



Priority Charter Schools

**TRAVEL
MANUAL
2022 - 2023**

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this manual is to provide broad guidelines for official Priority Charter School business travel in accordance with applicable regulations and sound business practices.

OVERVIEW

This Travel Procedures Manual applies to all Priority Charter Schools employees who incur expenses while engaged in official school district business. Only those expenses that have been incurred while on District business will be reimbursed. District travel and business expense reimbursement procedures meet the IRS definition of reimbursable expense. Expenses that conform to this policy are not reported as taxable income to the individual. Certain expenditures that do not conform to this policy will not be considered reimbursable. Items of a personal nature incurred while traveling shall be carefully segregated from District expenses and are not reimbursable.

All travel related expenses must be made within the ethical and legal limits as defined by District, state and federal guidelines and regulations.

TRAVEL STATUS

An employee is not in travel status when traveling within their own county and shall not receive lodging or meal reimbursement. An employee must travel more than 50 miles one way to be eligible for full per diem or lodging.

OCCUPATIONAL FRAUD

Fraud is the use of one's occupation for personal enrichment through the deliberate misuse or misapplication of the District's resources or assets. Employees (travelers) who intentionally submit fraudulent travel request will be disciplined according to the District's Ethics Policy.

EXCEPTIONS

The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent or their designee have sole authority to approve exceptions to provisions of this Manual. Approved exceptions must be explicitly justified as beneficial to both PCS and the individual and requires the recommendation of the traveler's supervisor.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The PCS travel guidelines generally follow the travel guidelines as established within the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts *TexTravel* website, where applicable. The *TexTravel* can be accessed online at <https://fm.x.cpa.state.tx.us/fmx/travel/textravel/index.php>. Because the reimbursement rates can change, it is recommended that travelers print the page at the time reservations are made and submit the print-out with the travel reimbursement voucher as a supporting document.

The following is the responsibility of every traveling employee of the Priority Charter Schools :

- Make own hotel reservation and/or workshop/conference registration when possible.
- Cancel hotel reservations according to hotel's cancellation policy or make necessary changes if travel plans change.
- Cancel registration according to agency's cancellation policy.
- Notify the Executive Director of Finance via email of any change in travel plans.
- Verify all travel arrangements are complete ten (10) business days prior to departure date of trip.
- Verify that all expenses being paid or reimbursed are valid and conform to the provisions established in this manual, and understand that requests lacking required funds, next-level supervisor approval and supporting documentation will not be processed or reimbursed.
- Ensure that expenses submitted for reimbursement have not been previously paid through a travel reimbursement request or by an outside organization.
- Obtain appropriate approval signatures. An employee shall not approve his/her own expenses. In addition, any subordinate within the direct reporting structure of the individual requesting the expenditure or reimbursement may not grant approvals.
- Submit all travel-related requests at least 20 days prior to travel date. All requests shall be submitted complete.
- Submit all reimbursement requests (with supporting documentation) related to

his/her travel within 10 days of completion of travel. The employee incurring expenses may delegate the responsibility for preparation of the appropriate forms, but will always retain accountability for ensuring all travel expenses are in accordance with policies and procedures of the District. Adjustments for per diem will not be made after check has been processed.

- Submit all receipts with reimbursement request if expense was incurred using personal credit card or “out-of-pocket.” Food receipts are optional.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Individuals authorized to approve travel or business expenditures of other employees shall administer these guidelines. Expenses that appear to be excessive or unusual in relation to the nature of the business travel shall be investigated prior to approval. Explanation of any such expenditure must be included before submission to the Executive Director of Finance and the Superintendent.

Transactions and forms related to travel or business expenses must be approved by next-level supervisor. The authorized approver is responsible for verifying the purpose of the expense is valid and directly related to official school business. The approver should also verify the validity of the business trip and guarantee funds are available to cover all expenses related to that trip.

All reimbursement requests or travel-related payment requests submitted for approval should be reviewed and approved within five (5) business days. The supervisor should forward the approved travel reimbursement requests or travel-related payment requests to the next administrative level (see Levels of Authorization below). The employee should be informed that his or her request has been submitted to Accounts Payable.

