

VA Financial Policies and Procedures
Government Travel Charge Card Program

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0201 OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies and procedures for the use of the Government Travel Card. The Government Travel Card program was developed to procure transportation services, subsistence, and other allowable travel and transportation expenses incurred during official travel. The goal of the program is to reduce substantially VA's cash requirements by diminishing the need for travel advances and improving internal control, cash management and administrative procedures.

Public Law 105-264, Travel and Transportation Reform Act (TTRA) of 1998 mandates that Federal employees use the Government travel charge card for all payments of expenses related to official Government travel. Exemptions are allowed in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 41, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 300-304.

This chapter provides:

- Policy regarding mandatory use of the Government travel charge card (Travel Card) for official agency travel.
- Statutory and regulatory authority to issue and require employee use of the Travel Card.
- Mandatory use of the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Travel Card for employee's common carrier costs and e-Gov Travel Service (ETS) and Transportation Management Center (TMC) transaction fees.
- Roles and Responsibilities of cardholders, supervisors, approving officials, and Agency/Organization Program Coordinators (A/OPCs) in regards to the agency's Travel Card program.
- Management oversight and internal control requirements to improve the agency's Travel Card program and reduce fraud, waste, and abuse.

0202 POLICIES

020201 AUTHORITY FOR USE OF TRAVEL CHARGE CARD.

A. Mandatory Use.

1. Unless otherwise exempt, all VA employees regardless of grade, title or position, must use the Individually Billed Account (IBA) Travel Card to pay for authorized official travel expenses not paid using the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Travel Card.
2. The VA Chief of Staff has mandated that all common carrier costs and ETS and TMC transaction fees associated with employee official travel be paid using the CBA Travel Card. Common carrier costs are identified as air, rail or bus service.

3. Contractors, volunteers and patients are not considered employees and are prohibited from obtaining an IBA Travel Card. Additionally, participants in the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), various internship programs or various summer jobs may be issued a restricted IBA Travel Card only based on supervisor approval. Special consideration will be given to non-VA personnel employed at integrated Federal Health Care Centers (FHCC).

B. Exemptions For Use of IBA Travel Card

The following types of employees are exempt from IBA Travel Card use:

1. New appointees traveling prior to reporting for duty.
2. Employees who have an IBA Travel Card application pending.
3. Employees who travel infrequently (less than twice a year).
4. Individuals traveling on invitational travel.
5. Employees traveling to or in an area where the political, financial or communication infrastructure does not support the use of the IBA Travel Card (e.g., certain foreign countries or emergency response areas).
6. Employees denied an IBA Travel Card by the contract bank.
7. Employees who had their IBA Travel Card canceled due to misuse or abuse.
8. Employees performing separation travel upon retirement. The IBA Travel Card should be cancelled as part of out-processing procedures.
9. Direct and indirect hire foreign nationals. (Note: Foreign nationals in the Philippines are approved based on a current Memorandum of Understanding.)

020202 TRAVEL CARD TRAINING.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Circular A-123, Appendix B, Improving the Management of the Government Charge Card Programs, requires agencies to provide initial and refresher training on charge card management. The following training is required for card program participants:

A. Cardholders and Approving Officials. Prior to the issuance of an IBA Travel Card, employees must complete the online VA Travel Card training course located on VA's Talent Management System (TMS). Cardholders must maintain training certifications and forward a copy to the Level 4 A/OPC. Travel Cards will not be issued until initial

training is complete, and existing accounts will be deactivated if proof of refresher training is not provided by the cardholder. Refresher travel card training is required every three years.

B. Agency/Organization Program Coordinators (A/OPCs). A/OPCs must be fully trained to perform their tasks, to include proficiency in the Electronic Access System (EAS) and its various reports in order to manage the program and monitor Travel Card usage. The levels consist of the following

1. Level 1 A/OPC: Effective October 31, 2011, this A/OPC level transferred from the Office of Financial Policy to the Financial Services Center. This level provides VA-wide oversight for all travel charge card A/OPCs.

2. Level 2 A/OPC: This A/OPC level is at the Administrations (Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration and National Cemetery Administration), the Office of Information and Technology (OIT), the Financial Services Center (FSC) and VACO. This level provides oversight for Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs.

3. Level 3 A/OPC: This A/OPC level is an intermediate level between Level 2 and Level 4 A/OPCs. For example, this level for VHA would be established at the VISN level. This level will provide oversight for Level 4 A/OPCs.

4. Level 4 A/OPC: This A/OPC level is located at the station and staff office-level charge card coordinators. This level provides the day-to-day functions between the contractor bank and the employees.

All A/OPCs are required to complete the “VA Online Travel Card Training” on VA’s TMS with refresher training every three years. A/OPCs must also take GSA’s self-paced A/OPC Travel Card Program training available at www.gsa.gov and complete the web-based training required by the Bank’s EAS.

Training certificates for all courses must be retained by the individual A/OPC as well as the next reporting level A/OPC. The certificates may be retained as either an electronic or paper copy. For example, Level 4 A/OPC training certificates must be retained by the Level 4 A/OPC individually as well as the Level 3 A/OPC.

020203 APPROPRIATE USE OF TRAVEL CARD.

Only appropriate uses of the CBA and IBA Travel Card will be acceptable while on official travel. The IBA Travel Card may be used to pay for local travel expenses, but it is not required.

A. The following authorized travel expenses must be charged to the CBA Travel Card:

1. Common carrier transportation fare for official travel. Personal/unofficial travel expenses in conjunction with official travel must be paid by the traveler using personal funds. If a traveler arrives at the common carrier terminal and transportation is not ticketed, the traveler should contact the TMC and arrange transportation. The IBA Travel Card may be used to purchase the transportation.

2. ETS and TMC transaction fees.

Note: Lodging expenses may be charged to the CBA Travel Card in limited situations, such as when traveler is exempt from use of the IBA Travel Card or advance room deposits for lodging (reference Appendix M, Use of CBA Travel Card for Lodging, for process).

B. The following authorized travel expenses must be charged to the IBA Travel Card.

- Hotels or Lodging, and
- Authorized rental cars.

All other authorized official travel expenses should be charged to the IBA Travel Card but are not mandatory.

C. An IBA Travel Card may be used to pay for advance room deposits when required by the lodging facility to secure a room reservation before the beginning of scheduled official travel. When advance lodging arrangements are required and payment of the traveler's IBA travel card billing statement is likely to be due before the traveler is reimbursed for travel expenses, the advanced lodging arrangements may be obtained using the station's centrally billed account (CBA) Travel Card (Reference Appendix M).

Note: Cardholders who receive a travel advance to pay for a room deposit, but fail to perform the travel for reasons unacceptable to the approving official, must repay the advance.

D. Other official travel-related expenses which may be charged to the IBA Travel Card are emergency-type expenses (e.g., lost or damaged luggage or clothing). Such "retail" expenses cannot exceed \$250 per billing cycle. Travelers must contact their supervisor and/or A/OPC before making retail purchases. These personal expenses are not reimbursable and may not be claimed on the traveler's expense report. Cardholders are required to pay the full amount on their statement using personal funds upon receipt.

E. Cardholders may obtain Automated Teller Machine (ATM) withdrawals needed to pay for authorized expenses while on official travel when the vendor does not accept the IBA Travel Card. ATM withdrawals must be noted and approved on all travel authorizations prior to travel. ATM withdrawals must not be obtained prior to five

calendar days before scheduled travel. In addition, travelers who have an IBA Travel Card will not obtain a travel advance via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

1. ATM withdrawal amounts are determined by the total meals and incidental expense (MIE) allowance and any authorized miscellaneous expenses itemized on the travel authorization.
2. ATM access may result in fees to the Government and therefore must be limited. ATM fees for personal debit/credit cards are a personal expense and **not** reimbursable. Additionally, if the traveler withdraws ATM funds for authorized expenses (i.e., meals and incidentals), the traveler cannot charge said items to the IBA Travel Card. The bank may charge the cardholder a transaction fee, which appears on the cardholder's billing statement. Some banks charge a service fee, and when used abroad, may charge a currency exchange fee.

F. Authorized expenses which may be charged to the IBA Travel Card include:

1. Meals and Incidental Expenses (MIE) covered by the per diem allowance or actual subsistence allowance.
2. Miscellaneous transportation expenses such as:
 - Parking
 - Local transportation system fares
 - Taxi fares
 - Tips associated with transportation (e.g., taxi or shuttle).
3. Gasoline and other variable expenses associated with the use of an authorized rental car for official business when advantageous.
4. Laundry/dry cleaning (authorized after 6 consecutive nights of lodging).
5. Telephone calls when a Government calling card is unavailable for use.
6. Gasoline for the use of a privately owned vehicle (POV) while on official travel may be charged to the IBA Travel Card. However, gasoline is not a separate reimbursable expense claimed on the expense voucher. Reimbursement is covered by the mileage allowance associated with the use of the POV.

G. Local Travel. The Travel Card may not be used for expenses in the local travel area unless:

1. Travel authorization has been issued pursuant to provisions of the Government Employees Training Act (GETA) (e.g., Leadership VA training);
2. An employee is conducting a site visit and requires use of a rental car. In this case, the employee must use his/her Travel Card for procurement of the rental car, and must be issued a Travel Authority (TA) rather than a local reimbursement voucher;
3. An employee has written or verbal authorization to use a taxi or other special conveyance; or
4. An employee has written or verbal authorization to pay for parking.

Reference VA Financial Policy and Procedures, Vol XIV, Chapter 7, Local Travel, for additional guidance.

020204 INAPPROPRIATE USE OF THE TRAVEL CARD.

A. The Purchase Card is the method used to pay for training or registration expenses and conference fees when such fees must be paid in advance. The Travel Card will not be used to pay for such fees. When a fee is identified after official travel has begun, the traveler must contact their Purchase Card A/OPC to arrange payment of the fee.

B. Cardholders will not use their VA IBA Travel Card for expenses incurred on personal leave in conjunction with official travel (e.g., retaining official rental car usage while on personal leave). Only authorized official travel expenses can be charged to the VA Travel Card. Personal expenses must be paid from personal funds as they are not related to official Government travel.

C. The cardholder will not use their IBA Travel Card for non-reimbursable miscellaneous expenses (e.g., rental movies and spa fees which are not covered under the hotel contract with the Federal government). These charges may not be assessed to the IBA Travel Card. The employee must pay these charges separately out of personal funds.

D. Other examples of inappropriate use include:

1. Unauthorized ATM access
2. Unofficial/personal expenses (e.g., upgrades to other-than-coach travel at personal expense)
3. Family purchases (e.g. hotel rooms or meals)
4. Personal household purchases/expenses (e.g. rent, utilities)

5. Group meals
6. Official expenses for other employees or Veterans (e.g., transportation or lodging expenses)
7. Personal liability insurance for authorized official rental vehicle (the U.S. Government is self-insured), and
8. Prepaid gasoline for authorized official rental vehicle. Reimbursement for gasoline is based on actual expense for usage.

020204 UNAUTHORIZED USE, MISUSE, AND DELINQUENCY OF TRAVEL CHARGE CARD ACCOUNTS.

A. Misuse of the travel charge card and account delinquency are considered misconduct and subject the cardholder to disciplinary actions ranging from a reprimand to removal. Charge card privileges may also be cancelled. The contract bank provides reports that monitor usage and indicate any potential abuses to A/OPCs. The A/OPCs will inform the appropriate official of any misuse of the charge card.

B. VA Handbook 5021, Employee/Management Relations, provides the range of penalties for indebtedness—“lack of good faith in paying financial obligations, such as failure without good cause to make or live up to arrangements to pay a debt that the employee admits he owes or that is supported by court judgment, or that represents a tax or other financial obligation to the U.S. Government or to State or local government.” The range of penalties for this offense is:

1. For the first offense, an admonishment.
2. For the second offense, a minimum of admonishment to a maximum of reprimand.
3. For the third offense, a minimum of admonishment to a maximum of removal.

Refer to Appendix E, VACO Administrative and Disciplinary Actions for VA Central Office employees. It is recommended that field HR offices refer to the VACO HR disciplinary actions as a guide.

020205 REIMBURSEMENT AND PAYMENT RESPONSIBILITIES.

All travelers must pay the monthly IBA Travel Card statement in full when the statement is due regardless of whether they have been reimbursed.

020205.01 Submission of Expenses.

A. Upon completion of authorized travel, travelers will use ETS to prepare and submit an expense voucher in the usual manner to the approving official within 5 workdays after completion of a trip. An alternate preparer may create the expense voucher, but the traveler is responsible for reviewing and submitting the expense voucher in ETS. Travelers who are unable to file a voucher within 5 days due to emergency situations must contact their supervisors for direction and assistance (refer to Chapter 1, Travel Administration for additional details). Employees on extended travel must submit an expense voucher every 30 days. Regardless of whether reimbursement of travel expenses is made, payment of their Government bank-issued charge card bill must be made in accordance with the charge card agreement.

1. Each level of approving officials will have 3 business days to review the expense report. The approving official will either return to the traveler for correction or approve the voucher and submit it to the servicing fiscal office.
2. A travel claim (voucher) with an omission or an error will be returned to the traveler within 3 business days. The notification will include the reason(s) why the travel claim (voucher) is not proper or correct.
3. VA will reimburse authorized travel expenses no later than 21 days after submission of a proper expense report. Should payment of a travel settlement take longer than 30 days following receipt by the office where the claim is to be approved, the office may be required to make an interest payment. Approving officials should maintain satisfactory recordkeeping to track submission and receipt of expense reports. Expense reports submitted electronically in VA's ETS are considered received when the traveler submits the completed claim to the travel system.

B. Split Disbursement. Cardholders must ensure the total outstanding authorized reimbursable charges made to the IBA Travel Card are designated for split disbursement on the expense report. Approving officials must ensure cardholders properly designate their total authorized outstanding charges for split disbursement to reduce the potential for delinquency. Cardholders may review all account activity on the bank's EAS or contact the bank by phone to confirm the amount billed on the IBA Travel Card. Approving officials will return vouchers for corrections submitted by cardholders which do not properly reflect the amount to be split disbursed.

C. Overpayment to the Bank. If the amount paid to the bank exceeds the balance on the account, a credit will exist on the account. The cardholder may call the bank to request a check be issued for the credit balance or allow the credit to be applied to future charges. ATM withdrawals unrelated to official government travel are against agency policy and not a means to obtain an account credit.

020205.01 Late Fees and Suspension/Closure of Account.

A. Travelers are responsible for payment of their IBA charge card bill in accordance with the cardholder agreement, even if the cardholder has not been reimbursed by VA. Actual bank fees charged for non-payment will not be reimbursed by VA. When properly submitted travel claims are not paid by VA within 30 days, VA will reimburse a late payment fee. This late payment fee is equivalent to interest calculated in accordance with the Prompt Payment Act plus a fee the bank would have charged the traveler had they not paid the bill.

B. If an employee's travel card is closed, it may be reinstated only when the account is paid in full, the Level 2 A/OPC submits a justification on behalf of the employee to the Level 1 A/OPC, and the Level 1 A/OPC submits a written request to the bank to reinstate the account. The final determination is made by the bank.

020205.02 Responsibilities of Travelers for Payments.

A. Monthly Statements. Per the Cardholder agreement, employees are responsible for paying their full statement balance when their cardholder statement is received at their address. The employee is liable to the bank for full payment of all charges authorized by the employee, independent of any agreement or program reimbursement which may exist between the employee and VA. Under the FTR, Chapter 301, employees must pay amounts owed to the bank according to the Cardholder agreement, even if VA fails to reimburse the employee within 30 days receipt of a properly submitted voucher.

