

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: Negotiated Agreements
Board of Education Handbook

Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Financial Services

Travel for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Purposes

I. PURPOSE

To publish the criteria and procedures for MCPS employees to obtain reimbursement from MCPS travel funds

II. BACKGROUND

MCPS employees may be reimbursed for expenses directly related to official MCPS business subject to advance approval requirements. Employees conducting official business must exercise due care and prudence when incurring expenses. The superintendent of schools reserves the right to authorize reasonable expenditures and reimbursements that involve extenuating circumstances beyond those contemplated in this regulation. In addition, the Board of Education's (Board) Handbook and other applicable policies or legal requirements govern expenditures by Board members and Board staff.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Commuting* is driving from home (or a nonbusiness location) to an MCPS work location and travel from the last MCPS work location to a residence or nonwork location.
- B. *CONUS per diem rate* – Published federal General Services Administration daily per diem rate for the continental United States.
- C. *Business travel* is travel for MCPS business and includes attending a meeting, conference, or training for professional development purposes. Business travel includes local travel as well as nonlocal travel.

- D. A *conference* is a meeting requiring nonlocal travel for the purpose of representing MCPS interests, presenting MCPS work, or participating in professional development activities, even when no overnight stay is required. A conference typically takes the form of a professional association meeting or meetings of non-MCPS entities, but may include MCPS school, office, or cluster retreats.
- E. *Local travel* is defined as travel within Montgomery County for MCPS business or professional development. Local travel does not include travel within Montgomery County associated with an overnight stay, or attendance or participation in a conference or retreat.

For employees who regularly travel outside of Montgomery County for their job responsibilities (not for conferences or overnight stays), the Chief Operating Officer (COO) may designate this travel as local.
- F. *MCPS work locations* include any MCPS facility as well as any location used for a MCPS or school activity, meeting, or function.
- G. *Nonlocal travel* is defined as travel outside of Montgomery County for MCPS business or professional development or any travel that includes an overnight stay, or any travel to conferences, including retreats, even if there is no overnight stay.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Approval
 - 1. Advance approval must be obtained for all nonlocal travel for which an employee seeks expense reimbursement. Employees complete MCPS Form 281-1: *Request/Accounting for Nonlocal Travel Funds*, for nonlocal travel.
 - 2. All approved conference attendance, both in Montgomery County and beyond, should be treated as nonlocal travel.
 - 3. These guidelines will be applied to outside consultants under contract with MCPS whenever travel is authorized as a separate expenditure.
 - 4. For the purposes of mileage, in no cases shall an employee's residence be designated as a MCPS location, even when teleworking.

B. Reimbursable Expenses

1. Reasonable and proper costs of transportation, lodging, subsistence, business communications, registration fees, and/or incidental expenses related to the conduct of MCPS business incurred by MCPS personnel while on MCPS business travel are reimbursable. Usual and customary gratuities are reimbursable.
2. If an employee is required by the primary account manager to travel, these provisions will always apply. However, with mutual consent of the employee and the primary account manager, arrangements for partial reimbursement are acceptable.
3. MCPS will not reimburse costs for room service, snacks or refreshments outside of normal meals including expenses related to in-room mini-bar snacks, pet care expenses, child care expenses, spouse or guest expenses, or for incremental costs of double occupancy over single occupancy rates.
4. Local Meals

Unless preapproved by the superintendent of schools or the COO, MCPS only will reimburse employees for meal expenses incurred while on business travel. MCPS will not reimburse employees or other individuals with whom they meet, including Board members, other elected officials, or MCPS staff members, unless preapproved by the superintendent of schools or COO.

C. Transportation

1. The primary account manager will authorize the mode of transportation and the travel schedule that will keep the total cost at a minimum considering the relative costs of both transportation and loss of working time by the employee.
2. Primary account managers may authorize the use of a privately owned vehicle in lieu of a common carrier for the employee's benefit, provided that the total cost including mileage does not exceed the round-trip advance purchase airfare. In such cases, reimbursement for lodging and subsistence during the travel time is limited to the amount that would have been reimbursed had travel been by air. Any excess travel time during working hours must be charged to annual or personal leave.

3. When use of a privately owned vehicle is authorized for destinations in excess of 150 miles from Rockville, Maryland, a statement of the justification for such use must be attached to MCPS Form 281-1: *Request/Accounting for Nonlocal Travel Funds*. Examples of acceptable justification are as follows:
 - a) Two or more employees will travel together in one vehicle, resulting in a lower total cost than if they traveled by common carrier.
 - b) An automobile is needed to perform official duties at the destination, and use of a privately owned vehicle is determined to be more economical than travel by common carrier and rental of a car at destination.
4. When use of a privately owned vehicle is authorized for MCPS business travel, mileage is reimbursed at the rate established by the Board. Receipts are required for parking expenses of more than \$5 and may be requested for parking expenses less than that amount when the expense is recurring. MCPS will not reimburse for parking tickets or traffic violations.
5. Tolls will be reimbursed when incurred for MCPS travel; however, tolls incurred for use of the Intercounty Connector/MD 200 by a private vehicle will not be reimbursed. Documentation of tolls paid is required for tolls of more than \$5 and may be requested for toll expenses less than that amount when the expense is recurring.
6. The Division of Controller shall publish the mileage reimbursement rate which shall be based on the Internal Revenue Service expense mileage rate.
7. When transportation by air is designated, an employee must use the lowest cost available rate that will accomplish the purpose of the trip. Whenever possible, plans should be made far enough in advance to take advantage of available excursion rates requiring advance reservations. First class air accommodations will not be authorized.