LEVELS OF AUTHORIZATION:

1. Immediate supervisor (Campus Principal must approve all campus level employees)
2. Executive Director of Finance
3. Superintendent or designee has the final level of approval for all travel request forms

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director of Finance is responsible for reviewing all approved travel-related requests and for investigating all policy and procedure non-compliance. All reimbursement requests related to travel must be sent to the Executive Director of Finance within thirty (30) days of completion of trip. The Executive Director of Finance must verify that expenses are reasonable. Other duties include:

- Review all requests for travel related expenses (registration, airline, hotel, and reimbursements).
- Uniformly administer all travel policies and procedures.
- Inform all travelers (via email) when registration has been paid.
- Book all airline and/or rail tickets.
- Make hotel reservations for traveler upon request.
- Email airline electronic itinerary and hotel information to traveler at least seven (7) working days prior to departure date.
- Verify information contained on reimbursement request matches the accompanying supporting documentation and is in accordance with policies and procedures.
- Verify expenses conform to any requirements imposed by the IRS.
- Verify expenses are charged to proper object code.
- Verify expenses have been reviewed/approved by next-level supervisor.

ELIGIBLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

The following types of expenses, if reasonable and necessary, for district purposes and if properly documented are examples of expenses that may be payable or reimbursable as defined in this manual:

- Air and rail travel
 - All air and rail tickets for PCS travelers are purchased by Accounts Payable. Changes or cancellation penalties imposed by the airline if due to demands made by PCS and not personal reasons (supporting documentation must accompany to the Travel Reimbursement Form).

- Car rental and gasoline for rental vehicles
- Ground transportation including taxi and public transportation fares, mileage for personal vehicles, and parking fees.
- Meals, while on official PCS business.
- Registration and fees for attendance at approved conferences and seminars.
- Taxes associated with transportation, lodging and meals only.

INELIGIBLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

PCS **will not** reimburse the following expenses:

- Personal grooming services such as barbers, hairdressers and shoe shines
- Car rental insurance purchased for domestic travel
- Childcare
- Membership to private clubs
- Fees for frequent flyer programs and other similar awards for hotels and car rentals
- Fitness and recreational fees, including massages and saunas
- Laundry and dry cleaning expenses
- In-room movies
- Theatre or other tourist attractions and sightseeing
- Parking for personal trips (malls, restaurants, sporting events, etc.)
- Transportation for personal trips (shopping, sightseeing, restaurants, etc.)
- Insurance cost such as life insurance, flight insurance, personal automobile insurance and baggage insurance
- Lost baggage
- Lost or theft of personal funds, personal property or airline tickets
- “No show” charges for hotel or car service
- Parking tickets or traffic violations
- Personal automobile repairs
- Personal credit card annual or late fees
- Personal telephone charges

- Pet care
- Tips or gratuities, except when included as part of the bill
- Valet parking, when self-parking is available
- Upgrades (air, hotel, rental car, etc.)
- Spouse or guest travel
- Liquor/Alcoholic beverages
- Limousine service unless no other more cost-effective mode of transportation exists
- Retail purchases of supplies, book, etc. (items must be purchased with a purchase order)
- Overweight baggage
- Baggage charges beyond the first bag
- In-room internet
- Meal and lodging expenses incurred more than one night before or after the event/conference/workshop.
- Room service

RECEIPTS

PCS policy requires original, itemized unaltered receipts for all expenditures except food and tips. All other non-meal expenses require dated, unaltered original receipts. Receipts must be submitted when requesting reimbursement of travel expenses after travel ending date.

Hotel receipts must accompany all travel reimbursement requests – including prepaid lodging by PCS and other agencies before the Executive Director of Finance processes the reimbursement. The receipt must show check-in and check-out dates.

An **itemized hotel folio** must accompany the travel reimbursement request if such lodging was paid by traveler or by PCS.

An **express check-out receipt** is acceptable and must accompany the travel reimbursement request if such lodging was paid by any other entity.

CASH ADVANCES

Priority Charter Schools does not offer cash advances.

AIRLINE SERVICES

All domestic and international air travel must be in Coach or equivalent class. Any upgrades are the sole financial obligations of the traveler. All tickets (purchased by PCS or reimbursed to the traveler by PCS) belong to Priority Charter Schools.

All tickets are booked electronically by Accounts Payable's staff member(s).

Request to purchase an airline ticket must be submitted on the Travel Request Form at least 15 working days prior to departure date. Desired flight times must be indicated on request along with any special instructions. The lowest available airfare and best available flight will be booked for all travelers. The traveler must include a copy of his or her airline itinerary when submitting the travel reimbursement form. If airline accommodation has been made and the traveler decides to use another transportation method, PCS is only responsible for the difference in price and or miles upon requesting reimbursement.