The Cardholder agreement informs employees how to handle disputed charges on their billing statement. The employee should follow these procedures by submitting a signed Cardholder Statement of a Questioned Item Form to the bank within 60 days of the statement date on which the original transaction appears. Once the form is received, the bank will issue a temporary credit to the employee's account while the disputed item(s) is being researched. While the bank is conducting this investigation, the cardholder is not required to pay the amount of the disputed charge and it will not be considered past due. The cardholder should inform the A/OPC of any disputed charge. Accounts are considered delinquent if unpaid 60 days after the billing date.

B. Fees Chargeable by the Bank. The bank may charge a fee when a payment is returned due to "non-sufficient funds." In addition, a late fee per billing cycle may be assessed for IBAs which are 75 days past the closing date of the account statement on which the charges first appeared. The returned check fee for dishonored checks is not reimbursable to the traveler. If the bank refers an account for collection, the bank may charge the cardholder collection costs, court costs, and allocated costs for attorneys, not to exceed 25 percent of the account balance.

C. Pre-suspension Notification. At 45 days past the closing date of the account statement on which the charges first appeared, the bank will issue a pre-suspension letter to the cardholder. Future enhancements to the bank's EAS will also provide e-mail notification to the A/OPC at this time. Upon receipt, the A/OPC will notify the

cardholder and the cardholder's supervisor via e-mail when possible; the account will be suspended in 15 days if the bank does not receive full payment of all undisputed amounts on their accounts. The A/OPC will keep a record of the supervisor's notification and related correspondence.

D. **Suspended Accounts.** At 60 days past the closing date of the account statement on which the charges first appeared, the bank will issue a suspension letter to the cardholder. The bank will block Travel Card privileges, which includes ATM access, and all charge capability until it receives payment in full. If no action is taken toward this debt, the account will be canceled. Supervisors should assess whether the individual has properly filed a travel claim (voucher) and been reimbursed; whether split disbursement was adhered to; and whether further administrative or disciplinary action is required.

E. **Salary Offset.** (Money and Finance: Treasury 21 CFR Parts 900-904) At 90 days past the closing date of the account statement on which the charges first appeared, the A/OPC will initiate salary offset procedures as detailed in Appendix C, Salary Offset Procedures/Forms. Salary offset payments will begin to be taken from an employee's pay at 120 days past the closing date of the account statement until the delinquency is paid in full.

F. **Closed Accounts.** Once canceled, an account may be reinstated only when the account is paid in full and the supervisor requests the bank, in writing, to reinstate the account. The bank reserves the right to report adverse credit information to national credit bureaus on accounts exceeding 126 days past due. Adverse credit reporting on severely delinquent cardholders can have a long lasting negative effect on the cardholder's ability to obtain personal credit and may adversely affect employees with security clearances.

G. **Closing Accounts Suspended Two Times.** Cancellation of an account may also occur if the account has been suspended twice during a 12-month period for non-payment of undisputed principal.

H. **Closing Accounts Due to Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF).** Closure of an account may occur if the account has had two episodes of NSF during a 12-month period.

0203 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

020301 [Public Law 105–264, Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998](#)

020302 [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 \(P.L. 110-161\), Title VII, Division D, Section 743](#)

020303 [5 U.S.C. 5702, Per Diem; Employees Traveling on Official Business](#)

020304 [38 U.S.C. 309, Chief Financial Officer](#)

020305 [5 C.F.R Part 1315, Prompt Payment](#)

020306 [31 C.F.R. 900-904, Federal Claims Collection Standards](#)

020307 [41 C.F.R. Chapter 301—Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances](#)

020308 [OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B](#)

020309 [VA Handbook 5021, Employee-Management Relations](#)

020310 [VA Talent Management System \(TMS\)](#)

0204 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

020401 The Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (ASM/CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department's programs and operations, as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and 38 U.S.C. 309. Specific responsibilities include the direction, management and provision of policy guidance and oversight of VA's financial management personnel, activities and operations. The CFO establishes financial policy, systems and operating procedures for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.

020402 Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Chief Financial Officers, Finance Officers, Chief Accountants, Chiefs of Finance Activities and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter.

020403 The Office of Financial Policy (OFP) provides Department-wide financial policy and guidance. The OFP Travel Policy staff develops, coordinates, issues, evaluates and reviews Departmental travel policies. The OFP Travel policy staff also evaluates and reviews travel systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations.

020404 Approving Officials are responsible for:

A. Ensuring employees are reimbursed only for authorized and allowable official travel and transportation expenses supported by necessary receipts.

B. Ensuring ATM withdrawals are noted and approved on the travel authorization if requested by the employee.

C. Ensuring employees follow split disbursement requirements when completing travel voucher claims and do not improperly reduce their split amounts in the E-Gov Travel System. Split disbursement is addressed in Vol XIV, Chapter 1, Travel Administration.

D. Approving (or returning incomplete) travel voucher claims within 3 business days of notification.

E. Ensuring employees submit receipts, statements, and justifications which are attached to the travel voucher. When the travel voucher is submitted using ETS, then receipts must be submitted electronically by utilizing the Fax Receipts component (Reference Volume XVI, Chapter 1, Travel Administration).

020405 Supervisors are responsible for:

A. Program Audits. Supervisors, in conjunction with the A/OPC, will ensure periodic internal control reviews are conducted on their respective Travel Card programs. Reviews should include:

- Processing of travel vouchers as it directly relates to delinquency issues associated with the Travel Card
- Account misuse
- Closure of unused accounts for terminated/retired employees.

Findings should be reported to the intermediate Travel Card Level 3 or Travel Card Level 2 A/OPC as appropriate. Supervisors will refer all suspicious or fraudulent activity to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

B. A/OPC Appointment Considerations. Supervisors should consider the volume of work associated with A/OPC responsibilities in determining the number of employees needed to adequately manage the associated workload. The frequency of travel and the historic delinquency rate of the organization should be considered when making this determination. A/OPCs must be appointed in writing (reference Appendix D, Sample of Appointment Letter). A/OPCs must have access to, and the ability to relate sensitive information to, the management chain of command for determination of appropriate action. Supervisors must also ensure the performance standards and job elements required to perform the duties of an A/OPC are clearly outlined in the employee's performance plan.

C. Administrative and/or Disciplinary Actions. Improper, fraudulent, abusive or negligent use of any Travel Card is prohibited. The employee will be personally liable to the Travel Card contracted bank for the amount of any unauthorized transaction. Misuse of Travel Card may result in disciplinary action against the employee under applicable VA and Government-wide administrative procedures, up to and including employment termination (reference VA Handbook 5021, Employee/Management

Relations). Appendix E contains VA Central Office administrative procedures for sample guidance and disciplinary actions for employee's misuse of the travel card.

020406 Level 1 Travel Card A/OPC (Charge Card Oversight section) serves as the administrator of VA's travel charge card program. The Travel Policy section provides policy and guidance for the VA travel charge card program.

020407 Level 2 Travel Card A/OPCs are responsible for providing high-level guidance, policy augmentation, and oversight to all travel charge card accounts within their respective administrations. The roles and responsibilities of the A/OPCs are critical to the program's success; therefore, it is required that the performance standards and job elements to perform these duties are clearly outlined in the employee's performance plan.

020408 Level 3 Travel Card A/OPCs are responsible for providing high-level guidance, policy augmentation, and oversight to all travel charge card accounts within their respective administrations or staff office. The roles and responsibilities of the A/OPCs are critical to the program's success; therefore, it is required that the performance standards and job elements to perform these duties are clearly outlined in the employee's performance plan.

020409 Level 4 A/OPCs serve as the Travel Card coordinators and are responsible for the day-to-day management and oversight of the Travel Card accounts (see Appendix F, Roles and Responsibilities of VA Travel Card A/OPCs). The roles and responsibilities of these coordinators are critical to the program's success, thus it is required that performance standards and job elements to perform these duties are clearly outlined in the employee's annual performance plan.

020410 Cardholder Responsibilities. Cardholders are required to:

- Abide by the rules and regulations of the card member agreement with the contract bank;
- Use the Travel Card only for authorized reimbursable expenses incurred in conjunction with official travel;
- Not use the Travel Card for unauthorized ATM withdrawals;
- Submit the complete travel claim and all required receipts within 5 business days upon return to the official station;
- Pay the full statement balance of all undisputed charges when due using the "split-to-card" option in the agency ETS as fully as possible;
- Notify appropriate Level 4 A/OPC of any unused restricted tickets where a credit exists. The credit must be used for future official travel before expiration (one year from purchase date);
- Notify the A/OPC of any problems with respect to use of the Travel Card;
- File a dispute with the Contract Bank in a timely manner (within 90 days of charge per contract) for unauthorized charges;

- Notify Contract Bank of lost or stolen card per the terms of the card member agreement;
- Notify the bank of an address change; and
- Sign the Statement of Understanding (SOU) for IBA Travel Card (VA Form 0933) (reference Appendix G, Statement of Understanding (IBA Travel Card)).

020411 The Office of Business Oversight's Management Quality Assurance Service (MQAS), as part of the reviews it conducts on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) facilities, may perform judgmental reviews of expense vouchers for timeliness and appropriateness.

0205 PROCEDURES

020501 [Travel Card A/OPCs' Roles and Responsibilities \(Appendix F\)](#)

020502 [IBA Accounts \(New/Transfer/Closure\) \(Appendix H\)](#)

020503 [CBA Travel Card Application Process \(Appendix I\)](#)

020504 [CBA Reconciliation Tool Registration Process \(Appendix K\)](#)

020505 [Procedures for CBA Reconciliation Tool \(Appendix L\)](#)

020506 [Use of CBA Travel Card for Lodging \(Appendix M\)](#)

0206 DEFINITIONS

020601 Account. The account established in connection with the Travel Card.

020602 Agency/Organization. The United States federal agency, bureau, division, office or other organizational entity participating in the program that has requested/authorized U.S. Bank to issue the Travel Card to an employee of the Agency/Organization.

020603 Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC). This individual serves as the focal point for establishing and maintaining accounts, and issuance and destruction of cards. The A/OPC is responsible for the day-to-day management of the card accounts including setup, maintenance, management and oversight.

020604 Approving Official (AO). This individual (also typically a supervisor) signs the traveler's voucher, indicating approval for payment and its content.

020605 Automated Teller Machine (ATM). An electronic device which allows cash advances from participating banks.

020606 Automated Teller Machine Withdrawals/Cash Advance. Monies obtained from a Travel Card via ATM or bank teller. Withdrawals/cash advances must be obtained in limited amounts commensurate with official travel and approved on the travel authorization.

020607 Billing Error. Transactions appearing on a cardholder's account as questionable charges, duplicate billings or unauthorized charges.

020608 Cancellation. Permanent termination of travel charge privileges after the travel charge account is 120 calendar days past due the closing date of the statement or two non-sufficient funds (NSF) notices.

020609 Charge. Any account activity that has a debit value.

020610 Centrally Billed Account (CBA). A travel charge card account used to pay for the travel expenses of Veterans/patients, as well as the common carrier transportation and transaction fees for VA employees. Unlike IBAs where employees receive statements and pay for all travel expenses themselves, CBAs are paid directly by the agency. CBA payments are subject to the "Prompt Payment Act of 1982," as amended (Public Law 97-177). These accounts contain a unique prefix identifying the account as a CBA for official Government travel. This prefix also identifies the account as eligible for Government travel rates, including city-pair fares and tax exemption. CBAs are required to be reconciled monthly by the Level 4 A/OPC.

020611 Delinquency. A debt on which payment is overdue.

020612 Disposable Pay. The part of pay remaining after the deduction of any amount required by law is withheld. Required deductions do not include discretionary deductions such as health insurance, savings bonds, charitable contributions, etc. Deductions may be made from basic, special and incentive pay.

020613 Dispute. A written challenge of any unresolved transaction. Cardholders must assert a dispute or a billing error in writing within 60 days of date of the statement reflecting the transaction in question. Any disputed charge and any discrepancy between a receipt and other supporting documentation and the Travel Card statement of account will be resolved in the manner prescribed in the Bank's guide for travel charge cards.

020614 E-Gov Travel Service (ETS). E-Gov Travel Service is Government-wide, Web-based, travel management service used by agencies to ensure Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) compliance while meeting their missions.

020615 Electronic Access System (EAS). Web-based management programs provided by the Bank giving A/OPCs the ability to make account inquiries, produce monthly reports, perform Travel Card maintenance functions, and activate/deactivate

Travel Cards. EAS provides near real-time update capability. EAS allows access via personal computers in order to provide designated reporting information. Cardholders may also access EAS in order to review their own account information and make payments.

020616 Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). The FTR enumerates the travel and relocation policy for all Title 5 Executive Agency employees. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is available at www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr.

020617 Individually Billed Accounts (IBAs). An IBA is an account where a Travel Card is issued to an individual employee. The Cardholder receives the billing statement directly from the bank at the address provided on the Travel Card application. Cardholders are responsible for notifying the A/OPC and the bank of changes in contact information such as a new address. Cardholders are responsible for payment in full of the amount stated on the monthly billing statement within the terms stated on the monthly statement.

020618 Merchant Category Code Groups (MCCGs). A numerical identifier assigned by the bank for classification of products and services. MCCGs are established by the card network to describe merchant types. VA blocks certain MCCGs to hinder inappropriate Travel Card use. The Travel Card Level 1 A/OPC reviews all MCCGs available on Travel Cards and restricts any MCCG not appropriate for use during official travel.

020619 Misuse. Use of the Travel Card in an unauthorized, illegal or adverse manner (e.g. unauthorized cash advances, purchase of unofficial/personal expenses not incident to official travel).

020620 Official Travel. Written or electronic authorization to travel on authorized official business for the Government resulting in reimbursement for expenses on a travel voucher.

020621 Salary Offset. The authority to collect by deduction from the amount of pay owed to an employee of the agency, any amount of funds the employee owes to the bank as a result of delinquencies not disputed by the employee on a travel charge card issued for payment of expenses incurred in connection with official Government travel.

020622 Split Disbursement. A payment process in the VA E-Gov Travel System allowing payments to be made to the bank by the agency on behalf of the cardholder. At the cardholder's direction and in accordance with agency policy, disbursement is split to the bank. The bank receives a direct payment by the agency of the cardholder's specified/claimed amount. The remainder of the payment is disbursed electronically to the cardholder's specified account. Split disbursement is an effective tool to reduce delinquency and improve refunds paid to the agency which in turn are returned to the employee's facility.

020623 Suspension. Temporary termination of Travel Card privileges after the travel charge account is 60 calendar days past due the closing date of the statement.

020624 Travel Advance. Prepayment of estimated travel expenses from the Government paid to an employee in the form of electronic funds transfer.

020625 Travel Card (Government Travel Charge Card). Government Travel Charge Card or Travel Card is a convenient method for federal agencies and their employees to make payments for official Government travel and travel related expenses. There are two types of accounts available under the GSA SmartPay contract - individually billed accounts (IBA) as described in 020614 and centrally billed accounts (CBA) as described in 020607.

020626 Travel Management Center (TMC). A common carrier travel firm under contract providing reservation, tickets and related travel management services for official travelers.

0207 RESCISSIONS

020701 VA Directive and Handbook 0631.1, Employee Travel Management, Travel Charge Card Policy, dated August 14, 2003.

020702 OF Bulletin 10047E3.05, Delegation of Approving Authority for Credit Worthiness Evaluation, dated November 6, 2009.

