

The newly revised HHS Travel Manual was recently issued with a January 2012 effective date. This manual supersedes the May 2008 manual and its introduction requires revisions be made to the 1500 section of the NIH Manual. The below discusses these changes which should be immediately adopted by the travel community pending changes to the NIH Manual.

1. In-Kind Sponsor Reimbursable Expenses Only. For Title 31, no longer will in-cash reimbursable sponsor travel be allowed beginning April 1, 2012. The STO may waive this restriction under exceptional circumstances. This restriction applies to Title 5 and 42 as well, although cash reimbursement is still permitted for per diem, taxis and miscellaneous expenses. (7.1)
2. Leave Policy while on TDY Travel Domestic/Non-Foreign. Introduces HHS' leave policy for domestic TDY. For each night of lodging, one day of annual or compensatory leave may be taken up to a maximum of three days. No leave is allowed for a TDY trip not having an overnight stay. *Further, no leave is allowed when trip is funded, either partially or fully by a Sponsor.* The STO can modify accordingly for long term TDY and can waive the 3-day rule when circumstances so warrant. (5.2.1)
3. Leave Policy While on International TDY. The Department strongly discourages employees from using annual leave in conjunction with official international travel to avoid the impression that Federal funds are being used to finance what is seen as a personal benefit. This is especially true when traveling to resort areas known for their recreational facilities or sight-seeing attractions. For each night of lodging, one day of annual or compensatory leave may be taken up to a maximum of three days. No leave permitted for a TDY trip not having an overnight stay. *Further, no leave is allowed when trip is funded, either partially or fully by a Sponsor.* The STO may authorize different leave requirements for long-term TDY. (6.5.1). Additionally, the STO can waive the restriction of no leave allowed while on international sponsor travel and can also waive the 3-day rule. (6.7)
4. Vouchers Submitted in a Timely Manner. HHS will begin working with the OPDIVs to assure fuller compliance with the FTR which mandates travel vouchers must be submitted within five working days after completion of a trip. This assistance will include distributing to NIH a quarterly report of outstanding travel claims. Further, HHS has published a 4-step table to guide this process. (3.2.2)

Timely Voucher Submittal Table of Actions

Time Frame	Action
After 5 working days	Email to traveler and delegated AO that voucher is late and needs to be filed
After 10 calendar days of earlier e-mail	Follow up email to traveler and delegated AO similar to the earlier e-mail

After 20 calendar days of second e-mail	Traveler is given 45 additional days to file and notified that if this is not accomplished, a formal letter of disciplinary action will be prepared
After 45 calendar days	Employee supervisor notified and required to prepare a letter similar to an adverse impact (personnel action) and will remain in the employee's file for one year.

5. Mandatory Use of Government Travel Management Service for Reservations. The use of an unauthorized service such as Orbitz or Travelocity will subject employees to possible disciplinary action. However, the manual allows specified exceptions including a new one which recognizes that Omega may be unable to arrange for common carrier transportation, lodging, and/or car rental for travel in remote areas of developing nations. (3.4.1)
6. Prohibition Against the Use of Personal Funds for Common Carrier Charges. For passenger transportation costing \$100 or less, an employee may use personal funds only if use of an IBA or CBA is not practical. An employee who repeatedly uses personal funds to pay for common carrier expenses will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with NIH policy. If a new employee or an invitational or infrequent traveler, who is unaware of proper procedures, makes an unauthorized purchase of common carrier transportation using personal funds, reimbursement to the employee will be *limited* to the constructed cost of such transportation using the City Pair Fare (if no City Pair is available, the fare provided by the TMC will be used) and authorized method of payment. (4.1.3.1)
7. First Class Travel - International. Added a third exception for the use of the use of First-Class travel when Other than Coach Class (Business Class) accommodations are not reasonably available and the requirements and approval for Other than Coach Class (Business Class) travel have previously been met and approved. (6.4.2)
8. Capping of Per Diem and Transportation Expenses. Employees cannot waive common-carrier (i.e., airline) transportation and per-diem for mission travel as this is considered augmentation of an appropriation. However, an exception to this capping policy may occur when the travel is being conducted in conjunction with training activities under the GETA. In this case, an OPDIV/STAFFDIV has the discretion to pay for all, a portion, or none of the transportation and per diem expenses, and may authorize payment only for those expenses it deems necessary to achieve the objectives of the training program. (3.1.7.1)