DENIED BOARDING COMPENSATION

Airlines occasionally offer free tickets or cash allowances to compensate travelers for delays and inconveniences due to overbooking, flight cancellations, changes of equipment and etc. Travelers may volunteer for denied boarding compensation only if the delay in their trip will not result in any interruption of business or any additional cost. In these cases, the employee is free to keep the compensation.

UNUSED/VOIDED TICKETS

Unused air or rail tickets or flight coupons must never be discarded or destroyed as these documents may have cash value.

All tickets are issued electronically and tracked with an online system in the AP Department. Converting unused tickets to tickets for personal use will be considered occupational fraud.

AIRLINE PENALTY FARES

Airline penalty fares may be utilized when needed. The Executive Director of Finance will honor reimbursement requests for penalty fares and administrative fees when business circumstances require that schedules are changed or canceled. Such tickets are non-transferable. Although the ticket is issued in the employee's name, the ticket belongs to the District.

Most carriers require that changes be made and re-ticketed on or before the departure date of each ticketed flight. You may be able to exchange the return portion for a fee. The

carriers may also charge a fee for customers who standby for an alternate flight on his or her ticketed day of departure. Check with the airline for more information. A receipt for any fees charged should be attached to the Travel Reimbursement Request for reimbursement.

To obtain the lowest possible penalty fare, airline travel should be booked as far in advance as possible.

FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAM AWARDS

Any bonus or promotional gratuity received as a gratuity as a result of official PCS travel shall be used to offset or reduce the cost of subsequent official PCS travel. Under no circumstances can the traveler keep a bonus or other promotional gratuity so earned for his own personal use. As sufficient mileage, earned as a result of state-paid travel, is accumulated, free ticket coupons will be applied for and used to offset official PCS travel costs.

RENTAL CARS

PCS will reimburse travelers for the cost of renting a mid-size, intermediate or compact car with prior approval. Mileage is not reimbursed for rental vehicles, although the cost of gasoline may be reimbursed.

When picking up a rental car, traveler should check with rental car agent for any promotional rates, last-minute specials or free upgrades.

The physical condition of the rental vehicle should be inspected prior to leaving the rental lot. Any damage found should be reported to the car rental agency before the vehicle is accepted. Damage should be documented on the car rental agreement to avoid possible dispute over damages for which the company is not responsible.

Original rental receipts and any associated gasoline receipts must be submitted with travel reimbursement request.

Employee will not be reimbursed for traffic citations they receive while on District business.

Travelers are responsible for canceling rental car reservations if travel plans change.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Taxi, bus, subway, or shuttle fares will be reimbursed at actual cost with original receipts. Receipts should include company name, date, destination and amount. Employees traveling to the same location should share ground transportation to and from the airport whenever possible. Limousine or car services should be used **only** when a justifiable, valid business reasons preclude the use of more economical mode of transportation.

USE OF PERSONAL AUTOMOBILE

A privately owned vehicle may be used for business travel provided the vehicle is insured by the private owner and the individual using such a vehicle has a valid operator's license. It is expressly understood that while using a privately owned vehicle, the operator assumes all responsibility for accidents to the extent of the operator's insurance coverage.

Exact mileage will be computed using an official internet map (i.e., MapQuest, or Google Maps). PCS will pay a standard rate per mile for official travel by private automobile based on the actual **driving distance by the shortest, most direct, practical route.** Exact mileage is computed from the traveler's assigned worksite to the destination and return to the traveler's assigned worksite (excluding weekend travel). Exact mileage to an airport is determined from assigned worksite to the airport.

The following chart will be used when determining mileage for inter-district and/or Regional Service Centers (One-way mileage is listed):

	Admin	CCA	CPCA	GCA	TCA
Admin		34	57	41	
CCA	34		48	43	38
CPCA	57	48		19	56
GCA	41	43	19		40
TCA		38	56	40	
Region 12	38	70	87	71	35
Region 13	67	65	19	31	66

As of July 1, 2022, the reimbursement is at the rate of \$.625 cents per mile. This rate will adjust as the federal government adjusts its rate, typically the first of the calendar year. Employees must submit a completed Mileage Reimbursement form with the attached internet map (unless location is on the chart above). An employee that receives a travel stipend CAN NOT request mileage reimbursement for inter-district travel.