020703 OF Bulletin 10047E3.04, Credit Worthiness, dated November 6, 2009.

020704 OF Bulletin 08E1.07, Government Travel Charge Card Policy Update, dated August 20, 2008.

020705 Travel Notice 07-04, Split Disbursement, dated December 20, 2006.

0208 QUESTIONS

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed as shown below:

All Others

Office of Financial Business Operations
Travel Card A/OPCs
Office of Financial Policy (OFP)

APPENDIX A: APPROPRIATE USE OF TRAVEL CARD

Only authorized appropriate uses of the CBA and IBA Travel Card will be acceptable while on official travel. Personal/unofficial travel expenses in conjunction with official travel must be paid by the traveler using personal funds. Inappropriate or misuse of the Travel Card may result in disciplinary action.

A. CBA TRAVEL CARD: The following are authorized travel expenses:

1. **Common carrier transportation fare for official travel.** If a traveler arrives at the common carrier terminal and transportation is not ticketed, the traveler should contact the TMC and arrange transportation. The IBA Travel Card may be used to purchase the transportation.
2. **ETS and TMC transaction fees.**
3. **Lodging.** Lodging expenses may be charged to the CBA Travel Card in limited situations, such as when traveler is exempt from the IBA Travel Card or advance room deposits for lodging (reference Appendix M, Use of CBA Travel Card for Lodging, for process).

B. IBA TRAVEL CARD: The following are authorized travel expenses:

1. **Lodging.**
2. **Advance room deposit.** (Note: Cardholders who receive a travel advance to pay for a room deposit but fail to perform the travel for reasons unacceptable to the approving official, must repay the advance.)
3. **Automated Teller Machine (ATM) withdrawals.** ATM withdrawals must be noted and approved on all travel authorizations prior to travel. ATM withdrawals must not be obtained prior to five (5) calendar days before scheduled travel. In addition, Travelers who have an IBA Travel Card will not obtain a travel advance via EFT.

ATM withdrawal amounts are determined by the total meals and incidental expense (MIE) allowance and any authorized miscellaneous expenses itemized on the travel authorization.

4. **Official rental vehicles** and associated gasoline expenses.
5. **Baggage fees.**
6. **Meals** covered by the per diem allowance or actual subsistence allowance.

7. **Miscellaneous transportation expenses**, such as:

- Parking,
- Local transportation system fares,
- Taxi fares, and
- Tips associated with transportation (e.g., taxi or shuttle).

8. **Laundry/dry cleaning** (authorized after 6 consecutive nights of lodging).

9. **Telephone calls** when a Government calling card is unavailable for use.

10. **Gasoline for the use of a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)** while on official travel may be charged to the IBA Travel Card. However, gasoline is not a separate reimbursable expense claimed on the expense voucher. Reimbursement is covered by the mileage allowance associated with the use of the POV.

11. **Emergency-type expenses** (e.g., lost or damaged luggage or clothing). Such “retail” expenses cannot exceed \$250 per billing cycle. Travelers must contact their supervisor and/or A/OPC before making retail purchases. These personal expenses are not reimbursable and will not be claimed on the traveler’s expense report. Cardholders are required to pay the full amount using personal funds on their statement upon receipt.

APPENDIX B: INAPPROPRIATE USE OF THE TRAVEL CARD

Inappropriate or misuse of the contractor-issued charge card is considered misconduct and subjects the cardholder to disciplinary actions ranging from a reprimand to removal.

A. **Training/Registration Expenses.** The Purchase Card is the method used to pay for training or registration expenses and conference fees when such fees must be paid in advance. The Travel Card will not be used to pay for such fees. When a fee is identified after official travel has begun, the traveler must contact their Purchase Card A/OPC to arrange payment of the fee.

B. **Personal annual leave expenses.** Cardholders will not use their VA IBA Travel Card for expenses incurred on personal leave in conjunction with official travel (e.g. retaining official rental car usage while on personal leave). Personal expenses must be paid from personal funds as they are not related to official Government travel.

C. **Other examples of inappropriate use include:**

1. **Unauthorized ATM access:**

- ATM withdrawal amount which **exceeds** authorized ATM withdrawal amount on travel authorization (authorization “after the fact” may be received in emergency situations as determined by Approving Official.)
- ATM withdrawals while not on official travel.
- ATM withdrawals while on local travel.

2. **Unofficial/personal expenses** (e.g., upgrades to other-than-coach travel at personal expense).

3. **Family purchases** (e.g., hotel rooms or meals).

4. **Personal household purchases/expenses** (e.g., rent, utilities).

5. **Group meals**

6. **Official expenses for other employees or veterans** (e.g., transportation or lodging expenses).

7. **Personal liability insurance** for authorized official rental vehicle. The U.S. Government is self-insured.

8. **Prepaid gasoline** for authorized official rental vehicle. Reimbursement for gasoline is based on actual expense for usage.

9. Optional Personal Hotel Services (e.g., spas, movie rentals). Note: Mandatory hotel fees charged to all guests are reimbursable as miscellaneous expenses (e.g., resort fees).

APPENDIX C: SALARY OFFSET PROCEDURES FOR DELINQUENT TRAVEL CHARGE CARD ACCOUNTS

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-123, Appendix B dated January 15, 2009, each agency implements risk management controls, policies, and practices as critical tools for ensuring the efficiency and integrity of its charge card program by eliminating payment delinquencies, charge card misuse, fraud, and other forms of waste and abuse. These controls include implementing salary offset procedures for individually-billed (IBA) travel charge card accounts. The circular is available for review at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html.

A. All VA employees who are delinquent in payment greater than 90 days on their IBA travel charge card accounts will be subject to salary offset procedures. These procedures will result in automatic payment to the bank deducted from the employee's disposable pay each pay period until the delinquent balance is paid in full. The payment process, [New Salary Offset Flowchart \(Figure 1 shown on p. 26\)](#), visually describes the process.

B. Procedures to conduct salary offset¹ are as follows:

A. Between the 24th and last day of each calendar month, each station's primary A/OPC is required to run a Past Due report from U.S. Bank's Access Online. This report will include a listing of all cardholders within each A/OPC's hierarchy who are more than 30 days past due. The report also contains the cardholder's outstanding balances that are between 30 and 180 days past due.

B. Cardholders who have outstanding balances 90 days delinquent shall be subject to salary offset procedures. The station is to provide these cardholders with the [Salary Offset Letter \(Figure 2\)](#), customized by the station with the cardholder's name, amount owed, and date. The station may provide this letter to the employee in person, by mail, or by e-mail. This letter contains an enclosure Due Process Notice and [Grounds for Appeal \(Figure 3\)](#) which serves as the agency's notification. No other letters are required to be provided to the employee since the bank has already sent the cardholder a number of letters in an effort to obtain the outstanding balance.

C. The station must then wait 30 days until taking any further action on these 90-day delinquent cardholders, allowing the cardholders one additional opportunity to pay their balances in full.

¹ For additional information on authorized uses of salary offset, refer to Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XII, Chapter 1D, Salary Offset for Federal Employees Indebted to U.S.

D. Cardholder's with a balance 120 days or greater (who have previously been provided the Salary Offset Letter) must have salary offset implemented immediately. To conduct this offset, station A/OPCs will follow the [DD Form 2481 Instructions \(Figure 4\)](#). This form is initiated by the A/OPC, provided to station Payroll office, and then given to DFAS. Salary offsets will begin on the next available payroll date.

E. **IMPORTANT**: Station A/OPCs and Payroll offices must ensure that all payments go directly from DFAS to the bank in this process. Stations are not to request that monies be sent from DFAS directly back to the stations. If stations have inadvertently placed monies in suspense accounts which have been collected for offset purposes to pay their Travel Card outstanding balances, refer to Volume XII, Debt Management, to have these funds mailed to the bank. The station must ensure the cardholder and their Travel Card account number are referenced with this mailed check, so that the bank may apply the funds to the correct account.

Every two weeks, the Office of Charge Card Oversight and Travel Policy Service (CCOTPS) will obtain a report of all offset proceedings. This report will be provided to the bank so that payments received will be posted to the proper accounts. This will also ensure the account stops aging towards possible Charge Off. This bi-weekly report will also be provided to the Level 2 Travel Card A/OPCs by CCOTPS.

Figure 1 - New Salary Offset Flowchart

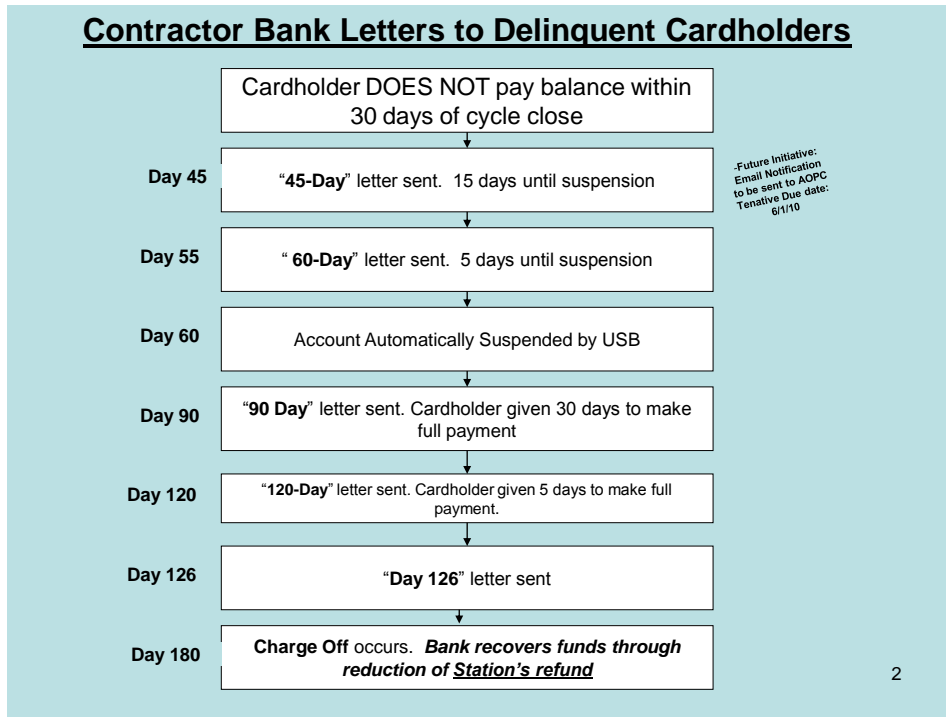
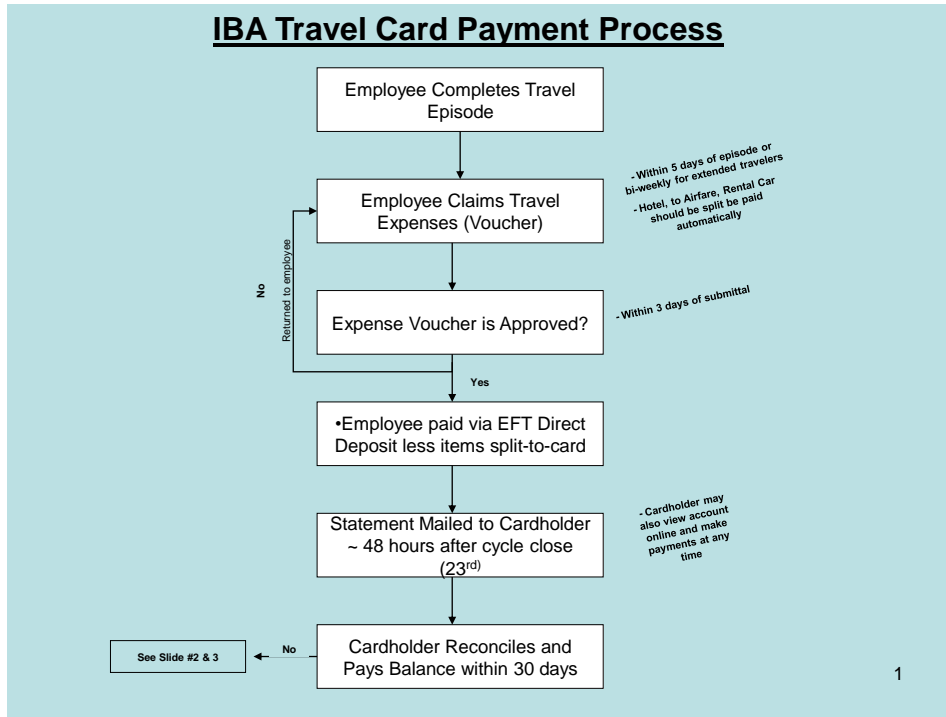


Figure 2 - Salary Offset Letter

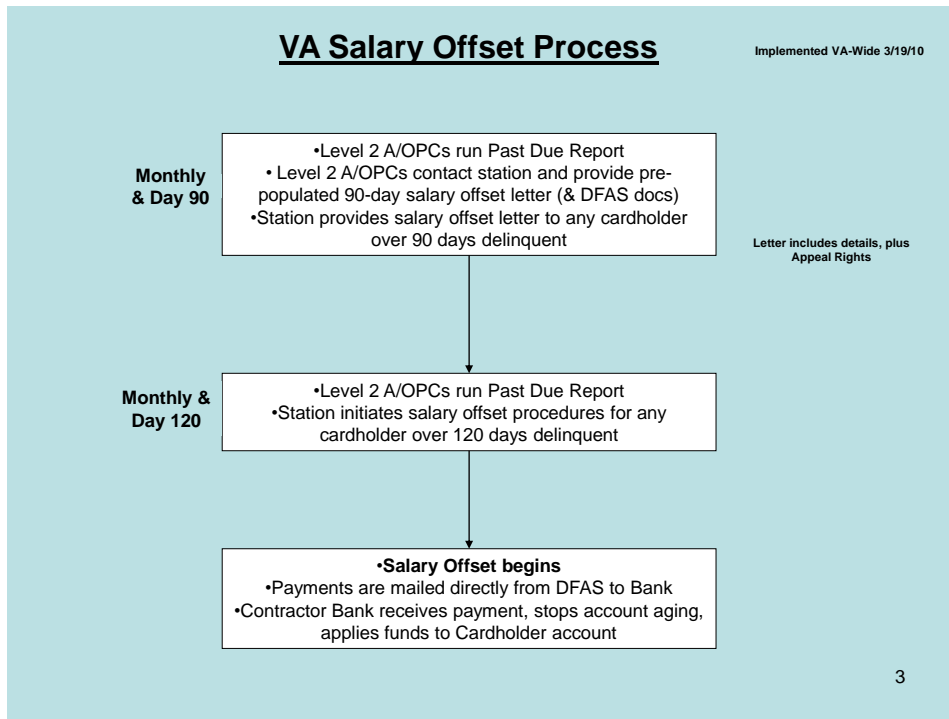


Figure 3 - Salary Offset Letter (cont'd)

Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Date:

[Name]

Subject: Delinquent U.S. Bank Charge Card Account Balance – Salary Offset

Dear Sir/Madam:

This is to advise you that U.S. Bank Government Services, hereby known as the bank, has requested the Department of Veterans Affairs to offset your pay for a delinquent Government travel charge card balance in the amount of \$_____. The delinquent balance excludes any disputed transactions that are still pending.

The Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 authorizes the Agency to offset up to 15 percent of your disposable pay at the request of the contracted bank to collect delinquent balances. Therefore, payroll deductions will begin the first pay period ending 30 days after the date of this letter unless you resolve the matter prior to such date or submit an appeal as described below. The deduction will continue until the total amount is paid-in-full, or we are notified by the bank to stop collection action.

