TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT POLICY
Revised 01/09/2025

Overview

The Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) has a limited amount of funds available for reimbursement for case-related travel. In-person client contact is key to an effective attorney-client relationship and is a requirement of the *Representation of Children and Youth in Dependency Cases Practice, Caseload, and Training Standards* (Standards) to which all OCLA contracted attorneys must adhere. Additionally, the Standards call for attorneys to communicate regularly with different professionals involved in the child's dependency case and to attend hearings and other case-related events (e.g., permanency planning staffings), which concern the client and where the attorney's in-person participation may be necessary. Some of these case-related activities may require travel to counties outside of the attorney's residence or even to other states. This policy outlines policies and procedures related to travel that is eligible for reimbursement pursuant to these Standards and existing funds.

Out-of-State Travel

Contractors must obtain Children's Representation Program (CRP) staff pre-approval for any case-related out-of-state travel for which they wish to seek reimbursement. Contractors should completely fill out and submit a Travel Request Form, available on OCLA's website here, as far in advance of their desired travel dates as possible and submit to their designated Managing Attorney for review and approval. The Managing Attorney will review the request and either forward to the CRP Director for approval or ask for more information. For all authorized out-of-state travel, the following rules and conditions apply:

- **Airfare:** OCLA will only reimburse for coach-class seats. Contractors should select the most economical flight option available that serves contractors' case-related travel needs and restrictions. The cost of any upgrades is the sole responsibility of contractors. Contractors must provide receipts when invoicing OCLA for airfare reimbursement. If it is more feasible or economical for contractors to drive to their out-of-state destination (e.g., Oregon or Idaho), OCLA will reimburse for mileage at the IRS Standard Mileage Rate for that travel period.

- **Ground Transportation:** OCLA will only reimburse for "economy" rental cars and only where use of a car is necessary for contractors to fulfill their case-related duties while in out-of-state travel status. Contractors should select the most economical rental option available. If access to a car while in travel status is not essential, contractors are encouraged to rely on Uber/Lyft/taxi or the destination city's public transportation system where safe and practical. Contractors must provide receipts when invoicing OCLA for ground transportation reimbursement.

- **Parking:** If overnight parking is required for travel, contractors must utilize the most cost-effective parking option reasonably available (e.g., offsite airport parking vs. overnight

parking at the terminal). For day travel, contractors should utilize street parking over fee-based lot parking where safe and feasible to do so. Receipts or other proof of payment are required for all parking fees exceeding $25.00 for a single parking event.

- **Lodging:** OCLA will only reimburse for out-of-state lodging costs that fall within the per diem rates published by the U.S. General Services Administration plus taxes. Any upgrades or expenses that exceed this amount are the sole responsibility of contractors.[1] Contractors must be away from their official station and residence overnight to claim reimbursement for lodging. Contractors must provide receipts when invoicing OCLA for lodging reimbursement. If lodging is unavailable within per diem rates, you may request lodging reimbursement not to exceed 150% of the applicable maximum per diem rate where the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging at a more distant site are consumed by the increase in transportation or other costs.

- **Meals:** Meals are only compensated where contractors are in travel status pursuant to the "3-Hour Rule."[2] OCLA will reimburse for all meal costs according to the per diem rates published by the U.S. General Services Administration. Contractors do *not* need to provide meal receipts when invoicing OCLA for reimbursement. Contractors must be in travel status during the entire designated meal period in addition to the 3-Hour Rule to be eligible for reimbursement of that meal. For overnight stays, contractors must be in travel status during the entire designated meal period to be eligible for reimbursement of that meal.

> Breakfast meal period = 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.
> Lunch meal period = 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.
> Dinner meal period = 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

In-State Travel

Contractors must select the most economical mode of travel available that meets their case-related travel needs and allows them to render standards-based legal representation. Not all in-state case-related travel is eligible for travel reimbursement and not all travel eligible for reimbursement requires prior approval. Contractors' personal and professional obligations and limitations are relevant to the review of any travel request and authorization will not be unreasonably withheld. The rules and conditions concerning reimbursement for in-state case-related travel are as follows:

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[1] Note: Some hotels attach a 'Destination Amenity Fee' to their room billings. These are a way for hotels to add unadvertised costs and exceed allowable state lodging rates. OCLA will not pay a Destination Amenity Fee. Contractors who agree to pay the Destination Amenity Fee will not be reimbursed for it.

