. The signature of the traveler's supervisor certifies that he/she agrees that the travel was necessary, and the requested reimbursements are appropriate.
2. Travelers may submit a reimbursement voucher when the total amount requested is greater than \$5.00. If the traveler has a reimbursement request that is less than \$5.00, they should wait to submit their reimbursement until they have other expenses to exceed the \$5.00 threshold. Travelers may submit reimbursement requests for expenses under \$5.00 if they are included with other payments, i.e., retired, recalled, and substitute judge per diems on a Form DC-1101.
3. Documentation such as overnight travel pre-approvals, receipts (where applicable), and exception approvals must be included in the request for reimbursement. Original itemized lodging receipts that reflect the traveler's name, hotel address, date(s) of stay, and a zero balance are required. Any

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additional information needed to substantiate reimbursable expenses must be noted on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher.

4. Although infrequent in nature, situations may arise where overpayments or duplicate payments are made for travel reimbursements. In such cases, any excess reimbursements must be repaid within 30 days of notice.
5. Travel expense reimbursements submitted in accordance with the \$1500 Circuit Court allowance for necessary expenses are subject to the Judicial System Travel and Meals Policy.
6. Due to the nature of their positions, the following are not required to have supervisor approval on their travel vouchers or pre-approval of overnight travel:
  - Chief Justice
  - Justices
  - Executive Secretary
  - Judges
  - Circuit Court Clerks

## G. Lodging

1. Justices, judges, and the Executive Secretary may obtain lodging when official business will necessitate travel greater than 50 miles from their base point. All other employees may obtain lodging when official business will necessitate travel greater than 50 miles from their base point and they have received supervisor approval. All lodging rates are governed by current U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) rates. The traveler must search for the travel destination using the search criteria on the website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. If a location is not listed in the GSA table, the standard rate applies. Home-sharing networks such as Airbnb, HomeAway, and VRBO are not acceptable for business travel and will not be reimbursed.

Lodging guidelines for all travel destinations (in-state and out-of-state) are provided in the Lodging Rates section of the GSA website. The appropriate rate is determined by the physical location (county or city) of the hotel and not the mailing address. When overnight stays are required while on travel status, first preference shall be given to selecting lodging in the economy class. Check, request, and confirm government rates both at the time reservations are made and during check-in.

Reimbursement for lodging is limited to actual expenses incurred up to the guideline amount, plus hotel taxes, fees, and surcharges. **Travelers who do not plan with careful consideration to these guidelines will bear the additional expense personally.** In such cases, taxes and surcharges will be prorated and reimbursed only for the appropriate rate.

2. **Lodging reimbursements that exceed the GSA rate or conference-specific exceptions to the lodging policy require Chief Justice, Executive Secretary, or Fiscal Director approval.** Direct billing of lodging expenses (rates, taxes, and surcharges only) incurred during overnight travel is permitted. Direct bill charges, however, are still considered travel expenditures and are governed by these travel policies.

## H. Meals and Incidental Expenses

1. Meals are reimbursed for travelers who stay overnight while on official SCV or OES business. Meals

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are reimbursed on a per diem basis according to the following rates and include taxes and tips (incidental per diems are for fees and tips given to valets, porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff and must be clearly indicated on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher):

	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>Incidentals</b>
<b>In-State Travel</b>	\$16.00	\$19.00	\$28.00	\$5.00
<b>Out-of-State Travel</b>	GSA Rates <a href="http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem">www.gsa.gov/perdiem</a>			

For overnight travelers to be reimbursed for meal expenses on travel days, the following criteria must be met:

- Breakfast- Leave home before 6:30 A.M
- Lunch- Leave their official station before 11:00 A.M. or return to their official station after 2:00 P.M.
- Dinner- Be unable to return home before 7:30 P.M.

By claiming a meal on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher you are attesting that your arrival/departure times are in accordance with the above policy and the time does not need to be noted on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher.

