



Background

Northshore School District employee travel is covered under Board Policy 7450 and Administrative Procedure 7450P. Extended/overnight field trips are covered under Policy 2320 and Administrative Procedure 2320P. Within these procedures there is an expectation that the most economical travel arrangements will be made. In November 2008, the State Auditor's Office conducted a Performance Audit of 13 school districts and made several recommendations on ways to reduce travel costs. This document is provided to assist those making travel arrangements with tips on getting the best prices.

Documentation

The **Best Practices Travel Plan Worksheet** has been developed to help organize trip planning and document best prices. This form is optional and for your convenience only. A file should be kept on the trip with all pertinent information including the travel authorization form and documentation to prove that economical travel prices were obtained. This file should be kept at the school or department for three years.

Conference Registration

Start with the conference registration, if applicable. The registration documents will provide the conference dates, location maps, and suggested hotels. Professional organizations typically negotiate lower room rates for their conferences. They may also suggest airports and other travel tips.

Tips:

- ✓ Start with the conference registration material.
- ✓ Watch for early registration discounts.
- ✓ Use the district purchasing card where ever accepted.

Hotel

The second step in the process should be making the hotel reservations. Hotels can be helpful in recommending airports, car rentals, and ground transportation. The expectation is to find the most reasonable rates at or near the conference/business location. When traveling in groups, the standard is two to a room whenever appropriate. At least three hotels should be compared for pricing.

Tips:

- ✓ Ask for conference rates and government rates and compare pricing. If using government rates, the employee will need district identification upon check in.
- ✓ If cheaper hotels are available away from the conference site, consider the cost of ground transportation and compare to the hotel savings.
- ✓ Ask about parking fees if driving or renting a car.

- ✓ Ask if a complementary breakfast is included.
- ✓ Ask about transportation to the conference or business site.
- ✓ Ask about transportation to and from the airport.
- ✓ Use your district purchasing card to secure the room. However, the employee will need a personal credit card upon check in.

Airfare

You can contact the Purchasing Department to check on state contracted airlines and rates, but state rates are not always available and not always less expensive than published air fares. Check at least three airlines and compare pricing.

Tips:

- ✓ Check the State Contract at the website provided by the Purchasing Department.
- ✓ Check the airline web pages for pricing.
- ✓ Check for additional costs such as baggage.
- ✓ Check other airports within destination for cheaper flights. Example: Oakland versus San Francisco.
- ✓ Check for restrictions on ticket changes and cancellations.
- ✓ Use your district purchasing card to purchase the airfare.
- ✓ Travel organized through Travelocity or Expedia is difficult to cancel and does not always provide the best pricing.

Car Rentals

Employees may rent a car when it would be less costly and substantially more convenient than any other available means of commercial transportation. The standard is economy or compact car.

Tips:

- ✓ Compare airport shuttle, taxi fees, and parking fees to car rental charges.
- ✓ Employees must have a valid driver's license, their own car insurance, and a valid credit card to be able to rent a car. The District will not reimburse employees for car rental insurance.
- ✓ Compare rates on several car rental web sites.
- ✓ Reserve car rentals in advance via their web sites to secure better pricing. Walk up rental rates are higher.

Travel Agencies

Travel agencies may be used to make travel arrangements including hotel, airfare, and ground transportation. Although travel agencies charge for their services, they can sometimes access better pricing than district staff. The use of a travel agency may be helpful when traveling to an unfamiliar city and the trip includes coordination of airfare, accommodations, conference/business location, and ground transportation. This may also be a good option when staff time is limited.

Contact the Purchasing Department for a list of state contracted travel agencies.