

## **TRAVEL AND PER DIEM POLICY – GENERAL SUMMARY**

Extensive travel is required to conduct business of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). Members, staff, faculty, consultants, and program participants frequently travel at the expense of NCJFCJ. **It is the policy of NCJFCJ that such travel is performed as economically as possible and is consistent with NCJFCJ policy and federal guidelines for this purpose.** It is also the desire of NCJFCJ to reimburse fairly those who have legitimate out-of-pocket expenses incurred by traveling on its behalf.

Persons traveling at NCJFCJ's expense will limit their expense claims to the period of the NCJFCJ-related meeting. If a participant finds it necessary to arrive at the meeting location the night before the meeting, NCJFCJ will provide reimbursement for expenses related to that evening's accommodations. Similarly, if a meeting commences with an evening session, expenses will be reimbursed for travel that day. The NCJFCJ cannot support personal expenses, including change fees or cancellation fees made for personal reasons; and the personal use of NCJFCJ accounts with travel agencies, rental car companies, airlines or other vendors is not allowable.

PLEASE NOTE: Special conditions on grant awards pertaining to travel supersede this travel policy and will be disclosed as applicable. Should a travel situation arise that is not addressed in this policy, federal guidelines or special grant conditions will apply.

Deviation from this policy may be considered under IRC 4958 Intermediate Sanctions (excess benefit transactions). For further clarification please refer to the NCJFCJ Intermediate Sanctions Policy.

Since no policy can cover every conceivable circumstance, it is anticipated that occasionally unique situations will occur. Should such a situation arise, it should be directed to the Director of Finance and copied to the appropriate department director. Under all circumstances, only reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

## **TRAVEL PROCEDURES/FORMS**

All persons who travel on behalf of NCJFCJ must have an approved, grant-coded Travel Request Form submitted to the Conference Planning and Marketing Department and obtain a travel number (T-Number) prior to the booking of any travel arrangements. The Travel Request Form should provide the necessary support documentation to justify the means of travel. Under no circumstances should travelers authorize their own individual travel by signing and approving the Travel Request Form.

### *Receipts Required*

Audit regulations require that original receipts be submitted to NCJFCJ. Receipts are required for all lodging, transportation, baggage and material handling, parking expenses, registration fees and other applicable on-site expenditures. For those seeking reimbursement for lodging costs, hotel/lodging receipts indicating a zero balance are required. Original round trip passenger coupons or a copy of the electronic ticket showing airline codes, cost and travel dates must be submitted to NCJFCJ. Boarding passes are not sufficient receipts. Airline receipts must be submitted to NCJFCJ even though no other reimbursement is requested. Receipts are required for any business-related parking expense; however, valet parking is an allowable expense only if no other parking options are available.

**National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
Travel and Per Diem Policy**

**Effective: August 1, 2009; Revised 10/5/09**

**Page 2 of 7**

Receipts and memoranda of explanation are required for all extraordinary circumstances, such as being stranded due to the curtailment of transportation or other unusual expenses, and are subject to the approval of the Director of Finance.

Lost Receipts: If receipts have been lost or destroyed, or are impractical to obtain, a signed statement explaining the circumstances must be furnished with the travel expense voucher as well as certification that reimbursement is not being requested through any other source. An NCJFCJ Travel/Housing Statement may be used for this purpose.

*Dates, Destination, and Purpose*

Please provide arrival and departure dates, destination(s), and purpose of NCJFCJ trip on the Travel Request Form and the Expense Voucher. Travel dates must coincide with meeting dates on the Travel Request Form.

*Non-NCJFCJ Travel*

In the event of non-NCJFCJ travel in conjunction with NCJFCJ travel, the travel agent must verify the cost as being the same as if the traveler had only taken the NCJFCJ trip. Only the lesser of actual expenses or the most reasonable alternative will be reimbursed for the funded destination. Documentation must be submitted in writing to the Finance Department along with the applicable expense voucher. Any additional costs will be at the expense of the traveler and must be charged directly to the traveler. NCJFCJ's travel agency, Welcome Aboard Travel, provides this service.

*Expense Vouchers*

All expense vouchers must be accompanied by the aforementioned receipts, and with the exception of vouchers for NCJFCJ staff, must be submitted to NCJFCJ within 60 calendar days of travel. (Please see below for staff requirements.) Failure to submit expense vouchers within 60 calendar days of travel will result in the forfeiture of reimbursement. When processing expense vouchers for NCJFCJ-funded travelers, program staff may modify or alter the expense voucher by initialing and providing an explanation for the change. If necessary, the amounts provided by the traveler will be corrected by the Finance Department. Program staff should verify that the travel took place, provided meals are accounted for, the traveler was funded for the programming which the expense voucher supports, and the traveler fully participated. Program staff should verify receipts and contact the traveler to obtain any support documentation that is missing, within 15 calendar days of receipt of expense voucher.