If a traveler is authorized to stay overnight but chooses not to do so, they may be reimbursed for the full per diem amount for each meal claimed. IRS guidelines require this reimbursement to be classified as a taxable fringe benefit and must be recorded as wages on the employee's W-2. Any meals provided by hotels, meetings, conferences, or any other source must be listed on the voucher and deducted from the traveler's per diem. If a meal is offered but does not meet the traveler's medical or dietary restrictions, they may note "dietary or medical restrictions" on their reimbursement request and claim the per diem for that meal. Dietary or medical restrictions should be communicated in advance for conferences and training, if possible, to help ensure accommodations are met as part of the travel.

## 2. Business Meals

Meals and meal tip expenses not involving an overnight stay are not reimbursable unless documentation supporting the reimbursement clearly establishes that the meal is taken during overtime work periods or for official business reasons. To be eligible for reimbursement, non-travel official business meals must be essential to the Supreme Court's mission, a business necessity, involve substantive and bona fide business discussions, and approved by the Chief Justice, Executive Secretary, or Fiscal Director. Meal reimbursement for holiday parties, retirement parties, and other social gatherings must be approved by the Chief Justice or Executive Secretary and are subject to the meal guidelines set forth above. Chief Justice, Executive Secretary, or Fiscal Director approval is also required to exceed GSA rate up to 50% over the applicable per diem guideline with sufficient

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justification and the original, itemized receipt. An itemized receipt is required for all business meal reimbursements and charges such as tips and delivery fees must be included when calculating the expense amount per meeting attendee. The absence of such documentary evidence requires the meal reimbursement amount to be reported as gross income to the employee. Reimbursement requests must include the following:

- Receipt
- List of Attendees
  - Estimated lists are acceptable for gatherings over 25 attendees (Example- 25 OES staff, 12 legislators, and 23 judges for an Investiture)
- Department Director Approval
- Chief Justice, Executive Secretary, or Fiscal Director approval for meals over the GSA rate not to exceed 50% over the applicable per diem guidelines

## I. Transportation

**Current Mileage Rate as of 1/1/2026- 72.5 cents/mile**

1. Mileage rates are approved by the Executive Secretary and published by the Fiscal Director at the beginning of each calendar year or when there are changes published by the Internal Revenue Service. Prior to the start of any trip where the expected means of travel is a personal vehicle, the employee should calculate the anticipated round-trip mileage.
  - Roundtrip mileage shall be calculated using the actual start and end points of the trip using the shortest practical route for travel outside of your normal commute. Trips shall begin or end at your base point or the employee's residence.
    - Employees who utilize a permanently assigned state vehicle will not be reimbursed for mileage while using the vehicle. Employees may claim mileage reimbursement if the vehicle is unavailable due to extenuating circumstances (repairs, etc).
    - Round-trip mileage traveled routinely by the employee between his/her residence and base point or office/building/court(s) where the traveler performs duties on a routine basis is defined as commuting mileage and is not reimbursable.

Example: You regularly work in an office in the city where you live. Your employer sends you to a 1-week training session at a different office in the same city. You travel directly from your home to the training location and return each day. You may claim mileage reimbursement for your daily round-trip transportation between your home and the training location.

Commuting mileage is reimbursable for Circuit and District Court judges who travel to a courthouse in a county or city other than the one in which the judge resides and the distance between the judge's residence and the courthouse is greater than 25 miles in accordance with Appropriation Act.

### A. OES and SCV Employees

- If the anticipated mileage is less than 500 miles round trip, the employee may drive their personal vehicle and will be reimbursed at the full published rate. The employee may also elect to complete the OFMS (Office of Fleet Management Services) trip calculator at

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<https://dgs.virginia.gov/fleet/travel-planning/trip-calculator/> to help determine the lowest cost transportation.