The amount deducted in any single pay period, including the administrative fee, will be limited to 15 percent of your disposable pay. Disposable pay, for this purpose, is defined as your biweekly gross pay less deductions required by law, i.e., retirement; Thrift Savings Plan; Federal, State, local taxes; Medicare; Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance; regular life insurance and health benefit premiums, and any debt owed to the United States Government.

The deductions for the offset will show on your Leave and Earnings Statement as “Debt, Gov Vol”.

If you wish to authorize a larger offset in order to accelerate the payment of this debt, please submit a written request to your Finance Officer. Your request must specify a percentage of disposable pay or a specific dollar amount.

If you believe that your account is delinquent because you have not been reimbursed for a related travel voucher, please contact your Finance Officer to determine the status of the voucher. You must inform your Finance Officer in writing of the name and phone

number of the approving official of your travel reimbursement voucher(s) to verify a travel reimbursement delay.

You have the right to inspect and copy records related to the delinquency, to request the bank review its decision to pursue collection of the debt from your Federal salary, and to make a written repayment agreement with the bank. If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please contact a representative of the bank directly at **(888) 994-6722**. You must also contact the bank if you have questions about the request offset, or wish to dispute the offset as erroneous. We suggest that you keep copies of any correspondence and/or evidence of payment to the bank. The bank must report to us on any charges or amount adjustments regarding the delinquent charge card balance offset.

If you feel you have received this notice in error, please refer to the enclosed information on appeal rights.

VA's Employee Assistance Program is available to employees who wish to voluntarily and confidentially seek counseling due to stress caused by personal financial problems. For further information on the program, please call **(800) 222-0364**.

If you have questions regarding our process in this matter, please contact your local A/OPC.

Enclosure-
Grounds for Appeal

Figure 3 - Grounds for Appeal Enclosure

GROUNDINGS FOR APPEAL

Employees are expected to timely reimburse the travel charge card contracted bank for all undisputed charges on the card. Employees are also expected to have used the card only for expenses related to official travel, to have timely filed their travel vouchers and to have timely disputed any improper charges. Therefore, the grounds for an appeal are limited. The following may, if properly substantiated, be grounds for appeal:

1. The charges sought by the travel charge card contracted bank are the subject of a properly completed, timely filed travel voucher that has not been paid by the Government.
2. The charges sought by the travel charge card contracted bank are the subject of a timely dispute that the travel charge card contracted bank has not resolved.
3. The charges sought by the travel charge card contracted bank have been released in bankruptcy.
4. The employee and the travel charge card contracted bank have signed a written payment agreement, and the employee is timely making payments as required by the agreement.
5. The employee has paid the delinquent balance in full.

The employee is responsible for providing proof to support any grounds for appeal. The nature of the proof will vary in each case. For example, proof to support an appeal based on the statement that the charges sought by the travel charge card contracted bank are the subject of a properly completed, timely filed travel voucher that has not been paid by the Government would include:

1. A copy of the voucher
2. Copies of any communications with the travel payment office concerning payment
3. A copy of the travel charge card billing statement
4. Any other evidence supporting the employee's statement.

As a general rule, financial hardship is not grounds for appeal. Because the travel charge card may only be used for official travel expenses, which are reimbursed by the Government, the employee should be able to reimburse the travel charge card contracted bank without hardship. Any request that the salary offset not be processed, either at all or at a reduced rate (less than 15 percent of disposable pay) because of financial hardship must include a detailed explanation of the hardship with a complete financial statement reflecting all income available to the household and all required monthly payments and debts.

For further information, please reference the FTR and applicable cardholder agreements.

Figure 4 - DD Form 2481 Instructions

**DD FORM 2481, REQUEST FOR RECOVERY OF DEBT DUE THE UNITED STATES
BY SALARY OFFSET INSTRUCTIONS**

1. PURPOSE OF THIS FORM:

To request recovery of a debt by salary offset for a debtor who has not responded to a demand for payment of their Government issued travel charge card account, requested a hearing, or refunded the creditor component's proposed installment deductions. This form also certifies that the debtor's due process has been completed.

2. COMPLETING THIS FORM:

Items 1 – 4 are completed by the station/facility A/OPC. Item 5 is completed by the station/facility payroll office. Item 6 is completed by DFAS accounting office.

Item 1. Paying Office Identification: Name and address of DFAS Paying Office responsible for processing the salary offset. Include a contact person and e-mail address and telephone number for this individual.

Example:

- a. Name: **DFAS Indianapolis, Civilian Pay – ZPV**
- b. Address: **8899 East 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1900**
- c. Contact Name: **Enter contact name**
- d. E-Mail address: **Enter email address**
- e. Telephone No.: **1-800-538-9043; Option #2**

Item 2. Employee Identification: Name, address, date of birth and social security number for the individual for whom a salary offset is requested.

Item 3. Debt Information: Specific information and justification of debt. Salary offset payments to U.S. Bank will be made by check. DFAS will submit an individual check for each delinquent employee. In order for salary offset payments to reach U. S. Bank, the information below must be listed in the appropriate boxes.

3a. Reason for Debt: Stations are strongly encouraged to highlight this section upon printing to ensure DFAS mails payment directly to U.S. Bank and not back to the station. For VA Travel Charge Card, this should read the following:

**DFAS PLEASE MAIL PAYMENT DIRECTLY TO U.S. BANK, NOT TO VA STATION:
U.S. Bank - Attn: Tamara Lockridge
9321 Olive Blvd, St Louis, MO 63132**

3b. Date Right to Collect Accrued: Enter the date the account was eligible for salary offset.

3c. Debt Identification Number: First 3 characters of VA Employee's last name and last 15 digits of the employee's U.S. Bank account number.

The VA Employee's 16 digit account number on the U.S. Bank Travel Card must be included in this box in order for payment to be made in the correct depository account. **Important: This field can only take 3 alpha characters and 15 digits. Enter the first 3 letters of the employee's last name, then drop the first digit of the account number and enter the last 15 digits of the employee's U.S. Bank account number.**

Example: John Oweyou's U.S. Bank account number is 4486 0001 0002 00003. You must drop the first digit and enter **OWE486000100020003** in Box 3c.

3d. Original Debt Amount:	NET Amount of Debt
3e. Number of installments:	LEAVE BLANK
3f. Interest Due:	LEAVE BLANK
3g. Penalty Due:	LEAVE BLANK
3h. Administrative Cost:	LEAVE BLANK
3i. Total Collection to be Made:	Total Net Amount due to the bank
3j. Commence Deductions On:	Pay period begin date

Voluntary Salary Offset payments will provide bi-weekly payment amounts of 15 percent unless the employee volunteers to offset additional funds.

Involuntary Salary Offset payments will be processed at 15 percent of the employee's disposable income.

Item 4. Due Process: Annotate the appropriate Due Process given to the individual for whom a salary offset is requested. **For VA Travel Charge Card, you should annotate the date the VA Salary Offset Letter was e-mailed or sent to the employee.** Box 4a should always be checked with the date action taken inserted into column (1). Columns (2) and or (3) should be checked as appropriate.

Item 5. Creditor Component Information: To be completed by the payroll office. Name and address of organization initiating collection. Include contact name, e-mail address and telephone number, and accounting classification.

IMPORTANT: Please ensure Payroll and DFAS are aware that offset payments are mailed by DFAS directly to U.S. Bank, not to the VA station.

Item 6. DFAS Accounting Office: To be completed by the appropriate DFAS Accounting Office.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE APPOINTMENT LETTER FOR TRAVEL CARD A/OPC

The Travel Card Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) serves as the Travel Card coordinator and is responsible for the day-to-day management and oversight of the Travel Card accounts. The roles and responsibilities of these coordinators are critical to the program's success. These duties should be clearly outlined in the employee's annual work plan.

The roles and responsibilities for all levels are outlined in VA Financial Policies and Procedures, Volume XIV, Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program, Appendix D.

This appointment is for _____, at Level ____ A/OPC.

Certification: "I certify that I have read and understand the policies and regulations that govern the use of the Government Travel Card. I further certify that I have read and understand the roles and responsibilities as a Level ____ A/OPC."

Print Name of Agency/Organization Program Coordinator

Signature of Agency/Organization Program Coordinator Date Signed

Print Name of First Line Supervisor

Signature of First Line Supervisor Date Signed

APPENDIX E: VACO ADMINISTRATIVE AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Central Office
Human Resources Service

Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

**EMPLOYEE / LABOR RELATIONS GUIDANCE
(For VACO Employees)**

Number: 09 - 10 Date: November 30, 2009

**TABLE OF DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES AND PENALTIES
FOR DELINQUENCY AND MISUSE OF GOVERNMENT
CONVENIENCE CHECKS AND PURCHASE, TRAVEL, AND FLEET CARDS**

This table provides supervisors latitude within a range of penalties to consider the appropriate mitigating or aggravating circumstances and ensure consistent corrective action. The points selected within each range should be based on the severity of the offense. Multiple incidents of misconduct may warrant greater than the maximum points within a range.

NATURE OF OFFENSE	POINTS
Travel Card	
Payment of bill is 60 up to 120 days past due.	1-to-2
Payment of bill is more than 120 days past due.	2-to-4
Inappropriate usage for less than \$200.	2-to-5
Inappropriate usage for more than \$200.	6-to-8
Inappropriate usage for less than \$200 AND employee is delinquent in payment (60 days or more past due).	5-to-7
Inappropriate usage for more than \$200 AND employee is delinquent in payment (60 days or more past due).	7-to-8
Failure to safeguard, monitor, or allowing/enabling another to use cardholder's card or account.	7-to-8
Purchase Card Convenience Check Fleet Card	
Inappropriate usage for less than \$200.	4-to-7
Inappropriate usage for more than \$200.	6-to-8
Failure to safeguard, monitor, or allowing/enabling another to use cardholder's card or account.	4-to-8
Misuse and/or conversion of Government funds for personal use.	7-to-8

POINTS CONVERSION TABLE			
POINTS	PENALTY	POINTS	PENALTY
1 pt	Admonishment	5 pts	6 Workday Suspension
2 pts	Reprimand	6 pts	8 Workday Suspension
3 pts	2 Workday Suspension	7 pts	10 Workday Suspension
4 pts	4 Workday Suspension	8 pts	Removal

Subsequent Disciplinary Action(s): Add Prior Points To New Points		
Example:	Previous discipline equals 4 points	Penalty = 4 Workday Suspension
	New misconduct equals 2 points (4 points + 2 points = 6 points)	Penalty = 8 Workday Suspension

Direct questions to Kenya Brown at (202) 461-7905 in the Employee/Labor Relations Division.



Caren E. Eirkson
Director, Central Office Human Resources Service (05HRS)

APPENDIX F: TRAVEL CARD A/OPCS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There are multiple levels of charge card A/OPCs within the VA travel charge card program.

The roles and responsibilities of the A/OPCs consist of the topics documented in the following pages. Please note this is not an all-encompassing list, as new topics and concerns within the travel charge card program occur frequently.

A. Level 1 Travel Card Program A/OPC:

The mission of the Level 1 is to provide guidance and oversight for the entire VA travel charge card program. VA's charge card program is very large and results in substantial refunds to VA stations. One of the primary responsibilities is to manage program risk. This is accomplished by routinely analyzing the charge card program, strengthening programmatic controls, and maintaining a close relationship with the issuing bank.

1. The office of the Level 1 A/OPC serves VA at a high-level, providing guidance, policy, and oversight to all travel charge card accounts within VA. It is not the role of the Level 1 A/OPC to provide individual help-desk support to the agency's various offices. Each office is responsible for the proper management and oversight of their Travel Card program.

2. The roles and responsibilities of the Level 1 Travel Card A/OPC are:

a. Ensure the agency's Travel Card program is in compliance with OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B including:

(1) Developing and maintaining the annual Charge Card Management Plan

(2) Establishing training requirements

(3) Implementing risk management controls, policies and procedures including:

- Maximizing refunds while minimizing risk
- Monitoring Split Disbursement
- Monitoring Salary Offset
- Maintaining and reporting data and performance metrics quarterly
- Monitoring Credit Worthiness
- Recommending disciplinary actions

b. Serve as the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) of the task order between VA and the issuing bank. Review and evaluate the bank's technical and

administrative task order performance and compliance, including conformance with price and schedule provisions of the work effort, and accepting deliverables.

c. Monitor travel charge card issues, including pending legislation related to travel in order to provide accurate information and policy updates.

d. Analyze account activity to prevent unauthorized use and misuse including:

- (1) Restricting questionable Merchant Category Codes (MCCs),
 - (2) Ensuring accounts are being used for authorized travel expenditures only,
 - (3) Ensuring unused non-refundable airline tickets are utilized before expiration,
 - (4) Monitoring refundable/non-refundable airline tickets,
 - (5) Ensuring ATM withdrawals and travel advances by employees are appropriate and do not result in delinquencies, and
 - (6) Monitoring and reducing account delinquencies
- Working with the bank to provide training to all A/OPCs and Level 2 travel charge card A/OPCs on the bank's online system.
 - Ensuring all agency A/OPCs and cardholders have attended required training.
 - Reporting travel charge card fraud, waste and abuse to agency OIG.
 - Reporting travel program status to GSA and OMB.

B. Level 2 Travel Card Program A/OPC:

1. The level 2 A/OPC is responsible for providing high-level guidance, policy augmentation, and oversight to their respective Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs.

2. The roles and responsibilities of the Level 2 Travel Card A/OPC include management and oversight of the Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs. Management of the following topics is required by each Level 2 A/OPC:

a. Communication and Customer Service

(1) Serve as the primary coordinator for the Travel Card program for their respective Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs..

(2) Responsible for the management of the Travel Card program for their respective Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs.

- (3) Represent their respective Level 3 and Level 4 A/OPCs in all Travel Card program-related requests and issues.
- (4) Communicate routinely to all Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs and all internal and external customers on Travel Card program-related topics and concerns.
- (5) Provide quality and timely customer service to all lower level A/OPCs within their oversight to ensure program success.
- (6) Actively use the bank's online system to monitor the Travel Card program.

b. New Accounts, Maintenance, and Training.

- (1) Assist their respective Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs by answering program-related inquiries, establishing new accounts and/or hierarchies, closing accounts and destroying cards when employees terminate/retire/transfer, establishing and reviewing reports, managing training, and serving as the administration's Travel Card program point of contact for all internal and external customers.
- (2) Ensure adherence to all credit worthiness procedures when establishing new individually-billed accounts (IBA) travel charge cards. Policies and procedures for credit worthiness are found in Appendix N, Credit Worthiness Procedures.
- (3) Ensure all respective Level 3 and Level 4A/OPCs and cardholders complete initial training prior to issuance of the card, and refresher training is completed every 3 years as stated in Paragraph 020501, Training.
- (4) Monitor the *TMS Training Reports*
- (5) Remove TMS training from user profiles within their oversight, contacting TMS Coordinators for assistance. A new process has been required for TMS to push this to the local TMS Administrator level, effective date is pending.
- (6) Maintain a complete, accurate listing of all their respective Travel Card Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs. This listing will be used by the Level 2 A/OPC to communicate program information to the Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs. (The bank sends the Point of Contact (POC) List to the Level 1 A/OPC, which is forwarded to all lower level A/OPCs monthly.)
- (7) Serve as the central point of contact between the Level 1 A/OPC in VACO and the respective Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs in the field; handle all card-related issues at their respective level prior to forwarding onto the Level 1 A/OPC for guidance or assistance.