Expense vouchers will be processed as timely as possible once all concerns are resolved and all documentation is received by the Finance Department.

*Travel Advances*

It is the practice of NCJFCJ to advance monies to its staff members in order to facilitate travel. Advances are a convenience to staff, and not required by law. Such advance monies must be accounted for in an accurate and timely manner. Please note, any requests for an advance must be signed by the *traveler*, authorizing NCJFCJ to make a payroll deduction if it becomes necessary to reimburse NCJFCJ for monies advanced and not returned or accounted for in accordance with this Travel and Per Diem Policy.

Staff must complete and submit expense vouchers within 30 calendar days following completion of NCJFCJ travel. Failure to complete and submit the travel expense voucher within 30 calendar days, and reimburse the NCJFCJ in full if applicable, will result in the suspension of advances until such time as the appropriate documentation or payment has been completed, and may also result in limitations or discontinuance of future advances.

**National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
Travel and Per Diem Policy**

**Effective: August 1, 2009; Revised 10/5/09**

**Page 3 of 7**

**TRAVEL**

Travel by common carrier (public) is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation and must be used when reasonably available. When NCJFCJ determines that travel must be performed by automobile, an automobile is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation.

*Air Travel*

Air travel will be reimbursed at the most economical fare. When purchasing airline tickets for travel with NCJFCJ funds, NCJFCJ-designated travel agencies must be utilized. Should an instance arise that requires purchasing through another agency or via the Internet, prior approval must be obtained from department directors, and must be documented with the Travel Request Form when submitted. Please note when booking outside of the designated travel agency, the purchaser bears the burden of the expense. Failure to obtain prior approval may result in non-reimbursable travel expenditures. NCJFCJ recognizes additional factors that are to be considered when purchasing the most economical airfare. Those factors include consideration of the total travel time, flight route, ability to change the ticket, whether the ticket is refundable and the traveler's work schedule. Amounts in excess of \$150 above the lowest fare at the time of ticketing require NCJFCJ department director's approval prior to ticketing. Amounts in excess of \$700 will also require NCJFCJ department director approval. It is the traveler's responsibility to verify the accuracy of any flight booked upon receipt of the itinerary, invoice or ticket. In the event of a discrepancy, please call the travel agency immediately. Any issues or concerns arising out of the airline booking with the NCJFCJ travel agency should be directed to the Conference Planning and Marketing Department.

Any personal travel booked in conjunction with NCJFCJ official business is at the expense of the traveler, and separate payment for any additional cost is required at the time of booking. Any additional costs related to upgrades or personal airline preference is at the traveler's expense.

Any increase in travel time due to personal preference is at the traveler's expense. When using an alternate mode of transportation, staff are required to first obtain pre-approval from the department director via the Travel Request Form and include the Travel Option Justification Form (if applicable) and are required to utilize annual leave or leave without pay when choosing alternative travel routes or modes of transportation that are longer in duration than had they chosen the most reasonable airfare or mode of transportation available.

*Ground transportation*

For ground transportation to and from airports, and to and from meetings, receipts are required. Ground transportation to and from social activities (i.e., dinners) will not be reimbursed. Tips are not considered an allowable expense and will not be reimbursed.

*Automobile*

Travelers choosing to drive must first obtain pre-approval from the department director via the Travel Request Form and include the Travel Option Justification Form. The Travel Option Justification Form must also be sent to Finance along with the Travel Request Form demonstrating the need for the use of a personal vehicle and that it is the most reasonable and cost-effective means of transportation available. All relevant costs must be included and noted on the Travel Option Justification Form. Failure to obtain prior approval from the department director, or to include all relevant costs on the Travel Option Justification Form prior to travel, may result in non-reimbursable travel expenditures.

Expenses for travel by auto will be reimbursed at NCJFCJ adopted federal mileage rate ([www.gsa.gov/povrate](http://www.gsa.gov/povrate)). Reimbursement will be the lower of: (1) the most economical air ticket between

**National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
Travel and Per Diem Policy**

**Effective: August 1, 2009; Revised 10/5/09**

**Page 4 of 7**

the nearest airfields including transportation costs to and from airports in lieu of all other transportation expenses, or (2) the approved NCJFCJ adopted federal mileage rate at the time of travel plus other allowable expenses incurred while in transit. Other allowable expenses include parking fees, ferry fees, and bridge, road and tunnel fees or tolls. Valet Parking is an allowable expense only if no other parking options are available.

If additional NCJFCJ-funded persons travel in the same automobile, mileage is payable to only one funded person.