[2] The 3-Hour Rule: Contractors qualify for meal reimbursement under the three-hour rule if they are in travel status for at least three (3) hours *beyond* their normally scheduled workday and do not stay overnight. The three hours may consist of hours occurring before, after, or a combination of both before and after their regularly scheduled work hours. The per diem rate is based on the traveler's final destination before returning home. The 3-hour rule applies to Saturday and Sunday, although contractors only need to be in travel status three (3) hours to be eligible for meals.

- **Personal Vehicle:** Contractors may invoice OCLA for mileage accrued during case-related travel using a personal vehicle where contractors traveled more than 50 miles, using the most direct route available, from their official residence and/or official duty station, whichever is closer to the destination (i.e., travel that amounts to 100+ miles roundtrip from the contractor's office/residence to the destination and back). This is known as the "50-mile Rule". Mileage is reimbursed at the IRS Standard Mileage Rate for that travel period.
  - **Private Transportation in Lieu of Personal Vehicle:** Prior approval is required from the CRP Director or their designee in order for contractors to seek reimbursement for the use of a rental car or ride share service, such as Uber, Lyft, or a taxi, during in-state travel. OCLA will only reimburse rental car or ride share services where such use is more economical than the cost of travel using a personal vehicle.
- **Airfare:** Prior approval from the CRP Director or their designee is required before contractors may utilize air travel for in-state case-related travel. The same conditions for out-of-state air travel described above apply to in-state air travel.
- **Parking:** If overnight parking is required for travel, contractors must utilize the most cost-effective parking option reasonably and safely available (e.g., valet vs. self-park). For day travel, contractors should utilize street parking over fee-based lot parking where safe and feasible to do so. Receipts are required for all parking fees exceeding $25.00 for a single parking event.
- **Lodging:** Prior approval from the CRP Director or their designee is required before contractors may utilize lodging for in-state case-related activity. Approval will not be unreasonably withheld. Authorized in-state overnight hotel stays will be reimbursed per the Office of Financial Management Per Diem Rate Tables. Any upgrades or expenses that exceed the amount indicated in the aforementioned per diem rate tables are the sole responsibility of contractors (see FN 1). Contractors must provide receipts when invoicing OCLA for lodging expenses. If lodging is unavailable within per diem rates, you may request lodging reimbursement not to exceed 150% of the applicable maximum per diem rate where the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging at a more distant site are consumed by the increase in transportation or other costs.
- **Meals:** Under the three-hour rule for non-overnight travel, meals will not be reimbursed unless contractors are in travel status for case-related purposes for at least 11 hours of the claimed travel day. For pre-approved overnight stays and those situations where contractors are in travel status for at least 11 hours of the claimed travel day, OCLA will reimburse for meals according to the per diem rates published by the Office of Financial Management Per Diem Rate Tables. Contractors do *not* need to provide meal receipts when invoicing OCLA for reimbursement. Contractors must be in travel status during the entire designated meal period to be eligible for reimbursement of that meal:

  Breakfast meal period = 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.
  Lunch meal period = 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.
  Dinner meal period = 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Travel Reimbursement Procedure

To receive reimbursement, contractors must complete the A-20 Travel Reimbursement Voucher, available on OCLA's website here, and provide all required supporting documents. Instructions for filling out the Travel Reimbursement Voucher can also be found on OCLA's website here.

Travel invoices need to be submitted within 10 calendar days after the close of contractors' contractual billing period. All invoices submitted beyond 30 days after the billing period may not be paid. Invoices submitted after July 10th of the current calendar year will not be paid. OCLA will process payments on a timely basis consistent with the payment terms in our underlying contract with contractors.