

3.11 TRAVEL - Reimbursement of Travel/Conference Expenses

I. POLICY

Smith County realizes the benefits that accrue to the County when their employees attend conferences, seminars, and professional training activities. The County will bear expenses incurred by county officials and full time county employees to attend such activities provided that the following procedures are followed. Smith County will only pay for conferences, seminars, training, and travel for expenses directly related to the work of the county office involved.

II. PROCEDURE

- A. Attendance by county employees at conferences and seminars shall be at the discretion of the county officials and department heads. The travel expense must be related to the duties and responsibilities of the county office incurring the expenses and there must be adequate funds budgeted to cover the expenses to be reimbursed.
- B. Although no specific prior approval by Commissioners Court is required for travel expenses, the Commissioners Court reserves the right to deny payment for any travel reimbursement that it deems to be improper or unnecessary. Additional justification for reimbursement or expenses may also be required for all county employees and department heads.
- C. Registration fees will be paid in advance by the County. The request for payment of registration fees must be submitted to the County Auditor's office along with the completed registration form and a course schedule or agenda. If a request for prepaid fees is not received in time for regular processing by the Auditor's office, then the registration fees must be paid by the county official or employee and reimbursed by the County.
- D. Lodging will be reimbursed at the conference host hotel rate or lower. If there is no host hotel, the County will reimburse at the current State of Texas In-State Lodging rate as posted at the time of travel.
- E. Meal expenses will be reimbursed at a maximum rate of \$40 per day. Per diem reimbursement will be approved only when an overnight stay has occurred. Meal reimbursement will not be allowed for training that does not result in an overnight stay. The per diem rate will be allowed for each full day of conference or training and one day of per diem may be added to the length of the conference to cover travel related days to and from. The conference or training agenda must be included

with the reimbursement request.

- F. Personal automobile expenses are reimbursed at the current State of Texas mileage rate in effect at the time of travel. Acceptable mileage calculations include the Texas Mileage Guide from Tyler to the destination city, or a computer generated document, such as Mapquest, showing the starting location as the address of Smith County office requesting the travel and the ending location being the hotel of your destination. Officials/employees receiving a fixed car allowance will only receive reimbursable mileage for training related travel outside of Smith County.
- G. All reimbursements will be made according to the County's usual and customary procedures for processing claims.
- H. Request for Travel Reimbursement forms must be signed by the county employee and the department head for reimbursement to be made. Such signatures serve as an affidavit that the claim for reimbursement is valid. Forms can be found on the County's intranet page under Smith County Forms.
- I. Smith County will not refund as travel/education expenses any fees or tuition for courses taken which could apply toward a college degree or for which academic credit hours are granted. College tuition may be reimbursed to eligible County employees according to the terms of the Smith County Tuition Reimbursement Policy.
- J. All claims for travel/education expense must be submitted to the County Auditor's office for processing by accounts payable no later than three (3) months after being incurred. Payment will be denied on any reimbursement claims presented after this time limit.
- K. Any training/conference costs requested for an employee that does not have full time status will require **express** Commissioners Court approval 30 days in advance of the scheduled training.
- L. Some expenses may be advanced per the Travel Advance Policy #3.12.

3.12 TRAVEL ADVANCE POLICY

I. POLICY

Travel advance checks will be issued to employees traveling on county business through the following policy:

- A. If lodging cannot be direct billed to the County, a check to the hotel can be issued in the amount of the daily charge time the number of days included in the trip. Travel advance checks will not be issued in the employee's name for lodging.
- B. Registration fees for conferences will continue to be paid through the Auditor's office per Policy 3.11, Section II (C).
- C. Travel advance check requests must be received in the Auditor's office and placed on the bill report prior to payment. Requests must be received by 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday morning to be on the next scheduled bill report for Commissioners Court approval.
- D. Additional expenses incurred over and above advanced amounts (i.e., taxi fare, shuttle fare, airport and hotel parking, tax on hotel rooms not included in the lodging advance, and mileage within the destination city to and from meetings) will be reimbursed per Policy 3.11. Unused or unaccounted for funds must be remitted back to the County.

II. PROCEDURE

Employees must complete the Request for Advance Payment form and submit it to their department head for approval. Completed forms should be submitted to the Auditor's office in accordance with paragraph C of this policy.