Individuals traveling within a 50 mile radius of their hometown\* are not eligible for meal, hotel and incidental reimbursement. Mileage will be reimbursed at the approved NCJFCJ adopted federal mileage rate at the time of travel. Receipts for parking and tolls are required for reimbursement. Should program circumstances require an exception to this section, approval from the department director is required and documentation of circumstances and department director approval must be submitted with the Travel Request Form.

*Rental Cars*

A vehicle may be rented when it facilitates the accomplishment of the NCJFCJ travel assignment. Travelers choosing to rent a car must first obtain pre-approval from the department director via the Travel Request Form and include the Travel Option Justification Form. The Travel Option Justification Form must also be sent to the Finance Department along with the Travel Request Form, demonstrating the need for the use of a rented vehicle and that it is the most reasonable and cost-effective means of transportation available. All relevant costs must be included and noted on the Travel Option Justification Form. Failure to obtain prior approval from the department director, or to include all relevant costs on the Travel Option Justification Form prior to travel, may result in non-reimbursable travel expenditures.

The traveler should select a reliable rental car company based on the best competitive rate. Mid-size four door vehicles are permitted at a reasonable rate; full-size, higher class and special purpose vehicles are permitted only when they can be rented at rates consistent with mid-size class or when NCJFCJ travel dictates the need. Such need must be documented and submitted with the Travel Request Form.

Under NCJFCJ policy, staff and others traveling on official travel business are required to purchase the optional collision damage waiver that provides coverage for all loss or damage to the car. Any additional optional insurance coverage is at the expense of the traveler. Personal vehicles are not covered under this policy.

If business purposes require that the drop-off/return site for the rental car is different than the location where the car was picked up, the estimated cost and business need must be documented on the Travel Option Justification Form, and prior approval received from the Finance Department.

Unless there is significant savings, travelers should not select the pre-paid fuel/gasoline option but should refuel the tank prior to returning the rental vehicle. Receipts are required for gasoline reimbursement, as well as documentation of cost savings if the pre-paid fuel option is chosen.

Charges for GPS units in rental cars are not reimbursable. Council-funded travelers should download driving instructions prior to travel.

**National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
Travel and Per Diem Policy**

**Effective: August 1, 2009; Revised 10/5/09**

**Page 5 of 7**

Travelers must agree that no illegal drugs or chemicals will be aboard the vehicle at any time and that no driver unauthorized by the car rental company or under the influence of alcoholic beverages, drugs, or chemicals will be allowed to drive the vehicle. The cost of the rental vehicle will be covered while on official NCJFCJ travel only. Any non-business related use of a rented vehicle will be at the traveler's expense.

*Local Travel*

Mileage for NCJFCJ business-related travel, including but not limited to, errands, purchasing, and meetings within the city of the employee's office, may be reimbursed. A record must be kept that clearly states the date, time, mileage, and purpose for mileage incurred. Reimbursement should be requested through a purchase order, with documentation and applicable receipts attached and approved by the department director. Mileage will be reimbursed at the approved NCJFCJ-adopted federal mileage rate at the time of travel. Requests should not be submitted until a minimum of twenty dollars (\$20.00) in allowable expenses is sought for reimbursement, and should be submitted within 15 days of the close of the fiscal year (if not earlier) for mileage incurred during that fiscal year. Receipts for parking and tolls are required for reimbursement. Mileage to and from an employee's home and his or her workplace is considered commuting and will not be reimbursed.

**TRAVEL TIME**

Travel time is defined as including the actual hours of time spent in a public conveyance, such as airplane, bus, train, etc. For example, if traveling by plane, the time will begin upon the employee's arrival at the airport terminal to the time the employee reaches his/her destination. If an employee is traveling to a location, then the destination is either the hotel or the work site (if the employee travels directly from the airport to work). If the employee is returning home from a location, the destination is the airport of final arrival.

While on location, only actual hours worked are recorded and are compensable.

Travel between home and work or between the hotel and work site is considered normal commuting time and is not eligible for compensation.

If an employee requests a specific travel itinerary or mode of transportation that is different from the one authorized by the NCJFCJ, only the estimated travel time associated with the itinerary and mode of transportation that has been authorized will be eligible for compensation.

**MEALS**

NCJFCJ meal and incidental per diem is as follows (less provided meals):

Travel is less than 24 hours: per diem by meal allotment up to 75% of the per diem.

Travel is 24 hours or more:

Day of Departure: 75% of applicable per diem.

Intervening days: 100% of applicable per diem.

Day of Return: 75% of applicable per diem.

Example: \$44 per diem, less \$12 provided meal, 75% of remaining balance is allowable for day of departure and day of return travel. \$44 per diem, less \$12 provided meal, 100% of balance is allowable for intervening days.