(8) Approve the establishment of new Centrally-Billed Account (CBA) Travel Charge Cards within their oversight.

(9) Approve the establishment of their respective new Travel Card Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs. This includes:

- Approve and process the Point of Contact maintenance form, and
- Establish A/OPC in the EAS Online system with a User ID/login (*User Profiles Setup Guide* details this process).

c. Authorized Charge Card Usage

Ensure cardholders are not using Travel Card accounts to purchase personal items or withdraw funds unrelated to employee's travel episode. This is accomplished by monitoring the following reports on a monthly, or as-needed, basis:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account List (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

d. Unused Airline Tickets

Ensure Level 4 A/OPCs are monitoring the reports currently provided by Level 1 A/OPC: (1) *Unused Ticket Report (FedTraveler.com)*; and (2) *Refundable Ticket Report (TMC)*

e. ATM Withdrawals

(1) Ensure ATM withdrawals by employees are appropriate and occur only within 5 calendar days of each travel episode.

(2) Ensure ATM limits are set appropriately so employees are within account limits and not misusing this privilege, resulting in account delinquencies.

(3) Educate account holders on proper use/restrictions of ATM withdrawals.

(4) Restrict/reduce the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent more than twice per year.

(5) Suspend the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent 60 days or more.

(6) Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

f. Travel Voucher Claims

- (1) Educate account holders and approving officials on travel voucher timeline submissions to reduce delinquencies.
- (2) Ensure management controls and practices in place to maintain compliance with agency's split disbursement requirements.
- (3) Ensure agency policy is being followed and corrective action taken against cardholder delinquencies. This shall include new HR policies concerning disciplinary actions for travel charge card offenses (See 020407 Supervisor Responsibilities).

g. Unauthorized Use and Misuse of Charge Card Accounts

- (1) Monitor Travel Card account activity to ensure account holders are not misusing their card (personal use).
- (2) Take appropriate action to prevent unauthorized use and misuse to include:
 - Restricting questionable Merchant Category Codes (MCCs).
 - Ensuring accounts are being used only for authorized travel expenditures while employees are on official Government travel.
 - Reduce account limits when employees have not been on official travel within the last 6 months.
- (3) Monitor the following reports:
 - *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*
- (4) Report Administration or staff office travel charge card fraud, waste and abuse to VA OIG.

h. Delinquent Charge Card Accounts and Salary Offsets

- (1) Ensure efforts are made to reduce delinquencies among the IBA Travel Card accounts.

(2) Notify their respective Chief Financial Officer and A/OPCs monthly of all Travel Card accounts which are 60 days delinquent and at risk for salary offset (initiates at 90 days). (See Appendix C – Salary Offset Procedures)

(3) Ensure salary offset procedures are initiated for any accounts more than 90 days delinquent. This includes notification to their respective Chief Financial Officer and Level 3 and/or Level 4 A/OPCs to begin salary offset proceedings for all accounts more than 90 days delinquent.

(4) Notify their respective Chief Financial Officer monthly of all pending charge offs. Once an account becomes 180 days delinquent, pending charge-off balances will be deducted from the stations' quarterly refunds. If Level 2 A/OPC has not initiated salary offset proceedings on any employee listed on the monthly Charge Off Report, the Level 1 A/OPC must do so immediately.

(5) Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:

- *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
- *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account Suspension (EAS Online)*

(6) Ensure agency policy is being followed and corrective action taken against cardholder delinquencies. This includes new HR policies for disciplinary actions regarding travel charge card accounts (See 020407 Supervisor Responsibilities).

C. Level 3 Travel Card Program A/OPC:

1. Each Level 2 A/OPC will determine the requirement for a Level 3 A/OPC. The level 3 A/OPC is responsible for providing high-level guidance, policy augmentation, and oversight to all travel charge card accounts within their respective organization.

2. The roles and responsibilities of the Level 3 Travel Card A/OPC include management and oversight of the area of responsibility as determined by the Level 2 A/OPC. Management of the following topics is required:

a. Communication and Customer Service

(1) Serve as the primary coordinator for the Travel Card program as determined by the Level 2 A/OPC.

(2) Responsible for the management of the Travel Card program as determined by the Level 2 A/OPC.

(3) Represent the Level 4 A/OPCs in all Travel Card program-related requests and issues.

- (4) Communicate routinely to all Level 4 A/OPCs and all internal and external customers on Travel Card program-related topics and concerns.
- (5) Provide quality and timely customer service to all lower level A/OPCs within the Administration to ensure program success.
- (6) Actively use the bank's online system to monitor the Travel Card program.

b. New Accounts, Maintenance, and Training

- (1) Assist respective Level 4 A/OPCs by answering program-related inquiries, establishing new accounts and/or hierarchies, closing accounts and destroying cards when employees terminate/retire/transfer, establishing and reviewing reports, managing training, and serving as the Travel Card program point of contact for all internal and external customers.
- (2) Ensure adherence to all credit worthiness procedures when establishing new individually billed accounts (IBA) travel charge cards. Policies and procedures for credit worthiness are found in Appendix N, Credit Worthiness Procedures.
- (3) Ensure all Level 4 A/OPCs complete initial training prior to issuance of the card, and refresher training is completed every 3 years as stated in Paragraph 020501, Training.
- (4) Monitor the *TMS Training Reports*:
 - Remove TMS training from their respective user profiles, contacting TMS Coordinators for assistance. A new process has been required for TMS to push this to the local TMS Administrator level, effective date is pending.
 - Maintain a complete, accurate listing of all Travel Card Level 4 A/OPCs within the Administration or staff office. This listing will be used by the Level 3 A/OPC to communicate program information to the Level 4 A/OPCs.

c. Authorized Charge Card Usage

Ensure cardholders are not using Travel Card accounts to purchase personal items or withdraw funds unrelated to employee's travel episode. Accomplished by monitoring the following reports on a monthly, or as-needed, basis:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account List (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

d. Unused Airline Tickets

Ensure Level 4 A/OPCs are monitoring the reports currently provided by Level 1 A/OPC:

- *Unused Ticket Report (FedTraveler.com)*
- *Refundable Ticket Report (TMC)*

e. ATM Withdrawals

- (1) Ensure ATM withdrawals are appropriate and occur only within 5 calendar days of each travel episode.
- (2) Ensure ATM limits are set appropriately so employees are within account limits and not misusing this privilege, resulting in account delinquencies.
- (3) Educate account holders on proper use/restrictions of ATM withdrawals.
- (4) Restrict/reduce the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent more than twice per year.
- (5) Suspend the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent 60 days or more.
- (6) Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:
 - *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

f. Travel Voucher Claims

- (1) Educate account holders and approving officials on travel voucher timeline submissions to reduce delinquencies.
- (2) Ensure management controls and practices are in place to maintain compliance with agency's split disbursement requirements.
- (3) Ensure agency policy is being followed and corrective action taken against cardholder delinquencies. This includes new HR policies concerning disciplinary actions for travel charge card offenses (See 020407 Supervisor Responsibilities).

g. Unauthorized Use and Misuse of Charge Card Accounts

- (1) Monitor Travel Card account activity to ensure account holders are not misusing their card (personal use).
- (2) Take appropriate action to prevent unauthorized use and misuse including:
 - Restrict questionable Merchant Category Codes (MCCs).
 - Ensure accounts are being used only for authorized travel expenditures while employees are on official Government travel.
 - Reduce account limits when employees have not been on official travel within the last 6 months.
- (3) Monitor the following reports:
 - *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*
- (4) Report travel charge card fraud, waste and abuse to VA OIG.

h. Delinquent Charge Card Accounts and Salary Offsets

- (1) Ensure efforts are made to reduce delinquencies among the IBA Travel Card accounts.
- (2) Notify respective Chief Financial Officer and A/OPCs monthly of all Travel Card accounts which are 60 days delinquent and at risk for salary offset (initiates at 90 days). See Appendix C – Salary Offset Procedures.
- (3) Ensure salary offset procedures are initiated for any accounts more than 90 days delinquent. This includes notification to Level 4 A/OPCs to begin salary offset proceedings for all accounts more than 90 days delinquent.
- (4) Notify respective Chief Financial Officer monthly of all pending charge offs. Once an account becomes 180 days delinquent, pending charge off balances will be deducted from the stations' quarterly refunds. If the Level 3 has not initiated salary offset proceedings on any employee listed on the monthly Charge Off Report, the Level 2 must do so immediately.
- (5) Monitor the following reports:
 - *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*

- *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account Suspension (EAS Online)*

(6) Ensure Administration or staff office is following agency policy and taking action against cardholder delinquencies. This shall include new HR policies for disciplinary actions regarding travel charge card accounts. Refer to section 020407 Supervisor Responsibilities.

D. Level 4 Travel Card Program A/OPC:

1. Each VA Administration and Staff Office has established Level 4 A/OPCs at their facilities/stations. In most cases, there is both a primary and alternate Level 4 A/OPC at the facility/station. These individuals serve as the stations' Travel Card coordinators and are responsible for the day-to-day management of the card accounts at their field station.

2. Following are procedures for establishing a new Level 4 Travel Card A/OPC:

- Completion of Bank Travel Card A/OPC Training
- Appointment Letter from Supervisor
- Register in Card A/OPC Registration Database (C.A.R.D.) once established and approved by Level 2 Travel Card A/OPC
- Obtain User ID in Bank System from Level 2 Travel Card A/OPC
- Contact Level 1 Travel Card A/OPC once above processes have been completed to identify new Level 4 A/OPC

3. The roles and responsibilities of the Level 4 Travel Card A/OPC include management and oversight of the facility/station-level travel charge card program.

4. Management of the following areas is required by each Level 4 A/OPC:

a. Account Applications, Maintenance, and Training

(1) Assist cardholders and applicants by answering program related inquiries, establishing new accounts and/or hierarchies, monitoring account activity by reviewing bank reports, managing training, and serving as the facility/station's Travel Card program point of contact for all internal and external customers.

(2) Complete all credit worthiness procedures when establishing new Individually-Billed Account (IBA) Travel Charge Cards. Policies and procedures for credit worthiness are found in Appendix N, Credit Worthiness.

(3) Ensure all cardholders have completed training as required by Paragraph 020308, Training. Maintain copies of all certificates of completion for all cardholders, including refresher training every 3 years.

- (4) Assist former cardholders with removing TMS training from their user profile by contacting the local TMS Coordinator.
- (5) Maintain a complete, accurate listing of all Travel Cardholders and accounts within the facility/station. Every three months, the A/OPC will review open account listings to identify unused accounts for potential closure. Accounts not used in a 12-month period should be closed. The A/OPC must reduce the limit to \$1 of any open accounts used infrequently at their station. Use the report, Account List (EAS Online) to monitor and take action on open accounts used infrequently.
- (6) Follow chain of command for all program-related questions and assistance. Contact the Level 2 A/OPC first, seeking guidance from the Level 1 A/OPC only if not assisted by the Level 2 A/OPC (or during an emergency).
- (7) Serve as the central point of contact between the cardholders and the Level 2 A/OPC. Handle all card-related issues at the facility/station level prior to forwarding onto the Level 2 A/OPC for guidance or assistance.
- (8) Complete applications for facility/station new centrally-billed travel charge card accounts (CBA) and forward to the Level 2 A/OPC for approval prior to contacting the bank for account establishment.
- (9) Ensure Travel Card is shredded and the account closed in the bank's system when a cardholder within their facility/station terminates or retires. Accounts may be closed online or by calling the bank. Whenever a cardholder transfers to another facility, the facility/station Level 4 A/OPC must lower the account limit to \$1 and contact the new station's A/OPC informing them of the action. The A/OPC at the new station must contact the bank and submit a Cardholder Maintenance Form to modify the Cardholder's account information (address, phone, hierarchy, etc.).
- (10) Ensure all Travel Card account limits are set at the appropriate level. Infrequent traveler's limits should be set at \$1 when not in travel status to reduce risk. Unused accounts should also maintain a \$1 limit or be closed. Inactivated accounts should be closed.

b. Authorized Charge Card Usage

(1) Ensure Travel Card accounts are not used to purchase personal items or withdraw funds unrelated to employee's travel episode. Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
- *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*

- *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account Suspension (EAS Online)*

(2) Refer all suspicious or fraudulent Travel Card activity to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

(3) Ensure all centrally-billed account (CBA) Travel Cards within the facility/station are reconciled monthly. Accomplish by CBA Reconciliation Portal (reference Appendix L).

c. Lost or Stolen Cards

(1) Require all cardholders to notify the bank first and then the Level 4 A/OPC immediately when a Travel Card is lost or stolen. The Level 4 A/OPC should verify this with the bank.

(2) Ensure lost/stolen card accounts are closed immediately to prevent fraud. Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account List (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

d. Unused Airline Tickets

(1) Ensure travelers who have cancelled non-refundable airline tickets (which the agency has purchased) use the airline credit for official Government travel within 12 months of the cancelled reservation.

(2) Review the unused ticket report monthly, discuss with the cardholder's Approving Official, and ensure these tickets are used by the cardholder for official travel within the allowable timeframe.

(3) Ensure appropriate credits are received for all cancelled refundable airline tickets.

(4) Monitor the following reports:

- *Unused Ticket Report (FedTraveler.com)*
- *Refundable Ticket Report (TMC)*

e. Travel Advances and ATM Withdrawals

(1) Ensure ATM withdrawals and travel advances by all cardholders are appropriate and occur only within 5 calendar days of each travel episode.

- (2) Ensure ATM limits are set appropriately so employees are within account limits and not misusing this privilege, resulting in account delinquencies.
- (3) Educate account holders on proper use/restrictions of ATM withdrawals.
- (4) Restrict/reduce the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent more than twice per year.
- (5) Suspend the ATM privileges of any account holder who is delinquent more than 60 days. Accomplish by reducing the account ATM limit to \$1.
- (6) Accomplish by monitoring the following reports:
 - *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
 - *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*

f. Travel Voucher Claims

- (1) Educate account holders and approving officials on travel voucher timeline submissions to reduce delinquencies.
- (2) Ensure management controls and practices are in place to maintain compliance with agency's split disbursement requirements. This is required in an effort to reduce delinquencies.
- (3) Ensure agency policy is being followed and corrective action taken against cardholder delinquencies. New HR policies concerning disciplinary actions for travel charge card offenses required at the VACO level may be considered for field stations/facilities. Refer to section 020407 Supervisor Responsibilities.
- (4) Report violations directly to the cardholder's supervisor.

g. Unauthorized Use and Misuse of Charge Card Accounts

- (1) Monitor Travel Card account activity of all respective cardholders to ensure account holders are not misusing their card (personal use).
- (2) Take appropriate action to prevent unauthorized use and misuse including:
 - Ensuring accounts are being used only for authorized travel expenditures while employees are on official Government travel.
 - Reducing account limits when employees are not on official Government travel (travelling infrequently).

(3) Monitor the following reports:

- *Transaction Detail Report (EAS Online)*
- *Declined Transaction Authorizations Report (EAS Online)*
- *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
- *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
- *Cash Advance Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account Suspension (EAS Online)*

(4) Ensure agency policy is being followed and corrective action taken against cardholder unauthorized use and/or misuse. New HR policies concerning disciplinary actions for travel charge card offenses required at the VACO level may be considered for field stations/facilities (reference Paragraph 020407, Supervisor Responsibilities).

(5) Report unauthorized use violations directly to the cardholder's supervisor.

