

# OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION TRAVEL GUIDELINES

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TRAVEL GUIDELINES

<p><b>Official Business</b></p>	<p>All employees traveling on official state business must comply with these guidelines, Texas Government Code Chapter 660, the General Appropriations Act, and the Texas Administrative Code, which are outlined in the Comptroller’s <a href="#">Textravel</a> Rules. Each OCA employee is responsible for ensuring that his or her travel complies with applicable state law and travel guidelines.</p>
<p><b>Definitions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Routine Travelers</b></li> <li>• <b>Non-routine Travelers</b></li> </ul>	<p>“<b>Routine Travelers</b>” means the following OCA employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional collections staff</b> who regularly travel to cities and counties to assist with implementation and maintenance of the Collection Improvement Program;</li> <li>• <b>CIP Audit staff</b> who regularly travel to cities and counties to audit local entities that fall under the mandatory Collection Improvement Program; and</li> <li>• <b>Specialty court associate judges and their assistants.</b></li> </ul> <p>“<b>Non-routine Travelers</b>” means any OCA employee not listed as a “Routine Traveler, above.”</p>
<p><b>Travel Request (Non-routine Travelers)</b></p>	<p>Before reservations are made or travel occurs, each non-routine traveler must obtain approval on an OCA Travel Request form from the employee’s supervisor and submit the form to the agency budget analyst for budget approval. To save agency travel funds, travel request forms involving air travel should be submitted at least 14 days before the travel date.</p> <p>Upon approval, the budget analyst will forward the request form to the OCA travel coordinator. The employee must indicate on the form whether the employee or the OCA travel coordinator will make travel arrangements. If the employee wants to make his or her own travel arrangements, the employee must coordinate with the travel coordinator so contracted services are used when required.</p> <p>If the employee will seek reimbursement from a third party of any portion of the expenses, that also must be indicated on the request form in the “Justification” section.</p> <p>If the travel request includes mileage reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle and the estimated round-trip mileage is greater than 165 miles, a “Personal vs. Rental Car</p>

	<p>Comparison” worksheet must be completed and attached to the request form.</p>
<p><b>Travel Request (Routine Travelers)</b></p>	<p>Routine Travelers need not obtain advance written approval for travel except as described below.</p> <p>Advance approval on an OCA Travel Request form (as outlined for Non-routine Travelers, above) is required for the following Routine Travelers in certain circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Regional collections staff</u> who plan to travel outside their assigned region or on official state business not related to direct program assistance to city and county personnel</li> <li>• <u>CIP Audit staff</u> who plan to travel on official state business not related to auditing a city or county that falls under the CIP, e.g., travel to a conference or training seminar.</li> </ul> <p>If the travel request includes mileage reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle and the estimated round-trip mileage is greater than 165 miles, a “Personal vs. Rental Car Cost Comparison” worksheet must be completed and attached to the request form.</p> <p>If the employee will seek reimbursement from a third party of any portion of the expenses, that must be indicated on the form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Specialty court personnel</u> who plan to travel on official state business not related to their program case docket and other than to training sponsored by OCA or the Texas Center for the Judiciary must complete the OCA form entitled, “Request for Advance Authorization for Travel to Seminars, Workshops, Conferences, and Meetings (OCA Specialty Courts staff),” and obtain advance approval from the regional presiding judge. This form must then be forwarded to the program liaison with sufficient time to obtain the advance approval of the Board of Regional Judges if required by Board policy.</li> </ul> <p>If the travel request includes mileage reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle and the estimated round-trip mileage is greater than 165 miles, a “Personal vs. Rental Car Cost Comparison” worksheet must be completed and attached to the request form.</p>
<p><b>Use of Contracted Vendors</b></p>	<p>The State contracts with specific airlines, rental car agencies, and hotels for specified rates. OCA recommends the use of State contracted vendors in order to locate vendors that offer a Government rate. OCA also charges airfare or contracted</p>