**National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
Travel and Per Diem Policy**

**Effective: August 1, 2009; Revised 10/5/09**

**Page 6 of 7**

Depending upon location, persons on authorized travel status will receive a meal and incidental per diem reimbursement at the approved NCJFCJ adopted federal per diem rates in effect at the time of travel. Please refer to the GSA website ([www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem)) for current allowable per diem meal rates. Should there be a discrepancy in the rate obtained; the Finance Department will make the final determination as to allowable per diem rates.

When a person receives free meals or lodging, no reimbursement is allowed. Payment to a friend or relative is not allowable. Meals included in program or registration fees may not be claimed for reimbursement.

There is no reimbursement for meals taken in the traveler's hometown\*.

As a reminder to staff, group meal functions and breaks will be reimbursed provided the expenditures adhere to the latest OJP Financial Guide and the requirements of the NCJFCJ Travel and Per Diem Policy. Please submit a formal agenda and a participant list with the T-numbers to the Finance Department **not less than 30 calendar days prior to the event**. Note: There are strict definitions regarding "working meals". All criteria must be met in order for the function to be considered a "working meal." Requests for reimbursement that do not meet the OJP Financial Guide criteria will be denied, including transportation costs. Unless otherwise specified, Continental Breakfast is not considered a provided meal. A basic Continental Breakfast is defined as coffee, tea, juice, and some type of bread or pastry, such as bagels, muffins, Danish, or croissants.

There is no reimbursement for receptions or social events.

### **HOTEL**

Individuals should be economically selective in choosing a motel or hotel while on independent travel status; the prevailing federal per diem rate is preferred. If the prevailing federal per diem rate or better is not available, appropriate justification must be submitted with the travel expense voucher to support amounts up to 150% of the prevailing federal lodging per diem for individual travel. Should an instance arise that is not in compliance with this policy, a letter, along with department director approval, must be submitted to the Finance Department outlining the circumstances involved. If the purpose of travel requires the traveler to stay at a particular hotel, NCJFCJ will reimburse reasonable lodging expenses with documentation and prior department director approval. In any case, luxury hotels are not an acceptable lodging option. If room and tax costs are master billed, individuals will not be reimbursed for these expenses. Individuals traveling within a 50-mile radius of their hometown\* are not eligible for meal, hotel lodging or incidental reimbursement.

Individuals are responsible for incidental expenses charged to the hotel room (i.e., room service, movies, telephone, laundry, valet, bar, etc.). Tips are not an allowable expense (per federal guidelines) and will not be reimbursed.

All motel, hotel and meeting venue contracts and master-billed accounts with such venues on behalf of NCJFCJ or any of its departments must be pre-arranged through the Conference Planning and Marketing Department.

When conducting a conference or meeting, all NCJFCJ employees must comply with this policy, current federal guidelines and special grant conditions, as applicable.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### *Baggage/Materials*

NCJFCJ may reimburse expenses related to baggage or materials as follows (receipts are required):

- ◆ Transportation charges for reasonable baggage or work-related materials
- ◆ Necessary charges for storage of baggage when such charges are the result of official business
- ◆ Materials handling charges for hotel staff to deliver materials to meeting rooms or delivered for shipping

### *Laundry*

Laundry is not an allowable expense and will not be reimbursed.

### *Telephone*

Only telephone expenses relating to NCJFCJ business will be reimbursed and must be designated as such on the receipt. Phone expenses not relating to NCJFCJ business will not be reimbursed (i.e., phone calls made to check the status of an individual's home office are not reimbursable by NCJFCJ). Personal telephone calls are not reimbursable with the exception of NCJFCJ staff. Staff are allowed one call per day, of reasonable length and cost, to their families. Receipts are required.

### *Internet (Staff Only)*

Hotel Internet charges are only allowable in limited circumstances. Staff must utilize NCJFCJ contracted Internet services (wireless Internet card) when feasible. When an employee is traveling on NCJFCJ business and it is necessary to incur hotel internet costs for business purposes, an explanation of the business purpose must be included in the employee's time sheet comments for each day the cost is incurred.

### *Consultant Expenses*

Expenses incurred by consultants/faculty for materials, supplies, copies, etc. are not reimbursable.

## **SPOUSE/GUEST**

All travel expenses as specified in these guidelines are reimbursable for the authorized traveler only; costs related to spouses/guests, including meal costs, are the responsibility of the individual.

When hotel room costs differ for single or double occupancy, single occupancy costs are approved; additional expenses for double occupancy are the responsibility of the individual. When hotel room costs are the same for single or double occupancy, there is no additional cost to the individual accompanied by the spouse or guest.

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\*Hometown is defined as within 50 miles of the place of business.