- If the anticipated mileage is greater than 500 miles round trip, the employee is encouraged to complete the OFMS trip calculator to help determine the lowest cost transportation, which may include use of a rental vehicle. Additional factors such as departure time, return time, administrative costs to procure a rental vehicle, and location of Enterprise facilities should also be considered when calculating trip cost.
- Rental vehicles are only available to OES and SCV employees and they are encouraged to utilize a rental vehicle if it is determined to be the most cost-effective means of travel.

## B. Other Judicial System Employees

- Judicial System employees who are not eligible for the rental vehicle program will be reimbursed at the current mileage rate and will not be reimbursed for rental vehicles.

## 2. Vehicle Rentals (OES and SCV employees only)

The Department of General Services, Office of Fleet Management Services (OFMS) maintains a contract with Enterprise Leasing to provide vehicles for short-term travel by state employees. Luxury vehicle use is strongly discouraged and must be approved by the Executive Secretary (justification required). When rental vehicles are used, travelers will be reimbursed for actual expenses rather than mileage rates; therefore, receipts for the car rental and an accurate accounting of gas purchases must be submitted with the travel voucher in lieu of mileage. The total amount of gas purchases should be entered on the travel voucher under the “Other Expenses” column. Assistance in procuring a rental vehicle may be obtained by contacting the Administrative Assistant in the OES Front Office, who also manages the fuel card program. The use of Turo and other peer-to-peer carsharing companies is prohibited and will not be reimbursed.

Travelers must ensure that the rental vehicle is refueled before returning the vehicle to the rental contractor. The option to purchase insurance offered by rental car contractors should be declined by Commonwealth of Virginia employees and will not be reimbursed. Refer to the Extradition Cost Reimbursement Guidelines for information about rental car insurance for extraditions. Employees are responsible for operating the rental cars in a safe and responsible manner. All employees must wear a seat belt and are prohibited from text messaging when operating any vehicle owned, leased, or rented by the Commonwealth, SCV, or OES. If a traveler on official business is involved in a vehicle accident while operating a rental car, the following procedure should be followed:

- Contact the local police or state police of the jurisdiction where the accident occurred.
- Notify the contractor by calling the telephone number identified in the rental car agreement and complete a contractor-provided Vehicle Accident Report.
- Contact the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court and notify them of the accident. They will contract the Department of General Services, Division of Risk Management.

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3. Public Transportation- After trip approval, travelers have the option of acquiring airfare tickets on their own or requesting assistance by the Procurement Administrator. Rail tickets must be purchased by the traveler and are reimbursable through the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher. Generally, airline and rail travel cannot exceed the rates charged for tourist or coach class accommodations and any add-ons such as seat or class upgrades will not be reimbursed.

Tips for taxis, shuttle vans, and other ride-sharing services are reimbursable up to 20% of the fare. Receipts for public transportation expenses must be retained and submitted with the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher.

Permanent Use of State-Owned Vehicles must be requested through the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court. Such use is strictly limited to those employees whose job travel requirements make such method of travel the only cost-effective or practical alternative.

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## Policy Change History

Revision Date	Author	Description
7/1/2022	Wenzig/Shaver	Policy revised and published
1/1/2023	Wenzig/Shaver	Mileage rate updated, per diem rates updated, updated exceptions
7/1/2023	Wenzig/Shaver	Addition of return of excess travel reimbursement provision
1/1/2024	Wenzig/Shaver	Mileage rate updated, Seat belt requirements, Tipping rates for public transportation
7/1/2024	Wenzig/Shaver	Clarification of 3 <sup>rd</sup> party booking site and hotel fees, Clarification of actual expenses, Notation of \$1500 Circuit Court judge allowance subject to guidelines
10/1/2024	Wenzig/Shaver	Updated per diem rates, Text free driving notation, Peer-to-peer carsharing prohibited
1/1/2025	Wenzig/Shaver	Mileage rate updated
1/1/2026	Wenzig	Mileage rate updated