9. Use of Non-Contract Fares Due to Lower Cost. The previous bar requiring at least a 40% savings still remains for domestic and non-foreign flights, but is lowered to 15% for international flights. These tickets MUST be booked through Omega. (4.1.3.3)
10. Markets Being Served by More Than One Airport. When a traveler works in a market such as DC which is served by multiple airports, a cost comparison needs to be prepared showing the total constructed cost traveling from each of the available airports, including round-trip airfare and ground transportation. The cost comparison should be uploaded into the ETS with the traveler using the airport with the lowest constructed cost. The cost comparison discussed here is not to be confused with GovTrip's constructed trip functionality. (4.1.4.1)
11. Authorization of Actual Expense Allowance. Requesting AEA requires including cost comparisons from three hotels, with one of the hotels at the maximum lodging rate set by GSA. If there is no hotel available at the maximum per diem rate, as provided by the TMC, the traveler must provide this information as part of the justification. Three quotes are still required. The manual provides a template memorandum to be used as documentation for making and approving the request. (5.1.3.7)



Request for Actual
Expense Allowance S:

12. Sponsor Travel. HHS does not allow for sponsor-paid common carrier accommodations outside those that would be authorized if paid by an agency's own appropriation(s) in accordance with the FTR. Therefore, you can only accept business class, even if the sponsor offers to pay first class. (7.4.1.8)
13. Mandatory Use of Government Travel Cards. Frequent travelers must use their IBA cards for all official travel other than procurement of common carrier tickets handled through the CBA. IBA cards are not to be used for local travel unless one of the following conditions apply:
 - a. A travel order has been issued.
 - b. Travel is performed for training under GETA.
 - c. An exception has been granted by HHS' Assistant Secretary for Administration.
 - d. The employee is authorized to rent a car for a local travel area site visit or similar purpose, in which case the travel charge card must be used for renting the car and gasoline expenses. (10.2)
14. Sponsor Funded Long-term Travel and Training. Under title 31 authority, acceptance of in-kind services from a non-Federal source for travel and related expenses to attend a meeting or

similar function cannot be authorized for a single trip, with one purpose, for a period exceeding 13 lodging nights of per diem. If, due to exceptional circumstances, the non-Federal source is offering these services for a period of time that is 14 lodging nights of per diem or more, authorization for acceptance must come from the STO. (7.4.1.10)

15. Transportation Gratuities. The cap for tips for taxis, shuttles and courtesy transportation where there is no service charge assessed is now \$5. Previously, it was limited to \$2. If there is a service charge, the gratuity remains at an amount not to exceed 15% of the service charge. (4.1.2.2)
16. Seating Upgrade Programs. HHS will not reimburse expenses related to seating upgrade programs in coach class, for personal preference, nor any other ancillary fees. These programs are often called "Coach Elite", "Preferred Coach", "Coach Plus" or some other identifier. If a traveler is flying on a City Pair Fare and the only seat(s) available requires the purchase of a seating upgrade in coach class, the expense may be reimbursed if allowed by the AO. (4.1.5.7)
17. Rental Vehicles. HHS policy sets the default size for a rental car as compact or economy. Any other size of rental car requires pre-authorization and the appropriate justification for the use of other than the default car size. Post-trip approval may be obtained from the appropriate delegated official when circumstances so warrant and needs to be annotated on an amended travel order. (4.1.9.2)
18. Prepaid Fuel Option for a Rental Car. Travelers are not authorized to enter into a pre-paid fuel agreement with the rental car company. Rather, they are expected to fill up the gas tank prior to returning the rental car. (4.1.9.2)
19. Travel of an Employee with Special Needs. Established the following reasonable accommodation timeframes: 1) employees with permanent disabilities may be authorized use of Other than Coach Class accommodations not to exceed a 3-year period; 2) authorizations for employees having serious, but not permanent disabilities shall not exceed 1-year period; and 3) authorization for temporary disabilities shall not exceed a 6-month period. (5.2.5)
20. International Travel Arrangements. Identifies nine requirements that need to be performed by NIH and/or the employee no later than 7 days prior to departure: (6.2)
 - a. Review the Department of State current travel advisories and HHS travel warnings available at <http://www.globalhealth.gov> to determine if there are any restrictions on official travel to the destination country.
 - b. Process international travel requests for clearance through the NFT within the ETS (GovTrip) travel system. The uses of the GovTrip Travel System and NFT systems are not currently required for HHS employees employed, assigned permanently, or on long-term TDY overseas when travel services are provided by the Department of State. However, travel must be performed under HHS travel policies.