(6) Report fraud, waste, and abuse to VA OIG.

h. Delinquent Charge Card Accounts and Salary Offsets

(1) Make every effort to reduce delinquencies among the IBA travel charge card accounts within the facility/station.

(a) Notify (e-mail) cardholders who are 30 days or more delinquent that full payment is due to avoid account suspension.

(b) Notify respective Chief Financial Officer monthly of all Travel Card accounts 60 days delinquent and at risk for salary offset (initiates at 90 days). (See Appendix C – Salary Offset Procedures)

(c) Initiate salary offset procedures against any cardholder whose account is more than 90 days delinquent. Notify respective Chief Financial Officer of such action. If the Level 4 A/OPC has not initiated salary offset proceedings on any employee listed on the monthly Charge Off Report, the Level 2 or Level 3 A/OPC must do so immediately.


(d) Notify Chief Financial Officer monthly of all pending charge- offs. Once an account becomes 180 days delinquent, pending charge- off balances will be deducted from the station's quarterly refunds.

(2) Monitor the following reports:

- *Past Due Report (EAS Online)*
- *Charge Off Report (EAS Online)*
- *Account Suspension (EAS Online)*

(3) Ensure agency policy is being followed and and corrective action taken against cardholder delinquencies. This shall include new HR policies concerning disciplinary actions for travel charge card offenses (reference Paragraph 020407, Supervisor Responsibilities).

APPENDIX G: STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING (VA FORM 0933)

 Department of Veterans Affairs	
STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CHARGE CARD PROGRAM	
<p>I understand the Government Travel Charge Card Program is designed to improve the management and control of Government travel and thereby promote the efficiency of the Federal Service. I also understand I am authorized to use the Travel Card only for those necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by me for official travel. I will abide by these instructions issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The above limitation on Travel Card use also applies to automatic teller machine (ATM) withdrawals. The amount of cash withdrawals may not exceed the allowable per diem amounts. I will, however, charge expenses to the account wherever feasible rather than use cash withdrawals. I understand the issuance of this Travel Card to me is an extension of the employee-employer relationship, and I am being specifically directed to:</p> <p>(Card applicants must initial all the following provisions.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Abide by all rules and regulations with respect to the Travel Card Program.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use the Travel Card only for official travel.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not use my Travel Card to make ATM withdrawals when I am not on official government travel (or 5 days before my travel episode).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pay all charges upon receipt of the monthly billing statement from the Travel Card Contractor Bank.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Notify the A/OPC of any problems with respect to my use of the Travel Card.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> File a dispute with the bank in a timely manner (within 90 days of charge per contract) for unauthorized charges.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Notify the Card Contractor (bank) and my A/OPC if my Travel Card is lost or stolen</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Notify the Card Contractor (bank) if my address changes.</p> <p>I also understand failure on my part to abide by these rules or other misuse of the Travel Card may result in disciplinary and or administrative action being taken against me. I also acknowledge the right of the Travel Card Contractor Bank and/or A/OPC to revoke or suspend my Travel Card privileges if I fail to abide by the terms of this agreement or the agreement I have signed with the Travel Card Contractor Bank.</p> <p><i>Note. The Travel Card application cannot be processed without this form on file.</i></p>	
APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE	DATE
APPLICANT'S PRINTED NAME	APPLICANT'S TITLE
SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
SUPERVISOR'S PRINTED NAME	SUPERVISOR'S TITLE
A/OPC'S SIGNATURE	DATE
A/OPC'S PRINTED NAME	A/OPC'S TITLE

APPENDIX H: INDIVIDUALLY BILLED ACCOUNTS (NEW/TRANSFER/CLOSURE)

A. NEW ACCOUNTS.

1. Naming Conventions. All new IBAs issued after the publication date of this policy must contain the employee's official name as recorded in the agency's payroll system. No nicknames or abbreviations will be allowed. All new CBAs issued after the publication date of this policy must be identified with the station number (e.g., Station 999), and not an employee name.

a. **Standard Cards (IBA).** Issued to individuals with a favorable credit score of 660 or higher per OMB A123, Appendix B. The standard credit limit on these cards is \$5,000. Should a cardholder misuse or abuse the Travel Card, an A/OPC may, in conjunction with the cardholder's supervisor, lower the account limit to \$1 or close the account.

b. **Restricted Cards (IBA).** Issued to individuals under the following categories: (1) individuals with no credit score or a credit score of less than 660; and (2) individuals who do not authorize the bank to obtain credit information. Restricted Cards have the same appearance as Standard Cards. However, the default credit limit on a Restricted Card is \$1. Prior to approved official travel and at the request of the cardholder's supervisor, the A/OPC will increase the card limit based on travel requirements. A/OPCs will reduce the limit back to \$1 within five business days of completion of travel.

2. Requirement for Credit Worthiness. Section 846 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (Public Law 110-161, Title VII, Section 743) per OMB A123, Appendix B, mandates each agency evaluate the creditworthiness of all new Travel Card applicants before issuing a Travel Card to an individual (see *Appendix N, Credit Worthiness Procedures and FAQs*).

3. Travel Card Applications. As part of the Travel Card application process, cardholders must submit the following to the A/OPC:

- Travel Card training certificate;
- Signed Statement of Understanding (SOU) (VA Form 0933) (Appendix G);
- Travel card application with credit worthiness authorization;
- Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment form (VA Form 0868) (if credit worthiness authorization is denied on travel card application).

A/OPCs must have all of these documents prior to submitting the Travel Card application to the bank. A/OPCs will maintain copies of the training certificate and signed SOU after the VA Travel Card has been issued. They are not to be forwarded to the bank. The Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment form and bank travel card application will be destroyed once the Travel Card has been issued to the cardholder.

Application forms are available on the bank's website or from the A/OPC. An application must be completely filled out in order for the bank to process. The A/OPC must complete the application with the appropriate hierarchy levels and sign the application prior to submission to the bank. As of the date of the publication of this policy, all new Travel Card applicants will be required to complete and sign a Statement of Understanding (SOU) (See Appendix G). No Travel Cards will be issued without both the application and SOU. A/OPCs should emphasize to cardholders that the terms of the application include an agreement to pay the account in full upon receipt of a statement and not misuse their Travel Card.

4. Processing Travel Card Applications. Travel Card applications are required to be faxed to the bank since signature of the applicant is a requirement. Requests for travel charge cards are not allowed to be submitted via the bank's EAS. Upon receipt of a properly completed application, the bank will issue the Travel Card and Cardholder agreement to the cardholder's stated address, the temporary duty location, or other address as directed by the A/OPC. The bank will send PIN numbers associated with the ATM option separately from the Travel Card after receipt of the completed application.

5. Disaster/Emergency Medical Personnel Service (DEMPS) Travel Card Accounts. DEMPS is designed to provide a system where active VHA personnel can register, in advance, for deployment in support of internal emergencies affecting the Department or external support as might be requested by other Federal Agencies.

A/OPCs should assist the volunteer with acquiring their Government Travel Card if they do not have one (EVERY Volunteer must have a Government Travel Card or they CANNOT deploy on a DEMPS mission).

In order to ensure Travel Card accounts used in disaster/emergency response situations remain open (even when not used in any 12-month period), the account must be properly identified in the bank's EAS. The account Organization Name field must contain the exact wording "Disaster/Emergency". This designation must be made on each new account application at time of processing. Existing accounts must have this designation added to the account by the A/OPC and all travel charge cards for DEMPS volunteers must be lowered to \$1 (one dollar) unless they are in use.

B. LOST/STOLEN CARDS.

An employee is not responsible for any charges incurred against a lost or stolen card provided the employee promptly reports the loss to the bank under the terms of the card member agreement. Employees may call the bank 24 hours a day for this purpose (phone number is located on the back of the travel charge card). The cardholder will also contact their A/OPC (Level 4); the A/OPC should verify this with the bank.

C. TRANSFER OF ACCOUNTS.

1. **Station to Station within Same Organization.** When a cardholder transfers from one station to another within the same VA Administration or staff office, the A/OPC at the losing station will reduce the cardholder's credit limit to \$1 and contact the gaining station's A/OPC to inform them of the incoming employee. The gaining station A/OPC will then contact the bank to have the cardholder moved under the gaining station hierarchy. If the cardholder account has not been transferred to the new station 30 days after the employee's departure, the losing station A/OPC will make two additional attempts to request such transfer to the gaining station A/OPC (one by email, a second by phone). If no transfer occurs, the losing station A/OPC will close the account.

2. **Station to Station Across Organizations.** When a cardholder transfers across different VA Administrations or staff offices, the A/OPC at the losing station will reduce the cardholder's credit limit to \$1 and contact the gaining A/OPC. The gaining A/OPC will contact their Level 1 A/OPC to assist in completion of the transfer. If the cardholder account has not been transferred to the new station 30 days after employee's departure, the losing station A/OPC will make two additional attempts to request such transfer to the gaining station A/OPC (one by email, a second by phone). If no transfer occurs, the losing station A/OPC will close the account.

D. CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS.

Termination, Retirement, Transfer to Another Federal Agency. Cardholders will turn in their travel charge card to their A/OPC for cancellation when leaving VA employment, upon retirement, resignation/termination or transfer to another Federal agency. The A/OPC will shred the Travel Card in the employee's presence. The A/OPC will also contact the bank by phone or online and close the account. If there is an outstanding balance, the A/OPC will not close the account, but will lower the credit limit of the cardholder to \$1 and will notify cardholder's supervisor. A/OPCs should close these accounts as far in advance as possible and make every effort to ensure existing balances are paid prior to departure in order to avoid unpaid balances which could eventually be taken from station refunds via bank charge-off.

APPENDIX I: CBA TRAVEL CARD APPLICATION PROCESS

Prior to applying for a new CBA, stations must discuss the need for this account with their Level 2 A/OPC (Travel Card Manager). ETS does not have the capability for more than one CBA per station. There is no need to obtain a second CBA Travel Card for employee travel. All new CBAs issued after the publication date of this policy must not contain an employee name as the cardholder, but be identified instead with the station number (e.g., Station 999). To obtain a new CBA for Beneficiary Travel (Veterans/patients), or initial employee CBA Travel Card, the following must be performed:

A. **The Level 4 A/OPC** completes the following forms and provides them to the Level 2 A/OPC:

- Cardholder Setup - Travel CBA.
- Point of Contact Maintenance Form-Travel to establish A/OPC(s) for the CBA Travel Card (Travel Card Contractor Form).
- Statement of Understanding for CBA Travel Card (VA Form) for each A/OPC who will be responsible for the CBA Travel Card (primary and alternate).

B. **The Level 2 A/OPC:**

- Reviews the forms for accuracy and completeness.
- Collects any training certificates of all Level 4 A/OPCs who will be responsible for the new CBA Travel Card (if not already on file).
- Ensures that the station/facility has established and trained a User and Certifier for the CBA Travel Card Reconciliation Tool.
- Once all the above has been completed, the Level 2 A/OPC emails the completed forms to the Level 1 A/OPC Travel Card Manager with justification to establish the account.

C. **The Level 1 A/OPC:**

- Approves/disapproves all forms.
- Retains Statement of Understanding (SOU) for CBA Cardholder.
- Forwards all approved completed forms to the bank for account establishment.
- Adds any new A/OPCs to the Travel Card Contacts email group.

D. Upon notice from the bank that the new CBA Travel Card has been established, **the Level 4 A/OPC:**

- Provides the account information to include CVV number to the FSC VA-Wide TDY Travel Support (for employee CBA Travel Cards only). This establishes the account in VA's ETS.
- Contacts the Level 2 A/OPC and requests online access to the CBA Travel Card within the Bank's website.
- Activates the CBA Travel Card.

APPENDIX J: STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING – CBA TRAVEL CARD

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING
FOR THE GOVERNMENT CENTRALLY BILLED ACCOUNT (CBA)
TRAVEL CHARGE CARD PROGRAM**

I understand that the Government Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Travel Charge Card Program is designed to improve the management and control of Government travel and thereby promote the efficiency of the Federal Service. I also understand that I am authorized to use the CBA Travel Card only for those necessary and reasonable expenses authorized by my station for official travel. I will abide by these instructions issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I understand that the issuance of this Travel Card to me is an extension of the employee-employer relationship and that I am being specifically directed to:

(Card applicants must initial all the following provisions.)

_____ - Abide by all rules and regulations with respect to the CBA Travel Card.

_____ - Use the CBA Travel Card only for official travel.

_____ - Reconcile on a monthly basis all charges on the billing statement from the Travel Card Contractor.

_____ - Notify the Level 2 A/OPC of any problems with respect to my station's use of the CBA Travel Card.

_____ - Notify the Travel Card Contractor and my Level 2 A/OPC if my station's CBA Travel Card is lost or stolen.

_____ - Notify the Level 2 A/OPC when my responsibilities cease for the CBA Travel Card.

I also understand that failure on my part to abide by these rules or other misuse of the CBA Travel Card may result in disciplinary and or administrative action being taken against me. I also acknowledge the right of the Travel Card Contractor and/or Level 2 A/OPC to revoke or suspend my station's CBA Travel Card privileges if I fail to abide by the terms of this agreement or the agreement I have signed with the Travel Card Contractor.

Note. *The Government CBA Travel Card application cannot be processed without this form on file.*

Level 4 A/OPC Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Level 4 A/OPC Printed Name

Level 2 A/OPC Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Level 2 A/OPC Printed Name