When two or more PCS employees travel in one private vehicle, only one travel expense at the authorized reimbursement rate per mile shall be allowed. The person claiming reimbursement shall report the names of other PCS employee passengers. Employees may not request reimbursement for gasoline as this is covered by the mileage rate.

Travelers using a privately owned vehicle to travel out of state on official PCS business will be reimbursed mileage at the most economical mode of transportation - normally the lowest airfare. A comparison will be made between driving vs. airfare.

HOTELS

Overnight lodging (and parking) will not be reimbursed unless the event is more than 50 miles from the employee's primary work location. Lodging rates exceeding the maximum per person per day limit will not be reimbursed. Maximum daily lodging rate is based on the current rate established by the General Services Administration: <http://www.gsa.gov>. Rooms will be double occupancy when more than two people are traveling to the same destination. The only exceptions to this rule are the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, Executive Directors, and Campus Principals.

When traveling to a conference or seminar, it is appropriate to stay at the hotel hosting the conference or seminar, assuming that the daily rate is within the GSA guidelines.

If an employee chooses to stay with relatives, he or she will be reimbursed for meals, but must have prior approval from supervisor and attach a copy to travel reimbursement request.

LODGING RECEIPTS

All lodging receipts are required prior to reimbursement being processed. Meals and incidentals on lodging receipts must be itemized separately. A lodging receipt must include all of the following information:

- Name and location of the lodging establishment
- Dates of stay
- Itemized charges for lodging, meals, telephone calls, in-room movies, etc.

Receipts for **all lodging** are always required.

MEALS AND INCIDENTAL

Meal rates differ depending on whether the travel is in-state or out-of-state. Meal per diem

rates will be in accordance with the General Services Administration (GSA); <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/2187>, prorated according to the number of meals being served by the conference host. The per diem rate will be paid as outlined on the GSA website. PCS will reimburse travelers for allowable meal costs incurred during District related travel based on reasonable time necessary for traveling. PCS will reimburse travelers for meals on the days of travel to and from the destination according to GSA guidelines. The School shall reimburse an employee on a day that the employee conducts official School business outside of the employee's place of employment for at least six (6) consecutive hours. This excludes Regional Service Centers. Travelers can get reimbursed either on a per diem basis or with receipts (meal reimbursement).

- *Per Diem* – per diem allowances includes meals for food service handlers at restaurants. Meals must be itemized separately. Receipts and related documentation are not required when requesting reimbursement for meals using the per diem option. The allowable per diem depends on the location of the travel.
- *Meal Reimbursement* - Employee will be reimbursed meals consumed while the employee was travelling to and from the traveler's meeting location. Receipts for meals must be attached to the Travel Reimbursement Form. Adjustments to travelers per diem will not be made after check has been processed if receipts were not attached to the original reimbursement request.

EXPENSES FOR MEALS FOR OTHERS

Employees are *not reimbursed for paying for meals for others*. A traveler may not submit a per diem request for a meal if his/her meal was included in a group bill paid by another agency. Food receipts must show name of establishment and itemized list of purchased items.

ALTERNATE TRAVELER

Employees traveling on behalf of another PCS employee must first submit all necessary forms related to the trip. The Executive Director of Finance staff must be notified via email of the substitution. New arrangements will be made to accommodate the new traveler when necessary.

CHANGE OF TRAVEL PLANS

The Executive Director of Finance must be notified via email of any change in traveler's plans. The traveler will be responsible for any expenses incurred when travel plans change for personal reasons.

The traveler is responsible for canceling hotel reservation and registration within that agency's cancellation period. The traveler must notify the Executive Director of Finance via email of flight cancellations.

TRAVEL EXPENSE OF SPOUSE/PERSONAL GUEST

The expenses of a spouse, family member or guest accompanying the business traveler are not reimbursable.

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment expenses are **NOT** reimbursable by the District, this includes, but is not limited to:

- Sporting event tickets
- Concert and theater tickets
- Transportation to/from the event
- Meals and beverages consumed at the event

If there are any questions as to whether an expense is appropriate, inquire before the event rather than after.

NON-TRAVEL BUSINESS EXPENSES

Non-travel related expenses incurred during travel will not be reimbursed by the District. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Retail purchases of supplies, books, etc.
- Expenses incurred on behalf of others.

WHOM TO CALL WITH QUESTIONS

If you have travel-related questions, you may contact persons listed below during normal business hours:

- Executive Director of Finance
- Superintendent or designee

AFTER-HOURS TRAVEL

Traveler should be prepared to handle any emergencies occurring while traveling after

the normal PCS work hours. Notify the Executive Director of Finance staff the next business day for assistance in resolving PCS travel-related matters.

