



TITLE	POLICY NUMBER	
Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement	DCS 03-16	
RESPONSIBLE AREA	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION
Budget and Finance/Office of Accounting	05/24/19	5

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Child Safety (DCS) shall permit foster parents to apply for reimbursement of preapproved travel expenses to transport a foster child to medical appointments, visitations, or other approved locations. Travel shall serve a valid public purpose, i.e. consistent with relevant statutes, rules, and policies and shall not promote the purely private or personal interests of any individual.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to foster parents, and licensed or unlicensed kinship caregivers who incur expenses for non-routine travel on behalf of children in DCS care. Other DCS policies and procedures that are consistent with this policy, and laws, rules, technical bulletins, policies, and procedures dealing with procurement, budgeting, or accounting may also apply.

III. AUTHORITY

[State of Arizona Accounting Manual \(SAAM\)](#)

Topic 50, Section 95 –
Reimbursement Rates

[State of Arizona Accounting Manual \(SAAM\)](#)

Topic 50, Section 25 – Meals and
Incidentals

IV. DEFINITIONS

Arizona Financial Information System (AFIS): Business management software used by the State of Arizona to manage its business functions.

Claimant: An individual seeking reimbursement.

Client: Any person who receives services from the Department.

Department or DCS: The Arizona Department of Child Safety.

Foster parent: A person who acts as parent and guardian for a child in place of the child's natural parents without legally adopting the child. This includes licensed foster parents and licensed or unlicensed kinship caregivers. It does not include licensed congregate caregivers.

Kinship caregiver: A relative or an individual who has a significant relationship with a child and acts as parent and guardian in place of the child's natural parents.

Incidentals: Minor expenses associated with business travel such as tips, parking fees, and child-specific items (e.g., diapers, emergency/necessary clothing, etc.).

Non-routine travel: Travel to non-local in-state, out-of-state, or out-of-country visits, placements, or services that typically involve additional travel expenses such as airfare and lodging.

Office of Accounting: The DCS unit responsible for establishing accounting codes, allocating costs to appropriate funding sources, meeting financial reporting requirements, managing payroll, and ensuring timely payments to providers and vendors.

SAAM: State of Arizona Accounting Manual. The SAAM governs all travel costs. It may be accessed at <https://gao.az.gov/publications/saam>.

Valid public purpose: The use of public monies in a manner consistent with relevant statutes, rules, and policies and in a way that does not promote the purely private or personal interests of any individual.

V. POLICY

The Department may reimburse foster parents who incur out-of-pocket travel expenses including mileage, lodging, meals, and other incidentals while traveling on behalf of children in their care.

A. Limitations to Reimbursements

1. The Department shall not reimburse expenses in excess of the actual cost incurred for lodging, meals, or incidentals.
2. Allowable reimbursements are not to exceed the rates published in the [State of Arizona Accounting Manual, Topic 50 \(Travel\)](#).
3. Reimbursements are limited to foster parents and the foster child receiving medical treatment, attending visitation, or another approved expense in excess of 50 miles from their place of residence (unless otherwise noted). If there is not a confirmed need for both foster parents to travel, only the costs for one parent will be reimbursed. Reimbursements for other family members are not permitted.
4. Foster parents and kinship caregivers who are providing transportation to parenting time or supervised visits with birth families may request mileage reimbursement from their place of residence to the parenting time/supervised visit location and the return trip. Such reimbursement is based on actual miles and is not subject to the 50-mile deduction referenced in the preceding paragraph. Note: this is only for *approved* parenting time or supervised visits scheduled by DCS employees or assigned contractors.
5. All requests for reimbursement must include original itemized receipts to reflect the actual amount spent, regardless of the State approved rate.
6. Mileage is not reimbursable for rental cars; however, the cost of gasoline is reimbursable. NOTE: Pre-paid gasoline (having the rental company fill up the vehicle after the traveler returns it) is not allowed and will not be covered or reimbursed by DCS. It is the responsibility of the traveler to fill up the tank before returning the vehicle to the rental company.

B. Timeliness of Reimbursement Claims

1. Reimbursement forms must be filed with DCS Finance/Accounting at

CentralizedInvoicing@AZDCS.GOV within 90 days after the incurrence of the expense.

2. Any claim not received within 90 days after the month of travel will be considered delinquent. Delinquently filed claims must be approved by additional Department staff, require reasons for delinquent filing, and may preclude future untimely claims.

C. DCS Arranged Travel

1. Travel for airfare, car rental, and lodging is to be prearranged by the DCS Travel Desk with the DCS Specialist.
2. In the case of cancellation, the traveler must notify the Department at least 48 hours beforehand.
3. The Department will not reimburse travel costs incurred by a traveler due to the traveler not complying with a cancellation policy.

D. Education Related Travel Reimbursement

1. When a child's foster home is outside of the child's school of origin district boundary, the DCS Specialist shall work with the school, caregiver, and other members of the service team to explore transportation options to maintain the child in their school of origin.
2. When other options have been fully explored and ruled out, DCS may consider reimbursement of travel expenses to support the child's continued enrollment in their school of origin, and to support participation in school-related activities.
3. Reimbursement is only available to an unlicensed kinship caregiver approved to provide travel for education related purposes.
4. A licensed foster parent providing transportation to maintain a child in their school of origin may not receive reimbursement under this policy but may be considered for assessment of a special foster care rate. See DCS Program Policy: [*Chapter 4, Section 10, Out-of-Home Care Rates, Allowances, and Payments.*](#)

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Reimbursement of Expenses

To record travel expenses incurred by foster parents on behalf of the State, and to ensure proper reimbursement of those expenses, foster parents must complete the [Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim](#) form.