- c. Ensure the employee, if eligible, obtains a valid official (maroon) or diplomatic (black) passport and visa(s), if required by the country or countries visited.
- d. Ensure employee meets all medical requirements, including appropriate vaccinations and examinations.
- e. Ensure the employee obtains Department of State e-Country Clearance (eCC) through the eCC system prior to travel.
- f. Submit a copy of their agency travel safety brief for OSSI review both annually and when revisions are proposed; OSSI will issue an annual call for these briefs.
- g. Ensure the employee completes an in-house OPDIV/STAFFDIV travel safety briefing, approved by the OSSI in consultation with the U.S. Department of State for all travel, irrespective of the length to non-designated countries.
- h. When required for travel to a designated country, as defined by OSSI, ensure the employee received a travel safety and threat briefing, as needed, in consultation with OSSI. OSSI may consult with an OPDIV/STAFFDIV head with possible recommendations for modification of travel plans.
- i. When an employee plans to be on official duty travel in one location for 30 days or longer, complete the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) approved minimum four-day training course, "Serving Abroad for Families and Employees." HHS/CDC also offers a similar training course, "Preparing for Work Overseas," which has been certified as compliant to the Department of State. Once the traveler has completed the basic course, he or she will only be required to attend a shorter, security-refresher course every five (5) years.

21. Registration Fees for Locally Held Meetings. When the DEC determines that the acceptance is in accordance with the 5 CFR 2635 regulations, then the "free attendance" provision that is linked to the Widely Attended Gathering (WAG) approval process is to take place. An employee can only accept the waiving of a registration fee under the WAG authority or under HHS Form 348 sponsor-travel guidelines. Otherwise, an employee must pay to attend the event. (7.3.5)

22. Government Contractor-Issued Travel Charge Card Regulations. This is a new section to the manual which discusses roles and responsibilities of all the parties. (10.3)

23. Official Station. The FTR no longer uses the term "official duty station" and instead uses the term "official station" which is defined as an area defined by an agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties, or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain, provided no part of the area is more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his or her duties, or from an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. This version better clarifies the HHS definition of "local travel area". (4.3)

24. HHS Exception to the 80-mile Rule for Per Diem in the Local Travel Area. Adds a fifth criteria to the four others already noted in 1500-06-01(C)(8). This additional criteria reads “It is clearly within the Government’s interest, for accomplishment of its mission, to permit a particular employee to stay overnight at the site of the local travel assignment on one or more of those night(s), not necessarily consecutive”. (4.3.2.4)
25. Federal Advisory Committee Members must use the TMC for Car Rentals. In order for committee members to be covered by the government in the case of an accident, the car rental company must assess the Government Administrative Rate Supplement (GARS) fee of \$5.00. As a FAC member cannot make these arrangements on their own behalf, they must use Omega which arranges for this fee to be assessed when making car rental arrangements for NIH personnel. (4.1.9.2)
26. Fly America Act. Federal employees must use a US flag carrier unless mission necessity requires the use of a foreign carrier. However, transportation provided under an “Open Skies Agreement” that the US is a party to meets the requirement of the Fly America Act. Presently, there is an “Open Skies Agreement” with the European Union, with Australia and with Switzerland. (4.1.6.1)
27. Use of Acela Train Service. As the FTR defines this as an extra fare train service, it requires prior authorization. Failure to receive prior authorization will result in not being reimbursed for the related expenses. As Business Class is the lowest available class on the Acela, approval for extra fare train service is the only approval necessary. A First Class accommodation on the Acela requires a separate approval. (4.1.5.4)
28. ATM Withdrawal. Fees incurred with the following are reimbursable to the traveler:
- a. ATM fees for Full-Time Employees (FTE) who do not have an IBA per the HHS Travel Charge Card policy;
 - b. ATM fees for individuals who are authorized to travel on behalf of the Department (i.e., Invitational Travelers who, for example, do not have an IBA and are not eligible for a travel advance); or
 - c. When a travel card cannot be used at a foreign hotel due to the merchant code not being allowed. (4.2.1.7)
29. Internet Fees. While reimbursement is allowed regardless of connectivity location, i.e., hotel, conference location, etc., it must be pre-approved on the Travel Authorization. (4.2.1.4)
30. Baggage Fees. While reimbursement is allowed when such charges are the result of official business, pre-approval is required except for the first checked bag. Fees associated with the storage of bags are also permitted. (4.2.1.6)