NON-COMPLIANCE

Travel expenses that fall outside the procedures listed in this manual will not be reimbursed. If travel arrangements are changed because of a non-District related event, the traveler will be responsible for reimbursing PCS for any and all additional fees, including but not limited to, registration fees, lodging costs, transportation costs, and per diem. Any changes that result in additional fees must be approved by the funding source and the traveler's supervisor. When the cancellation processes are not followed, then any costs incurred becomes the responsibility of the traveler.

Please contact the Executive Director of Finance one week in advance of traveling accommodations if you have not received confirmation of travel arrangements for an upcoming event. This will confirm if all required paperwork and approval has been received by the business office and that travel arrangements have been made.

TRAVEL FORMS

All travel forms are available on the Priority Charter Schools website under Staff Resources and are in the following section.

- **Travel Request Form** – used to request transportation and lodging
- **Per Diem Request Form** – used to request per diem once travel has been approved.
- **Travel Reimbursement Form** – Used to request reimbursement for travel-related expenses after completion of trip.
- **Mileage Reimbursement Form** – Used to request mileage reimbursement for travel when using a personal vehicle. Can be submitted AFTER the trip has been completed.

PRIORITY CHARTER SCHOOLS TRAVEL REQUEST FORM

Employee: _____ Date of Request: _____

Campus: Admin CCA CPCA GCA TCA

Department: Gen Ed. <u>SpEd</u> ESL GT CTE PK Other: _____

Purpose of Trip: _____ (Attach Event Flier)

Travel Location: _____ *Only the Superintendent can authorize out of state travel.*

Estimated Date(s) of Travel: _____ to _____

Estimated Cost:

Registration	\$ _____	Registration Due Date: _____
Hotel:	\$ _____	Preferred Hotel: _____
Travel:	\$ _____	Mode of Travel: Air Personal Vehicle Rental
Other:	\$ _____	_____
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: \$ _____		

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

----- **FOR BUSINESS OFFICE USE ONLY** -----

Per Diem Calculations

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals	Daily Total

Total Estimated Cost w/per diem: _____

Approved: Yes No

By: _____

Date: _____

**PRIORITY CHARTER SCHOOLS
TRAVEL PER DIEM REQUEST**

Employee _____

Admin	CCA
CPCA	GCA
Campus	TCA

Mail Check to Address _____

Department	Gen Ed.	ESL
	SpEd	PK
	GT	CTE
	Other:	

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

Date(s) of Travel _____

Event Attending (Attach Event Schedule/Flier) _____

Destination _____

Per Diem (Attach GSA Per Diem Rates)

DATE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	INCIDENTALS	DAILY TOTAL
TOTAL					

Signature of Traveler

Date

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Signature of Approved Final Authorizer

Date

**PRIORITY CHARTER SCHOOLS
TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT**

Total Amount	\$ _____	Date of Request	_____
Employee	_____	Campus	Admin CCA CPCA GCA TCA
Mail Check to Address	_____ _____	Department	Gen Ed. SpEd ESL GT CTE PK Other:

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

Date(s) of Travel _____

Event Attending (Attach Event Schedule/Flier) _____

Destination _____

EXPENSES TO BE REIMBURSED

Mileage (Attach Mileage Reimbursement Form)	\$ _____
Lodging (Attach Detailed Receipt)	\$ _____
Meals (Attach Detailed Receipt)	\$ _____
Registration Fee (Attach Detailed Receipt)	\$ _____
Other (Attach Detailed Receipt with explanation)	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

I Certify that the purpose of travel to which these expenses are requested is for official Priority Charter School business.

_____ Signature of Traveler	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Supervisor	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Approved Final Authorizer	_____ Date

Revised: 07/21/2021

**PRIORITY CHARTER SCHOOLS
MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT FORM**

Employee: _____

School/Dept: _____

DATE	Starting Point (assigned workplace)/Destination/Purpose	MILEAGE
Total Mileage		
Rate of Reimbursement Per Mile		\$ 0.625
Total Reimbursement		<input style="width: 80px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

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CPCA	57	48		19	56
GCA	41	43	19		40
TCA		38	56	40	
Region 12	38	70	87	71	35
Region 13	67	65	19	31	66

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

Superintendent _____ Date _____

Account Code _____ Audited by _____

REVISED:07/14/2022