B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the individual seeking reimbursement to:
 - a. obtain approval prior to travel;
 - b. seek reimbursement only for items eligible for reimbursement;
 - c. submit a complete and accurate [Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim](#) form in a timely manner (forms should be filed within thirty (30) calendar days of incurrence of the expense qualifying for reimbursement, but not later than ninety (90) calendar days of incurrence of the expense qualifying for reimbursement).
2. It is the responsibility of the DCS Specialist and DCS Supervisor to:
 - a. pre-approve travel and complete the travel preapproval form;
 - b. ensure the claim is complete, accurate, and consistent with submitted original itemized receipts and all State reimbursements policies;
 - c. submit the completed reimbursement claim and completed pre-approval form to a Regional Resource Liaison;
 - d. communicate any information about claims from the Office of Accounting to persons requesting reimbursements.
3. It is the responsibility of the Regional Resource Liaison to:
 - a. receive the completed reimbursement documentation from the DCS Specialist and verify that all necessary documentation is

complete;

- b. process documentation according to standard work practices, and enter units for reimbursement;
 - c. notify Centralized Invoicing of the reimbursement and provide all necessary documentation;
 - d. receive and process information provided on the W9 Forms of adults approved to provide transportation for educational purposes, in order to build those designated adults into the Guardian Provider Portal to receive payment.
4. It is the responsibility of the Office of Accounting to:
- a. confirm eligibility of claimed reimbursements by:
 - i. verifying the rates do not exceed the State approved maximum; and
 - ii. for educational transportation, verifying that the foster parent is unlicensed.
 - b. pay eligible claims; and
 - c. reject claims that are incomplete, inaccurate, or not in compliance with Statewide policies and communicate this information to the Regional Liaison.

C. Documentation

- 1. Preapproval via the [*Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel*](#) form is required prior to travel.
 - a. If prearranged travel accommodations are necessary, approval should be obtained through the Travel Desk by following the directions on this form.
 - b. This form should be retained in the case file until all travel has been completed and submitted to the Regional Resource Liaison as part of the reimbursement documentation.

2. The Regional Resource Liaison shall submit the approved [*Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim*](#) form with original itemized receipts to DCS Finance/Accounting at CentralizedInvoicing@AZDCS.GOV.
3. The DCS Specialist retains copies of pre-authorization form, claim form, and original itemized receipts until reimbursement is received.

D. Review of Filed Claims

The DCS Specialist reviews the submitted claim for accuracy, non-duplication, appropriate approvals, and:

1. returns claims that are incomplete, duplicative, or lacking the appropriate approvals;
2. routes the claim to the Program Administrator if over 90 days old from the time of expense;
3. notifies the claimant if the claim is not approved.

E. Travel Reimbursement for Education Related Activities

When an unlicensed kinship caregiver is approved to provide assistance transporting the child to and/or from their school of origin, the DCS Specialist will perform the following:

1. verify the number of roundtrip miles anticipated;
2. explain that reimbursement is limited to the miles accrued to transport the child to and from school and school related activities (including return mileage when the child is not in the vehicle), and is limited to the current per mile State rate;
3. provide and review the [*Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel*](#) form and [*Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim*](#) form, instructions, and process for submittal.
 - a. Unlicensed kinship caregivers providing transportation must provide verification of a valid driver's license, current vehicle registration, and insurance to the DCS Specialist or designee prior to providing transportation, and every six months thereafter as long

as the person is providing transportation. If more than one adult is approved to provide transportation, separate forms and verifications are required for each adult.

- b. Education related reimbursement will occur within 30 days of receipt of a complete and accurate claim with all necessary approvals. Reimbursement claims must be submitted for full months and may not include trips for multiple months.
- c. Every 6 months, a new [*Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel*](#) form must be submitted, reviewed, and approved.

F. Travel Reimbursement for Parenting Time and Supervised Visitation

When a licensed or unlicensed kinship caregiver is approved to provide assistance transporting the child to parenting time or supervised visits, the DCS Specialist will perform the following:

1. verify the number of roundtrip miles anticipated;
2. explain that reimbursement is limited to the miles accrued to transport the child to and from the parenting time or supervised visit (including return mileage when the child is not in the vehicle), and is limited to the current per State rate;
3. provide and review the [*Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel*](#) form and [*Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim*](#) form, instructions, and process for submittal.
 - a. Unlicensed kinship caregivers providing transportation must provide verification of a valid driver's license, current vehicle registration, and insurance to the DCS Specialist or designee prior to providing transportation, and every six months thereafter as long as the person is providing transportation. If more than one adult is approved to provide transportation, separate forms and verifications are required for each adult.
 - b. Parenting time and supervised visit reimbursement will occur within 30 days of receipt of a complete and accurate claim with all necessary approvals. Reimbursement claims must be submitted for full months and may not include trips for multiple months.

- c. Every 6 months, a new [*Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel*](#) form must be submitted, reviewed, and approved.

VII. FORMS INDEX

[*DCS Foster Parent Pre-Authorization for Travel DCS-1861*](#)

[*DCS Foster Parent Travel Reimbursement Claim DCS-1862*](#)