Level 1 A/OPC Signature

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Level 1 A/OPC Printed Name

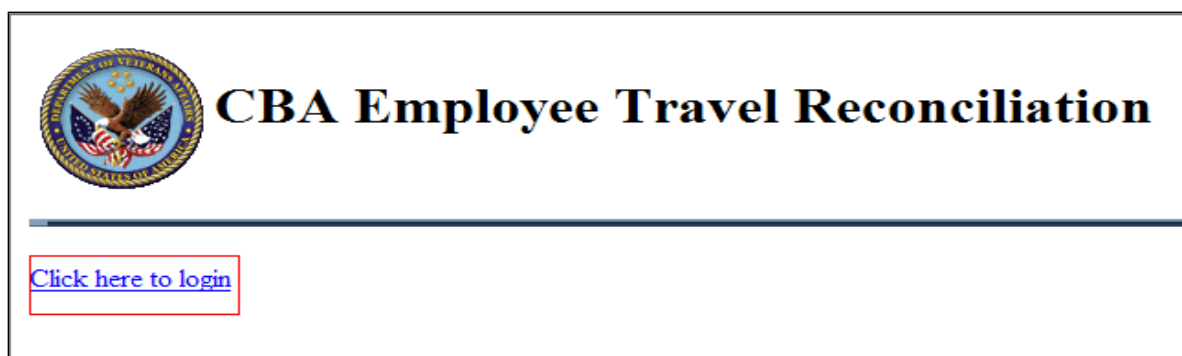
APPENDIX K: CBA RECONCILIATION TOOL REGISTRATION PROCESS

A. CBA Employee Travel Reconciliation Registration Process

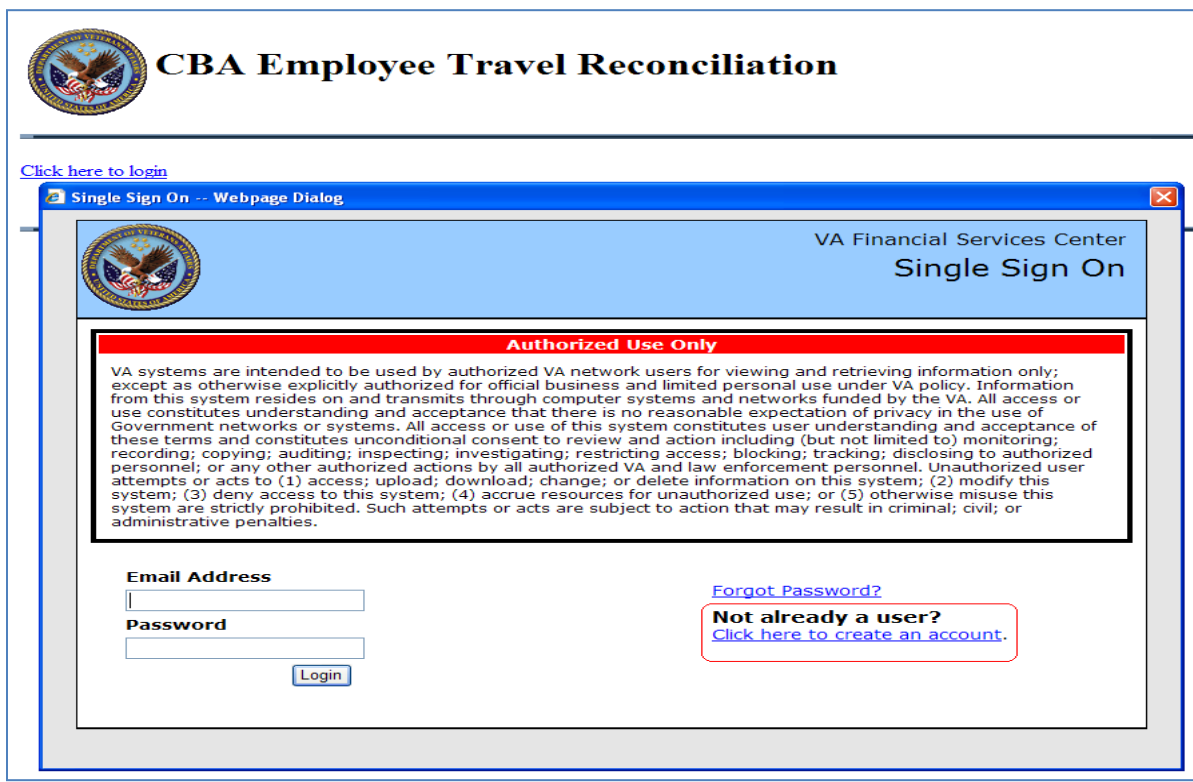
Click the following link to register as a user for the CBA Employee Travel Reconciliation Web Portal: <https://vaww.cbareconciliation.fsc.va.gov>

B. Creating a User Account

1. Click "[Click here to Login](#)"



2. Click "[Click here to create an account](#)"



3. Enter all required information on the Single Sign On page and click on the “**Register**” button at the bottom of the page

Password Requirements:

- 8 Characters
- 1 Capital Letter
- 1 Special Character examples: \$ * @
- 1 Number

Note: The status Bar will turn green when the password requirements are met.

Single Sign On
User Account Registration

*All fields marked with * are required*


* First Name:

* Last Name:

* Email:

* Phone:

Phone Ext:

* Password: 

* Confirm Password:

* Challenge Phrase:

* Challenge Response:

Address 1:

Address 2:

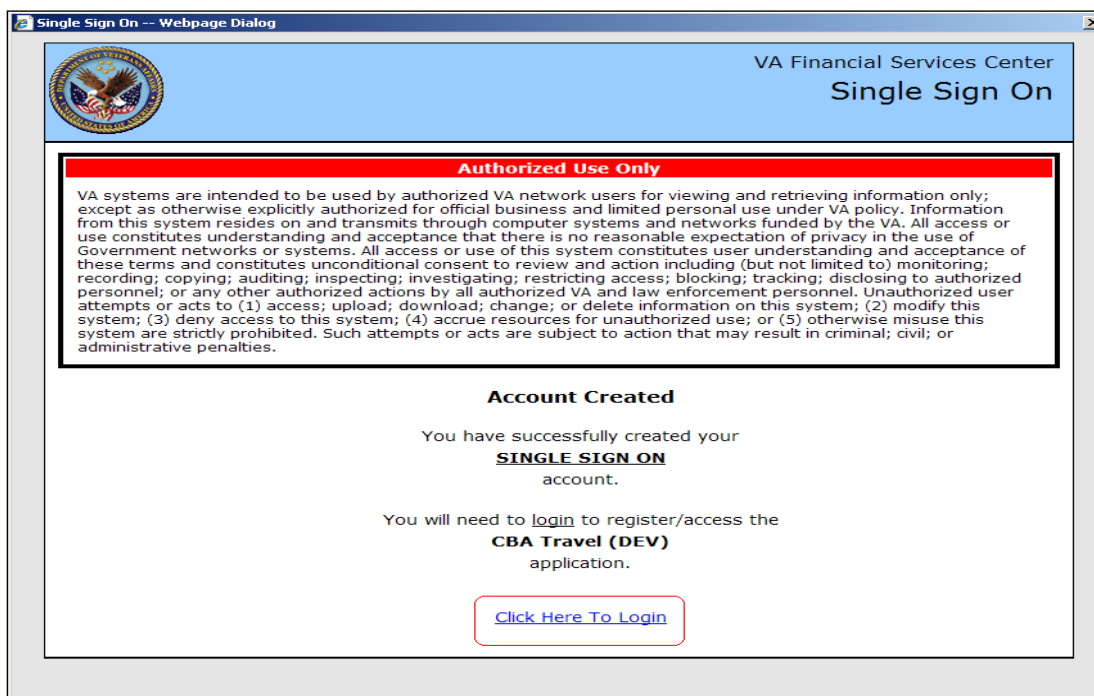
City:

State:

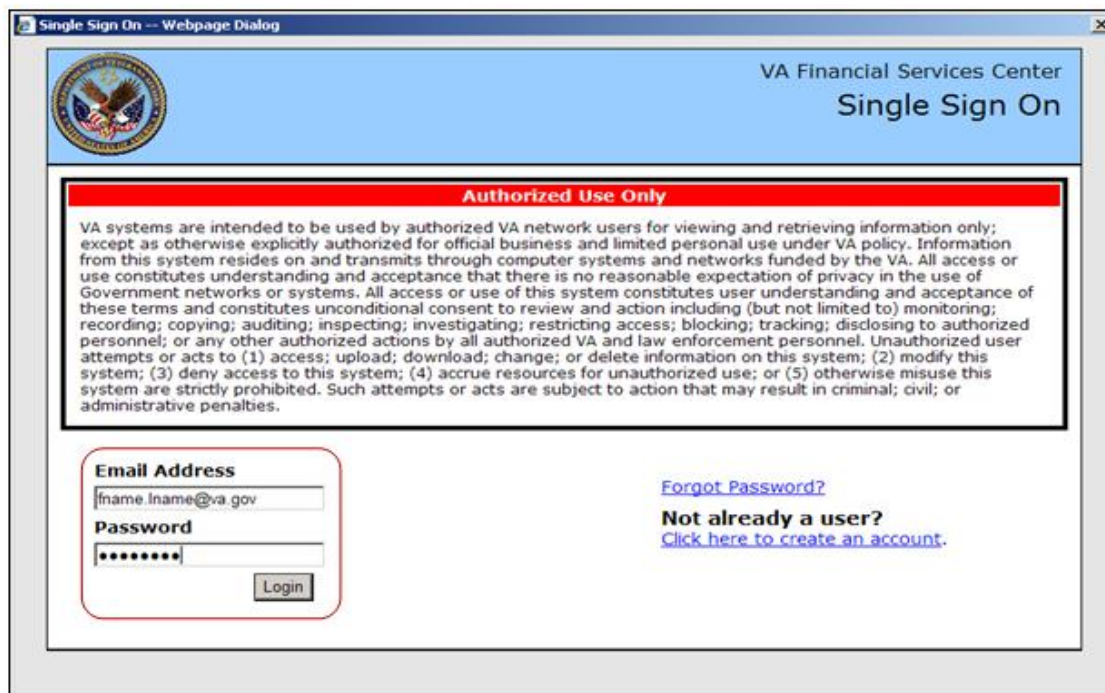
Zip Code:

Note: You must login for the first time to complete the registration process


4. Click [“Click here to Login”](#)



5. Enter your Email Address and Password and click **“Login”**



Note: Once you have logged in for the first time, you will receive the following message:



CBA Employee Travel Reconciliation

You have successfully registered for the CBA Reconciliation web portal.
An administrator will need to configure your account before you have access to the web portal.
An email will be sent to you when you are configured.

6. After you have completed your registration, your User Account will be activated by the FSC Administrators. An e-mail notification will be sent confirming your account has been activated.

APPENDIX L: FSC PROCEDURES FOR CBA RECONCILIATION TOOL

The Web portal design was based on the 224 Reconciliation Portal. Once the matching process is complete, unmatched transactions are placed in the portal for Station's assigned personnel to reconcile. Unmatched transactions are placed in the portal on the 10th business day of the month for the previous month's bank transactions. All bank transactions in the portal must be certified prior to the next month's data becoming available. Performance measures have been reported monthly by the Financial Services Center beginning in fiscal year 2011.

Reconciliation Web Portal Flow:

- Reconciliation process starts once the data for the previous calendar month is available, normally the 10th business day of the month.
- User reviews / researches each unmatched transaction and selects the appropriate status code. Below are the various status codes with the results:
 - **Timing/Research:** Additional time or research is needed to reconcile a transaction
Result: Remains in portal until matched
 - **Refund:** Refund was requested
Result: Remains in portal until matched
 - **Outside The System:** Reservations were made outside FedTraveler and the TMC
Result: Matched – Requires Justification
 - **Submit for Match:** Alerts the FSC that the Station has provided matching data for correction
Result: Administrator completes the matching process
 - **Disputed:** Station has disputed the charge with U.S. Bank
Result: Remains in portal until matched
 - **Relocation:** Transaction is for PCS Travel
Result: Matched – Requires Justification
 - **Matched in CheckFree:** Matched by the Administrator
Result: Matched - No further action required
- Completed Statement is submitted by User for certification.

- Certifier reviews transactions for accuracy.
- If statement is accurate, statement is certified and completed.
- If statement is inaccurate or incomplete, the statement is returned to user.
- User makes appropriate changes and resubmits the statement for certification.
- Certifier reviews additional changes for accuracy. Statement is certified and completed.

APPENDIX M: USE OF CBA TRAVEL CARD FOR LODGING

The current VA ETS System is configured to split CBA Travel Card expenses associated with common carrier and ETS and TMC fees. When the station authorizes the use of the CBA Travel Card to pay for a traveler's lodging expenses, the process is a manual procedure outside of FedTraveler.

The following procedures need to be followed when the station authorizes the use of the CBA Travel Card for lodging:

1. The CBA Travel Cardholder must contact the lodging facility directly and request a third party billing statement. The lodging facility will send authorization for the lodging and taxes to be charged directly to the CBA Travel Card. The third party billing information will show the traveler's name, check-in date, the cardholder name, card billing address and phone number, card number and type, card issuing bank and bank number as well as the categories of charges authorized (i.e. "Room and Tax", "Food and Beverage", "Retail", or "Recreation"). The CBA cardholder must limit the charges to only those authorized for the travel. In most circumstances, this will only be room and tax. The CBA cardholder will sign and date the third party billing form and return it to the hotel. As tax exemption status is associated with the CBA Travel Card, taxes should not be paid.
2. The amount of the lodging will not be itemized separately on the traveler's travel authorization as FedTraveler cannot currently obligate the lodging on a CBA correctly in VA's Financial Management System (FMS). Comments must be annotated in the traveler's TA that lodging has been paid using the CBA Travel Card and the amount of the lodging.
3. Once the traveler completes the official travel, the final bill will be provided to the traveler upon check out. The traveler cannot charge any expenses to the hotel room except those authorized on the third party billing. The traveler may wish to establish a personal expense report using personal funds with the hotel upon arrival. Any personal charges would then be a separate bill upon check out. The final bill and the third party billing authorization must be included as receipts when the traveler files the expense report.
4. The CBA payment associated with the lodging amount will cause a travel reject in FMS as the funding has not been obligated automatically when the travel authorization interfaces from FedTraveler into FMS. The CBA cardholder must coordinate with accounting staff to clear the travel reject in FMS. The travel authorization must be provided as well as the third party billing and hotel receipt for supporting documentation.

5. The CBA lodging amount cannot be obligated on the travel authorization. If the amount is annotated under the lodging amount, the obligation will be reflected under the employee's travel expenses rather than the CBA travel expenses. This has the potential to cause duplicate payments for the lodging.

APPENDIX N: CREDIT WORTHINESS PROCEDURES AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A. Government IBA Travel Charge Card Credit Worthiness.

1. BACKGROUND. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123, Appendix B, established guidance for executive branch agencies on the requirements for obtaining a Government Travel Charge Card (Travel Card). The circular implements Section 743, Title VII, Division D of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-161), which mandates agencies must assess the credit worthiness of all new travel charge card applicants prior to issuing a card. The circular is available for review at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html.

2. PROCEDURES

a. Effective December 1, 2009, the credit worthiness of new Travel Card applicants must be evaluated prior to issuance of a card. The credit worthiness score, also known as the Fair Isaac Corporation (FICO) score or credit score, must be at least 660 or higher in order to receive a standard unrestricted Travel Card. OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, states agencies may issue a card to applicants who have no credit score or a FICO score of less than 660; however, more stringent restrictions will apply. The FICO rating is a risk-predictive score based on five criteria, including payment history, amount of outstanding credit debt, length of credit history, amount of new credit, and types of credit used by the applicant. The bank will only obtain the FICO score on the applicant. The bank will not receive any information on the composition of the score, nor will it store this information. The bank will not provide an employee's FICO score information to VA or any other institution. The FICO score information will only be used to determine whether the applicant will receive either a restricted or an unrestricted card.

b. When issued, VA's restricted Travel Card will have a default credit limit of \$1 by bank.

c. Current cardholders are not subject to a credit worthiness evaluation and their current credit limits are unaffected unless they do not maintain their Travel Card account in good standing.

d. New applicants must complete the bank's travel charge card application prior to receiving a Travel Card and must agree to undergo a credit worthiness evaluation. New applicants are considered:

(1) A previous cardholder who left the federal Government or military service and returned, transferred from another agency, or reapplied for a Travel Card.

(2) As of December 1, 2009, an employee who previously lost their card as a result of a delinquency and is now reapplying for a new Travel Card.

(3) A current VA employee who does not have a Travel Card.

e. If an applicant refuses to undergo a credit worthiness evaluation by the bank, they must complete an Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment in Section II of [VA Form 0868 \(Figure 5\)](#) and submit this form to their Chief Financial/Fiscal Officer (CFO) or designee. This form is available on the following websites: <https://vaww1.va.gov/ccotps/> and <http://vaww.va.gov/vaforms/>.

f. If a credit worthiness evaluation or an alternate credit worthiness assessment is NOT completed, the employee will be denied a Travel Card. Applicants denied a Travel Card may be re-evaluated at a time deemed appropriate by the agency.

g. The VA facility's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or designee has the authority to approve or deny the new applicant issuance of a Travel Card based upon the results of Section II of VA Form 0868 or other verifiable derogatory information.

h. Credit worthiness restrictions can be temporarily lifted at the discretion of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or his designee in order to ensure the safety of American citizens and/or property.