	<p>car rentals directly to OCA accounts. Employees may make travel arrangements outside the state contract.</p>
<b>Travel Vouchers</b>	<p>To be reimbursed for eligible travel expenses, an employee must complete and sign a non-electronic Travel Voucher form and submit it to the agency travel coordinator or accountant. The signature of the employee’s supervisor also is required on the travel voucher unless the employee is an associate judge. An employee who files a false or fraudulent travel claim or voucher will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.</p>
<b>Time Requirements</b>	<p>Employees should submit their travel vouchers within seven (7) business days of the last date on which travel occurred. Specialty Court employees should submit their travel vouchers within seven (7) business days after the end of the month in which travel occurred.</p> <p>OCA Finance and Operations staff will process vouchers within seven to ten (7-10) business days after receipt of a properly completed, non-electronic voucher.</p>
<b>Receipts</b>	<p>Original itemized receipts must be attached to the travel voucher for lodging, airfare, auto rental, and rental car gasoline. Itemized receipts are also required for meals for each day on which actual expenditures for meals total \$18 or more. If an employee loses a receipt, the expenditure may be claimed by submitting an itemized list (including, at a minimum, the date of purchase, name of the establishment where food/drink was purchased, and the amount) on a separate document signed by the employee. OCA reserves the right to deny claims for which the employee does not have a receipt if the charges are deemed unreasonable or the employee has a documented pattern of missing receipts. Lodging receipts must show the address for the lodging establishment, indicate payment, and show a “zero” balance. Receipts are not required for parking, toll road charges, and other incidental expenses.</p>
<b>Reimbursement by a Third Party</b>	<p>If travel is for official state business but will be reimbursed by a third party rather than by OCA, the following guidelines apply. In accordance with Texas Government Code Section 660.016, OCA employees may not receive reimbursement from an organization that the OCA, Judicial Council, JCIT, Task Force on Indigent Defense, Court Reporters Certification Board, Guardianship Certification Board, or Process Server Review Board will be or is auditing, examining, or investigating. After the travel has occurred,</p>

	<p>the employee must submit to the OCA travel coordinator copies of any documentation sent to the third party or received from the third party documenting the travel expenses. The travel coordinator will file this documentation with the travel request.</p>
<p><b>Reimbursement by Both OCA and a Third Party</b></p>	<p>An OCA employee who anticipates receiving or actually receives a reimbursement or advance for a travel expense from a third party may seek reimbursement or advance for the expense from OCA only to the extent that the amount of the advance or reimbursement from a third party is less than the amount of the total expense incurred.</p>
<p><b>Reimbursable Expenses</b></p>	<p>Reimbursable expenses include mileage, transportation by public conveyance, meals, lodging, hotel taxes, and reasonable incidental expenses. Personal expenses, alcoholic beverages, gratuities, or any expenses that do not relate to official state business are not reimbursable.</p>
<p><b>Overnight Travel</b></p>	<p>For overnight travel (in-state and out-of-state), employees can claim <b>up to</b> the rate shown on <a href="https://fm.x.cpa.state.tx.us/fm/travel/travelrates.php">https://fm.x.cpa.state.tx.us/fm/travel/travelrates.php</a> for the location on actual expense for meals and lodging. If the location does not appear on this website then employees can claim <b>up to</b> \$46.00 per day for <b>actual expenses</b> for meals and up to \$85.00 per day (in-state) or \$83.00 per day (out-of-state) for <b>actual expenses</b> for lodging. For all overnight travel, original itemized receipts are required for lodging, and for meals, as outlined in the <b>Receipts</b> section.</p> <p>Employees may claim less than the maximum meal rate for a duty point and use the amount of the reduction to increase the maximum lodging rate for the duty point.</p>
<p><b>Non-Overnight Travel</b></p>	<p>Employees (whether headquarters or non-headquarters) will not be reimbursed for meal expenses for non-overnight travel (also known as partial per diem).</p>
<p><b>Use of Personal Vehicle v. Rental Car</b></p>	<p>A state employee may be reimbursed for mileage incurred during the employee's use of a personally owned or leased motor vehicle for official state business. With the exceptions of tolls and parking expenses, mileage reimbursement to a state employee is inclusive of all expenses associated with the employee's operation of a personally owned or leased motor vehicle.</p> <p>OCA shall specify its mileage reimbursement rate in an amount that is equal to or less than the maximum state mileage reimbursement rate designated by the Comptroller of</p>

**EXCEPTION for routine travel for Specialty Courts personnel.**

Public Accounts. If the OCA reimbursement rate is less than the designated state maximum rate, OCA shall notify its employees and other affected individuals in writing (including electronic mail) before the lower rate is effective.

Before an employee may be reimbursed for use of a personal vehicle for official state business, the agency must determine if this is the most cost-effective means of travel. If the total round-trip mileage is estimated at 165 miles or less, the use of a personal vehicle is presumed to be cost-effective, although the employee may choose to use a rental car. If the estimated round-trip mileage is greater than 165 miles, the employee must complete a “**Personal vs. Rental Car Cost Comparison**” worksheet to document that use of a personal vehicle is the most cost-effective means of travel. When the comparison worksheet shows it is more cost-effective to use a rental car, the employee may choose to use a personal vehicle; however, reimbursement will be limited to the estimated rental car cost shown on the comparison worksheet, not including administrative costs.