31. Lodging. First consideration must be given to establishments that are contracted by GSA under the FedRooms program to ensure that travelers stay in fire-safe accommodations at a rate that is at or below per diem. In addition, most FedRooms properties provide free internet access. FedRooms facilities are listed under the “Govt Preferred” tab in the lodging section within GovTrip. If an employee uses an unauthorized travel agent, or unauthorized TMC, or unauthorized travel service such as Orbitz, Travelocity, etc., the employee will be responsible for all additional costs that result from the unauthorized use and may be subject to disciplinary action. (5.1.3.2)
32. Recommended Lodging Facilities. When selecting lodging facilities, employees should give first consideration to the lodging recommended per the below table (5.1.3.5):

TDY Length and Lodging Selection

Term	From	To	Lodging
TDY	1	13 Nights	FedRooms/Extended Stay
Extended TDY	14 Nights	29 Nights	Extended Stay
Long-term TDY	30 Nights	90 Nights	Extended Stay/Long-term Lodging Facilities (Apartments)
Long-term TDY	91 Nights	End of Assignment	Long-term Lodging Facilities (Apartments)

33. Periodic Return Trips to Official Duty Station for Non-Official Reasons. For assignments that are less than 30 lodging nights, employees will not be authorized a return trip home at Government expense. For long-term assignments (including IPA agreements) of greater duration, a maximum of two return trips per month at the Government expense may be authorized in consultation with the employee’s supervisor and AO. A maximum of two trips per month is not an entitlement given the fiscal impact these trips have on the budget. (5.2.3.3)
34. TDY Travel in conjunction with Special Arrangements Due to Religious Observances. Requires a proper analysis be performed when an employee requires special travel arrangements due to their religious beliefs. Proper analysis includes a determination that all accommodation options are considered and that the accommodation option selected does not pose a hardship on the agency. (5.2.7)

35. Global Positioning System (GPS) for rental cars will be allowed. The optional GPS for a rental car requires authorization in advance. After the fact, reimbursement will not be authorized except in the event of an emergency. The STO or her designee must approve any after the fact exceptions. (4.1.9.2)
36. Other than Coach Class (First Class) Travel Accommodations. International First Class may be used if Business Class was previously met and approved and it is not available. *This is a new exception to the prior two exceptions which continue, i.e., medical and exceptional situations, such as security or mission critical.* (6.4.2)
37. Payment for Official Travel Expenses. When preparing a Travel Authorization, the AO must ensure that all official travel expenses are being paid for by either use of a Centrally Billed Account (CBA) or if applicable, an Individual Billed Account (IBA) unless the traveler is exempt from having an IBA card. (3.1.1.1)
38. Excess Baggage Surcharge. Reimbursement requires pre-approval on the Travel Authorization. (3.1.1.3)
39. Reimbursement When Someone Else Drives the Traveler to/from the Airport. If someone drives the traveler to the airport, instead of the traveler driving, the traveler may be reimbursed up to the constructed cost of either:
1. Using a special conveyance such as a taxi, shuttle, etc.; or
 2. Driving to the airport and any necessary parking costs (e.g. if waiting is required) in the lowest costing available parking facility/lot, exclusive of the long-term parking.
- The traveler should provide the constructed cost of both options to the AO so that they can determine the most advantageous method for the traveler. Mileage to the airport should be authorized in advance. (4.1.9.1)
40. Bus Transportation. While there are no government-preferred providers for bus service, the use of this type of common carrier requires pre-approval. If the bus service requires the purchase of a non-refundable ticket, both the AO and traveler must have full confidence that the trip will occur on the precise schedule tied to the tickets. (4.1.9.3)
41. Compliance with the E-Gov Travel System procedures. When creating a Travel Authorization for Conference Attendance, all HHS Travelers and Travel Preparers must use the Trip Purpose of "Conference" and then select a conference from the list of available conferences in the ETS. If a specific conference is not available, they must contact their Travel Administrator to have the conference loaded into the ETS. Travelers and/or Travel Preparers must select the conference that the traveler will be attending and not select a different conference just to complete the travel authorization. Failure to follow this policy may result in not being able to attend the conference, not being reimbursed for expenses related to event attendance, and may subject