B. Credit Worthiness Implementation Questions and Answers.

1. Q: How did VA and the bank determine the procedures for the credit worthiness check?

A: The credit worthiness determination is outlined in OBM Circular 123-A, Appendix B. VA and the bank are required to follow the guidelines established by the OMB Circular. VA and the bank did not determine the eligibility requirements.

2. Q: Who is subject to credit worthiness evaluation?

A: All new Travel Card applicants must be evaluated for credit worthiness prior to issuance of a Travel Card. A current cardholder who leaves the federal Government or military service and then returns, will be considered a new applicant for the purposes of credit worthiness requirements. A current cardholder who transfers to VA from another federal agency will be considered a new applicant for purposes of credit worthiness requirements. A current Travel Card holder changing offices within VA will not be considered a new applicant.

3. Q: How will credit worthiness be assessed?

A: The bank's travel charge card application form and the VA Form 0868 "Credit Worthiness Evaluation," have been revised to include a section for the applicant to provide consent to allow the bank to obtain a credit score. With the consent of the employee, the bank will obtain a credit score for new applicants on behalf of VA.

4. Q: What is a FICO score?

A: FICO stands for Fair Isaac Corporation. The FICO rating is a risk-predictive score based on five criteria, including payment history, amount of outstanding credit debt, length of credit history, amount of new credit, and types of credit used by the applicant. FICO credit scores are calculated by using scoring models and mathematical tables assigning points for different pieces of information which best predict future credit performance.

5. Q: Is there a passing score?

A: The FICO score indicates the credit risk level associated with a specific applicant. First time applicants will receive an unrestricted Travel Card with standard spending limits if the applicant has a credit score of 660 or higher. Credit scoring information is available at www.myfico.com.

6. Q: What if my credit score is less than 660?

A: For the first-time Travel Card applicant with no credit score or a credit score of less than 660, the applicant will be issued a restricted card with lower credit and cash withdrawal limits than the standard Travel Card.

7. Q: What is the process if obtaining a credit score is not possible?

A: If obtaining a credit score is not possible (e.g., the applicant refuses to provide consent or does not have a credit history), the OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B allows a card with more stringent restrictions to be issued after an alternative credit worthiness assessment is conducted.

8. Q: In keeping with the Privacy Act, what are the record keeping requirements for credit scores?

A: VA will not receive your credit score. With your consent, the bank will request your credit score, and from pre-determined criteria as described above, issue the appropriate card. Credit scores will not be kept by the VA or the bank.

9. Q: I am concerned about the privacy of my personally identifiable information (PII). What will VA and the bank do with my VA Form 0868 and the travel charge card application?

A: VA requires the A/OPC to destroy the applicant's VA Form 0868 and travel card application after the Travel Card is received by the applicant. The bank will keep a copy of the travel charge card application in accordance with requirements specified in the Privacy Act.

10. Q: I received a restricted card. How can I get a copy of the credit report that triggered this?

A: If you are issued a restricted card, you may request a copy of your credit report by contacting the appropriate credit bureaus.

11. Q: Who are the credit bureaus? What are their addresses?

A: The three major credit bureaus are:

- Trans Union, P.O. Box 390, Springfield, PA 19064
Phone number 1-800-916-8800
- Equifax, P.O. Box 105873, Atlanta, GA 30348
Phone number 1-800-685-111 1
- Experian, 701 Experian Parkway, P.O. Box 949, Allen, TX 75013-0949
Phone number 1-888-397-3742

12. Q: Where will the bank get the credit scores?

A: The bank will use one or all credit reporting agencies listed above to obtain FICO scores. A credit worthiness evaluation (credit check) must be conducted for all applicants before the applicant is issued a new card.

13. Q: Do the bank's Customer Service or VA A/OPC's have access to credit scores?

A: No. The bank's customer service and VA A/OPC's do not have access to credit score information.

14. Q: When are re-evaluations of credit worthiness required?

A: A credit worthiness re-evaluation must be conducted for restricted cardholders before the cardholder is issued an unrestricted card. The re-evaluation of credit

worthiness may be conducted by obtaining a new credit score. A re-evaluation of credit worthiness can also be conducted at the agency's discretion.

15. Q: How often may a credit check be obtained?

A: A cardholder may request a new credit check after 60 days has elapsed since their last credit check.

16. Q: Are there any circumstances in which credit worthiness restrictions may be temporarily lifted?

A: Yes. The credit worthiness restrictions may be temporarily lifted at the discretion of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or his designee, in order to ensure the safety of American citizens and/or property (e.g., during times of national emergency, contingency, peacekeeping, or humanitarian missions.)

17. Q: Will my Travel Card spending limit affect my credit?

A: Your travel card spending limit will not be included in your credit report unless you become 180 days delinquent. At that time, your delinquency will be reported as a bad debt to the credit bureaus.

18. Q: If I receive a restricted card, will it negatively affect my personal credit report?

A: The type of card the applicant receives will not be reported to the credit bureaus and will not negatively affect the applicant's personal credit report. However, delinquencies and charge-offs will negatively affect your personal credit report and credit score.

19. Q: Will this credit inquiry appear on my credit report?

A: The credit worthiness evaluation (credit check) performed by the bank will NOT appear on the applicant's credit report and will not affect the applicant's credit rating.

20. Q: What determines a restricted card from an unrestricted card?

A: The applicant's FICO score determines if an account is established as either restricted or unrestricted. For individuals with no FICO credit scores or a credit score of less than 660, the bank may issue a card; however, more stringent restrictions will apply. When on official travel, VA's restricted Travel Card will:

- Have a credit limit of \$1 when issued by Bank;
- Have a cash withdrawal limit of \$200 per week.

21. Q: Will the cardholder be told of his/her credit score?

A: No. The cardholder's FICO score will not be provided. A/OPCs do not have access to this information. If the cardholder requests more information, the A/OPC will tell the cardholder that they must contact the credit bureaus for information on their credit history. The Travel Cardholder has the right to dispute any incorrect information contained in the report.

22. Q: How will the applicant be notified that he/she is receiving a restricted Travel Card?

A: The applicant can call the A/OPC or the toll free number on the back of the card to determine if the card is either restricted or non-restricted. The bank will provide a report to A/OPCs detailing the accounts that have a restricted designation within a few days of receiving the account set-up form.

23. Q: Are any applicants denied a Travel Card?

A: Yes. Employees that refuse to undergo a credit worthiness evaluation will be denied a Travel Card. The VA facility's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or designee has the authority to either approve or deny an applicant the issuance of a Travel Card based upon the answers to Section II of VA Form 0868 or other verifiable derogatory information.

24. Q: What if the cardholder finds incorrect information on their report and has it corrected? Can the cardholder then receive an unrestricted card? How will the bank handle this situation?

A: The Travel Cardholder should work with their A/OPC and CFO/designee. The employee must provide information to the A/OPC and CFO/designee who will forward it to the bank so that the restricted designation can be reviewed and/or removed.

25. Q: What is the process if the employee refuses to participate and does not want to have a standard credit check performed?

A: If the employee refuses a credit check and still wants to receive a Travel Card, the employee must complete Section II of VA Form 0868, also known as the Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment. The VA facility's CFO or designee has the authority to issue or deny a Travel Card based upon the applicant's answers to the questions in Section II of VA Form 0868 or other verifiable derogatory information. The VA Form 0868 used to perform the Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment must be current, e.g., must not be older than one year.

26. Q: How will the VA fund my official travel under a restricted Travel Card?

A: Travelers using restricted Travel Cards will be reimbursed for their travel expenses the same as unrestricted card holders. However, the default credit limit on a Restricted Card is \$1. Prior to approved official travel and at the request of the Cardholder's supervisor, the A/OPC will increase the card limit based on travel requirements. A/OPCs will reduce the limit back to \$1 within five business days upon completion of travel.

27. Q: What alternative arrangements are available for employees that are concerned that their TDY expenses may exceed the credit limit on their restricted Travel Card?

A: When an agency employee has a restricted Travel Card and is concerned that they might exceed the credit limit for official travel, they must contact their A/OPC in order to exercise the options available. The airfare will be billed to the station/facility centrally billed Travel Card account (CBA). Additionally, A/OPC's have the option to pay the lodging on the CBA. On a case-by-case basis, the A/OPC may increase the account credit limits based on the employee's mission if there is no other alternative. Once the mission has been completed, the card limit must be lowered to the \$1 restricted limit level.

Figure 5 - VA Form 0868 This form is available on the following websites:
<http://vaww1.va.gov/ccotps/> and <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>.

Department of Veterans Affairs		CREDIT WORTHINESS EVALUATION		
<p>NOTE: Read Privacy Act Statement and Instructions on back before completing form. Applicants who decline to complete this form will not be eligible for a government travel card. All applicants must fill out Section I, items 1 through 10.</p>				
<p>SECTION I - AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO OBTAIN A CREDIT REPORT OR SCORE FOR CREDIT WORTHINESS ASSESSMENT</p>				
<p>1. AUTHORIZATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO RELEASE INFORMATION FROM THIS FORM TO ANY CONSUMER OR CREDIT REPORTING AGENCY IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A CREDIT REPORT OR SCORE AND TO OBTAIN MY CREDIT REPORTS AND SCORES FROM ANY CONSUMER OR CREDIT REPORTING AGENCY FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING MY ELIGIBILITY TO OBTAIN OR RETAIN A GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CHARGE CARD IS:</p> <p>GRANTED (Authorization is valid for 12 months from the date signed or upon the termination of my affiliation with the Federal Government, whichever is sooner.) (The Fair Credit Reporting Act, as amended (15 U.S.C. § 1681 and following) allows VA to obtain one or more of your credit reports or credit scores for purposes of issuing you a government travel card. Should VA decide not to issue you a government travel charge card based either in whole or in part on your credit report or credit score, you should know that the consumer or credit reporting agency that provided the report played no part in the decision.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> DENIED (Please complete Section II below)</p>				
2. EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE (Sign in ink)	3. EMPLOYEE'S FULL NAME (Type or print legibly)	4. DATE		
5. OTHER NAMES USED		6. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		
7. CURRENT WORK ADDRESS (Street, City, State, and ZIP Code)		9. CURRENT HOME ADDRESS (Street, City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8. WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code and extension)		10. HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)		
<p>SECTION II - ALTERNATE CREDIT WORTHINESS ASSESSMENT</p>				
FINANCIAL BACKGROUND			TRUE	FALSE
1. In the past seven (7) years, I have not, nor has a company over which I exercise control, filed for bankruptcy, been declared bankrupt, been subject to a tax lien, or had legal judgment rendered for a debt.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am not currently over 180 days delinquent on any loan or financial obligation. This includes loans or obligations funded or guaranteed by the Federal Government.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have not had a government charge card cancelled as a result of delinquency or misuse.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. In the past seven (7) years, I have not been subject to any disciplinary action, adverse action, stemming from the improper use of a government charge card. (Actions which were reversed through appeal do not apply.)			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have not been informed of any current investigations on my use of a government charge card.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I do not have debts to financial institutions or other third parties that are more than 120 days delinquent in accordance with the written agreements with those parties.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. In the past seven (7) years, I have not been subject to disciplinary action, or adverse action for failure to perform my fiduciary responsibilities. (Actions which were reversed through appeal do not apply.)			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. In the past seven (7) years I have not had my wages garnished or property repossessed for any reason.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE (Sign in ink)			10. DATE	
<p>SECTION III - TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CFO OR DESIGNEE</p>				CHECK ONLY ONE BOX
11. UNRESTRICTED CARD (Applicant has granted authority to obtain a credit report in Section I. The actual card issued will be based on the results of the credit score.)				<input type="checkbox"/>
12. RESTRICTED CARD (Applicant answered "True" to all questions in the Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment in Section II or is deemed an "acceptable" credit risk due to extenuating circumstances.)				<input type="checkbox"/>
13. RE-EVALUATION FOR ISSUANCE OF AN UNRESTRICTED CARD (Applicant was previously denied or issued a restricted travel card. A re-evaluation of credit worthiness must be conducted before issuing an unrestricted-card.)				<input type="checkbox"/>
14. TEMPORARILY LIFT CREDIT WORTHINESS RESTRICTIONS (In order to ensure the safety of American citizens and/or property during times of national emergency, contingency, peacekeeping, or humanitarian missions, VA Secretary or his/her designee may temporarily lift the creditworthiness restrictions for an individual cardholder on a case-by-case basis.)				<input type="checkbox"/>
15. DENIED (Applicant is deemed an "unacceptable" credit risk and denied a government travel charge card based on the Alternate Credit Worthiness Assessment in Section II, or other verifiable derogatory information.)				<input type="checkbox"/>
16. HIERARCHY 23600				
17. NAME AND MAILCODE OF ORGANIZATION				
<input type="checkbox"/> VHA <input type="checkbox"/> VBA <input type="checkbox"/> NCA <input type="checkbox"/> VACO <input type="checkbox"/> OIT <input type="checkbox"/> FSC				
18. CFO/DESIGNEE WORK ADDRESS (Name, Street, City, State, and ZIP Code)			19. WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER	
20. SIGNATURE OF CFO/DESIGNEE (Sign in ink)			21. DATE	

IV - PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Privacy Act Statement: The Department of Veterans Affairs is authorized to ask for the information requested on this form by 5 U.S.C. §§ 5705 and 5738, 38 U.S.C. § 501, Section 846 of Public Law 109-115 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-123, Appendix B. The information is collected as part of the Federal government's management of its charge card programs. The information collected will be used to determine whether you meet the Federally-established creditworthiness requirements for VA to issue you a government travel charge card. The information collected on this form is protected by the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. § 552a). VA may disclose the information you provide, including Social Security numbers, outside VA if the disclosure is authorized under the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a). VA may make a routine use disclosure of the information in the General Services Administration system of records entitled "Travel Charge Card Program" (GSA/GOVT-3), for the following purposes: (1) to a Federal, State, local, tribal, or foreign agency for civil or criminal law enforcement purposes; (2) to a Member of Congress or to a Congressional Staff Member in response to an inquiry made at your request; (3) to provide to the contractor necessary information for issuing credit cards; (4) pursuant to a request of a Federal agency in connection with hiring, retention, issuing a security clearance, reporting an employee investigation, clarifying a job, letting a contract, or issuing a license, grant, or other benefit when the information is relevant and necessary for a decision; (5) to provide information to an appeal, grievance, or formal complaints examiner, equal employment opportunity investigator, arbitrator, exclusive representative; or other official engaged in investigating, or settling a grievance, complaint, or appeal filed by an employee; (6) to officials of labor organizations when necessary to their duties of exclusive representation on personnel policies, practices, and matters affecting working conditions; (7) to a Federal agency for accumulating reporting data and monitoring the system; (8) listings, reports, and records of all common carrier transactions including refunds and adjustments to GSA by the contractor to conduct audits of carrier charges to the Federal government; (9) to appropriate agencies, entities, and persons in order to respond to a suspected or confirmed data breach; (10) to OPM, OMB, or GAO for program evaluation purposes; (11) to an expert, consultant, or contractor of GSA in the performance of a Federal duty; and (12) to NARA for records management purposes.

Failure to provide all of the requested information may result in VA being unable to process your request for a travel card, or VA not issuing you a government travel card. If you do not have a government-issued travel card, you will not be able to charge government travel to a government-issued charge card. If you do not have a government travel card and are required to travel, you must utilize your own funds, travel advances (if applicable) or the centrally billed account. Disclosure of your Social Security number (SSN) is voluntary. Executive Order 9397 provides the authority for VA to request your Social Security number in order to ensure that VA properly identifies you for purposes of your participation in these programs.