In no event shall an OCA employee be required to use a personal vehicle to conduct official state business.

Specialty court staff who travel regularly to hear dockets do NOT need to complete a “**Personal vs. Rental Car Cost Comparison**” worksheet for each trip they make. In order to ensure these staff are traveling in the most cost-effective manner, specialty court employees who travel routinely must complete a “**Rental vs. Mileage Tracking Form**” for a period of time that represents their “usual” travel itinerary. This form takes into account the number of days travelled each month, the length of dockets (if applicable) or the time required at the work site, the location of the nearest rental car company and other factors, as appropriate. Based on this information, the agency will determine whether travel in a rental car or personal vehicle is the most cost-effective means of routine travel and coordinate with each employee to implement appropriate travel and reimbursement procedures, consistent with this policy and procedures for all OCA employees. If the comparison determines that travel in a personal vehicle is the most cost-effective means of travel, the analysis will be kept on file for the employee; the form will not be completed for each travel voucher on an ongoing basis. OCA may periodically review the analysis if changes occur in the conditions of the employee’s routine travel, e.g., service area, caseload, or other factors impacting travel or workload.

<p><b>Mileage Reimbursement Calculation</b></p>	<p>The number of miles traveled by an employee for state business may be determined by point-to-point itemization. Point-to-point mileage may be documented by an employee's vehicle odometer reading or by a readily available online mapping service. OCA requires the use of <a href="#">Google Maps</a> as the approved online mapping service resource. The itemization must be sufficiently detailed for the agency to verify the number of miles.</p>
<p><b>Request for Travel Advance Funds</b></p>	<p>OCA has a limited amount of funds available to employees who are unable to pay the costs of travel up-front before being reimbursed. Any employee needing assistance with travel costs up-front must complete an OCA Travel Advance Request form. Travel advances may be limited to an amount less than the total estimated travel expenses and are subject to the availability of funds. An employee who receives a travel advance must file the related travel reimbursement request (travel voucher) within 5 days after the last day of travel for which the advance was given. Employees who fail to submit timely reimbursement requests may be prohibited from receiving additional travel advances.</p>
<p><b>Use of Personal Leave While Traveling</b></p>	<p>Expenses related to conducting state business are reimbursable when an employee is away from his or her designated headquarters location, even if the employee takes personal leave, so long as the primary purpose of the employee's travel is to conduct state business. Only those expenses related to conducting state business are reimbursable.</p>
<p><b>Travel Awards</b></p>	<p>Air travel awards, such as frequent flyer miles that are credited directly to the traveler and not to the agency may be used by the employee for business or personal purposes.</p> <p>Rental car travel awards, such as frequent car rental points, are credited back to the agency (OCA) and, therefore, are not available to employees for personal purposes. These credits will be redeemed for future car rentals secured directly by OCA.</p> <p>Hotel or food discounts offered to an employee in the course of business travel should be used to defer the cost of the current travel. If that is not possible because the discounts are for future use, then the employee may use the discounts for business or personal purposes.</p> <p>Employees are responsible for managing their own awards accounts. Employees may not incur additional expenses to the State in making State travel arrangements in order to</p>

	accrue personal benefit in their travel awards programs.
<b>Conservation of State Funds</b>	OCA is committed to conserving state funds by limiting travel expenses where feasible, and each employee is responsible for ensuring that travel arrangements are the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances. When more than one employee is traveling to the same point at the same time and on the same state business, the employees must coordinate their travel. Employees traveling by automobile must ride together unless there is a bona fide business reason requiring different departure or arrival times. The use of employees' personal vehicles must be more cost-effective than other forms of transportation.

## RELATED FORMS

(located at <http://www.txcourts.gov/oca/oca-employee-reference/travel.aspx>)

1. Travel Costs at a Glance, Employees
2. Travel Request Form (Headquarters Staff)
3. Request for Advance Authorization for Travel, Specialty Courts
4. Policy Statement for Specialty Courts
5. Travel Voucher, effective 01/01/15
6. Travel Voucher - HQ Sample
7. Travel Voucher - CPC Sample
8. Personal vs. Rental Car Comparison
9. Rental vs Mileage Tracking Form
10. Travel Advance Form