MCPS will not reimburse costs for in-flight internet, membership fees for airline, frequent flier or other travel clubs, flight or travel insurance, or upgrade fees on travel.

8. Employees may be reimbursed for the cost of ground transportation between the employee's residence or base location and air or train terminal and between terminal and hotel at destination when on nonlocal travel. Parking fees (supported by receipts) may be reimbursed when transportation to terminal is by privately owned vehicle. When a taxi is used between terminal and hotel at destination, the expense must be supported by a receipt. The receipt, together with the justification for using a taxi instead of the lower cost option, typically an airport limousine or shuttle service, should be attached to MCPS Form 281-1: *Request/Accounting for Nonlocal Travel Funds*.

D. Lodging

1. Hotel stays within a 50-mile radius of the Carver Educational Services Center (CESC) are prohibited unless approved by the COO, chief academic officer or deputy superintendent. Stays in hotels within a 50-mile radius from the CESC will only be approved if there are exigent circumstances, such as inclement weather or other safety-related conditions.
2. Employees will be reimbursed for the actual cost of lodging, including applicable taxes. The original hotel bill must be submitted with MCPS Form 281-1: *Request/Accounting for Nonlocal Travel Funds*, to support the request for reimbursement. Costs incurred for Internet access and business center services such as faxes and printing only shall be reimbursed when they are necessary for conduct of MCPS business and the only reasonable choice available.
3. MCPS will not reimburse costs for in-room movies, dry cleaning or laundry expenses, or other personal expenses. MCPS will not reimburse hotel charges associated with cancellation where reasonably prudent actions were not taken to avoid such charges. MCPS will not reimburse for loss of personal funds and property.
4. When lodging is shared with another person who is not on MCPS business, the employee shall be reimbursed only for the cost that would have been incurred if the employee had stayed alone in the same hotel.

5. When an employee on nonlocal travel is lodged in a private residence (such as the residence of a friend or relative), \$25 per day, up to a maximum of \$100 per trip, will be provided in lieu of lodging expenses. No receipts will be required. Such arrangements only should be made if the total cost, including related items such as ground transportation, results in savings to MCPS.

E. Subsistence during overnight or conference travel

1. The method for reimbursement of costs for subsistence is reimbursement for actual costs.
2. Employees will be reimbursed for the actual costs of meals, including applicable taxes, up to the CONUS per diem rate for the city where the conference, convention, or other MCPS business is conducted. Meals on days of travel may be reimbursed to a maximum of one half CONUS.
3. Only the COO may approve reimbursements in excess of CONUS.
4. The original itemized meal receipts must be submitted with MCPS Form 281-1: *Request/Accounting for Nonlocal Travel Funds*, to support the request for reimbursement. In the absence of an original receipt, the employee must certify that the copy being provided has not been previously submitted for reimbursement and will not be submitted for reimbursement in the future. Any request for reimbursement of \$5 or more will not be reimbursed without receipts. The following meals are not reimbursable:
 - a) Meals prior to departure from or following arrival to the Washington, DC metropolitan area are not reimbursable.
 - b) When meals are provided as part of conference, seminar, or convention fees, reimbursement for additional expenses for those meals obtained outside of the event will not be permitted.
 - c) Alcoholic beverage costs will not be reimbursed.

F. Ticketed Events

1. Periodically and on a very limited basis, MCPS will purchase tables or tickets to special events, and employees may be invited to attend (e.g., when employees or schools are being recognized by other organizations, such as the Maryland Teacher of the Year ceremony). Costs for

employees to attend other ticketed events will not be reimbursed unless preapproved by the COO.

2. Under no circumstances shall employees be reimbursed to attend the retirement celebrations of MCPS staff members.

G. Budgeting and Administration of Funds

1. Each program manager is responsible for preparing annually a budget request for funds to cover local and nonlocal travel for himself/herself and employees, using the above guidelines, and for submitting it to the responsible primary account manager for approval.
2. The amount requested for travel, subsistence, and related costs should be separate from the amount for registration fees for conferences, seminars, and/or conventions.
3. Following approval of the operating budget, each primary account manager advises the program managers of funds approved for the ensuing year. Major changes in approved plans for use of budgeted funds must be submitted to the primary account manager for approval prior to implementation.
4. Mileage reimbursement will be made in accordance with procedures described in the unit member's appropriate negotiated agreement. Commuting will not be reimbursed.
5. Local mileage will be reimbursed up to the shortest distance between the two locations, excluding toll roads, regardless of the route actually taken.
6. All local mileage and related expenses are to be reported within 10 business days of the end of each month. Reimbursement for mileage not reported on time will be the basis for denial of reimbursement. Earlier deadlines will be implemented by the Division of the Controller for fiscal year end.
 - a) School and departmental submissions and approvals must be completed no more than 15 business days after the end of the month.
 - b) Expenses for local travel are to be submitted using the iExpense module of the Financial Management System for all employees with access to an MCPS computer.

- c) MCPS Form 220-2: *Monthly Statement of Mileage for Use of Private Vehicle*, only may be used by those employees who do not have access to an MCPS computer (e.g., Interim Instructional Services teachers).

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 220-1, revised October, 1982; revised May 2, 1988; revised May 5, 1989; revised January 6, 2005; revised February 6, 2012; revised November 8, 2012; revised April 24, 2015.