the traveler to additional disciplinary actions. HHS will make additional efforts for earlier upload of conference data. (1.4.2.1)

42. Personal Telephone Calls. Prior definition of what constitutes the immediate family has been dropped. (4.2.1.2)
43. Federal Grant and Contract Funds. Only under very limited circumstances may an agency authorize acceptance of travel and related expenses from a non-Federal source receiving Federal grants or contracts. Specifically, the employee must be performing authorized official duties for their OPDIV/STAFFDIV that is consistent with the OPDIV/STAFFDIV's mission. In addition, the non-Federal source must indicate in the "Letter of Invitation" that it is using either Federal grant or contract monies or funds obtained through a private entity to fund the particular travel and related expenses. However, the source of these funds may never be from HHS, including when the grant or contract agreement has a separate clause for travel and related expenses. Any acceptance of payment by a non-Federal source, using Federal grant or contract funds must undergo a thorough review and analysis before approval by the OPDIV/STAFFDIV. OPDIV/STAFFDIVs may elect to adopt a more restrictive policy related to the acceptance of grant and contract funds. (7.4.1.9)
44. Relocation allowances. This is an entirely new section to the manual. (12) Payment of discretionary expenses requires approval by the STO per HHS' HR Manual Instruction 572-1 dated 1/16/2012.
45. Advances for Travelers with Cancelled IBA cards. An employee with a cancelled travel charge card account is considered high risk regarding repayment of a travel advance. In the case of extreme hardship, such an employee may request written approval for a travel advance on a trip-by-trip basis from the STO. NIH policy already allows for this per NIH 1500-15-01(E)(6)(c). (10.3.6.6)
46. Travel and Transportation Cost Comparison under an IPA. The HHS manual provides a worksheet requiring a constructive cost comparison involving relocation allowances, per diem and repeated trips to the worksite. In the event an assignee chooses to deviate from the option that the worksheet determines as the lowest cost, reimbursement to the assignee will be capped at 110% of this amount. Approval by the EO is required. (9.5)



IPA Cost Comparison
Worksheet.docx

47. Per Diem Allowance in Local Area. While there are some standard exceptions, i.e., 50-mile rule, 80-mile rule, GETA that allow for this, it is now possible to seek a waiver for reasons of religious beliefs, physical disabilities, and other exigencies. The waiver from HHS' Assistant Secretary for

Administration requires it be sent 30 days in advance of the meeting and provide information on 22 meeting related questions. (4.3.2.4)

48. Record Retention. Procedures are established by approving offices to meet documentation retention requirements for travel vouchers and supporting documentation in accordance with General Records Schedule 9, Travel and Transportation Records, issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For example, travel orders, original vouchers, and supporting documents covering passenger transportation and per diem charges must be maintained for six (6) years and three (3) months after the voucher has been paid. Use of scanned electronic images for receipts meets the six (6) years and three (3) months requirements for Schedule 6 Accountable Officers' Accounts Records. The original receipts must be kept, by the traveler, for two (2) years, in accordance with the HHS Records Management Schedule as approved by NARA in schedule DAA-0468-2011-0001 in July 2011. (3.2.3)