



POLICY STATEMENT

Policy Statement: 5201

Policy Area: Financial Management

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Approved:

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OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CREDIT CARD

I. COVERAGE

This Policy Statement applies to all Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) staff. This Policy does not apply to CSOSA contractors or to the Pretrial Services Agency.

II. BACKGROUND

Public Law 105-264, Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998, October 19, 1998, (5 U.S.C. 5701 note) requires all U.S. Government personnel to use the Government Travel Card (GTC) for costs incidental to official business travel unless exempted by Agency Director. The GTC is the most efficient method available for purchase and payment of business travel expenses. The Administrator of General Services implements statutory requirements and policies for travel by federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at government expense in the form of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). FTR, at Part 301-51, requires use of a government contractor-issued travel charge card for all official travel expenses, unless there is an exemption. FTR, at Part 301-52, outlines the employee and agency requirements for reimbursing expenses incurred while on authorized travel. FTR also requires GTC cardholders to reimburse the government travel card contractor in accordance with the cardholder agreement. Public Law 105-264 authorizes agencies, on behalf of the travel card contractor, to recover delinquent funds owed by the employee cardholder to the card contractor. Agencies may make deductions of up to 15 percent of an employee's disposable pay per pay period, or more with written consent of the employee, to recover delinquent funds owed to the travel card contractor as a result of undisputed amounts for which the employee has been reimbursed. Agency collection of delinquent funds must follow procedures outlined in 31 U.S.C. 3716(a).

III. POLICY

Government Travel Cards (GTC) are credit cards issued in an employee's name by a financial institution (travel card contractor) that is under contract with the General Services Administration (GSA). The travel card contractor, at the request and approval of CSOSA, issues GTCs to employees. CSOSA approves GTCs for employees who are expected to travel two or more times per year. Employees are responsible for all purchases made with the GTC. The GTC must be used for all official travel expenses that can be paid by credit card. This includes airfare, rail or bus tickets, lodging, meals, rental cars and other miscellaneous expenses; to the extent the card is accepted. Cash advances may be acquired from an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) with the travel card and the cash used for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE), incidental to approved travel.

The GTC must only be used for official travel related expenses. CSOSA may take disciplinary action if the GTC is used for purposes other than official travel or if an employee is delinquent in reimbursing the travel card contractor for valid charges made with the card. Disciplinary action may range from a reprimand to removal. CSOSA may deduct delinquent, undisputed amounts due the travel card contractor from an employee's disposable pay in accordance with Public Law 105-264.

IV. AUTHORITIES, SUPERSEDURES, REFERENCES, AND ATTACHMENTS

A. Authorities.

Public Law 105-264, Sec.2. 5 U.S.C. 5701 note, Requiring Use of the Travel Charge Card and Creditworthiness of Individuals To Be Issued Government Charge Cards

41 C.F.R. Part 301-10, Transportation Expenses (Federal Travel Regulations)

41 C.F.R. Part 301-2, General Rules (Federal Travel Regulations)

41 C.F.R. Part 301-51, Paying Travel Expenses (Federal Travel Regulations)

41 C.F.R. Part 301-52, Claiming Reimbursement (Federal Travel Regulations)

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-123 (Management's Responsibility for Internal Control) Appendix B (Improving the Management of Government Charge Card Programs), dated February 2006

31 U.S.C., Section 3716(a) (Administrative Offset)

B. Supersedures.

Administrative Policy Travel 99-01 "Employee Travel Card"

C. Procedural References.

None.

D. Attachments.

Appendix A. General Procedures

APPENDIX A GENERAL PROCEDURES

A. TRAVEL CARD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Government Travel Card (GTC) Program was created by the General Services Administration (GSA) as a travel and transportation payment and expense control system. It includes employee travel charge cards and automated teller machine (ATM) services used by federal government employees traveling on official business. The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) has a written task order with a travel card contractor to provide these services.

1. Individual Travel Cards

An individual travel card may be requested by CSOSA for approved employees who expect to travel at least two times per year. An employee is anyone for whom there is an SF-50, Personnel Action, or an SF-61 Appointment Affidavit, on file within the Agency. Contractors are not employees, and will not be given travel cards. Employees should contact the Agency Program Travel Coordinator (APTC) in the Office of Financial Management for information regarding the Agency's Travel Card Program.

The travel card must be used for all official travel expenses, including cash advances from the ATM, common carrier transportation tickets (airfare, bus, and train tickets), lodging, rental cars, meals and other travel related expenses, to the extent the card is accepted. This minimizes the need for cash, is the most efficient method available for purchase and payment of business travel expenses, and maximizes the benefits to the Agency under the charge card contract.

The use of the travel card for purchases or cash advances, other than for official business, is strictly prohibited and will subject the employee to disciplinary action.

2. Liability for Charges Made with the Individual Travel Card

The Government is not directly liable for any charges made using the individual travel card. CSOSA will reimburse employees for authorized and allowable travel expenses in accordance with FTR Part 301.52 requirements. Employees are responsible for full payment of all undisputed charges made using the card within 30 days from each statement closing date regardless of the amount reimbursed by CSOSA.

3. Travel-Related and Miscellaneous Expenses

In addition to the types of travel expenses listed above, the travel card may only be used for authorized "travel-related expenses." Travel-related expense means any expense allowable under FTR 301.2. The traveler's supervisor must approve travel-related and miscellaneous expenses in advance, if possible.

In unusual cases, if employees are unable to secure advance approval for unanticipated travel-related miscellaneous expenses, those expenses may be approved when employees submit a voucher for their travel expenses. Employees are advised, however, that when expenses are incurred which have not been previously authorized, the employee assumes the risk of liability if the expenses are partially or fully disapproved.

Employees must not use their travel card to charge expenses for a co-worker or a non-CSOSA employee. Employees who do so are solely responsible for any liability that may occur if the transactions are not properly settled and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees should never use their travel card for registration or conference fees. Only authorized Agency Procurement Cardholders may charge registration or conference fees for any employee to their procurement credit card. If an employee does charge a registration or conference fee to his/her GTC, it is his/her responsibility to notify the training or conference vendor to remove the charge from the card. If unsuccessful with the vendor, employees should contact the travel card contractor or APTC.

4. Cash Advances (ATM Withdrawals)

The ATM Cash Advance feature allows travelers to use their cards to obtain cash advances to pay for official expenses that cannot be charged using the card. Employees should use the GTC for ATM cash advances since CSOSA does not directly issue cash advances. The amount of the advance should not exceed expected cash expenditures for travel. Employees may withdraw cash from the ATM no earlier than three days before approved travel. Cash withdrawals must not be made after the last day of official travel. The travel card contractor or the ATM provider may charge a fee per withdrawal, regardless of the amount withdrawn. Withdrawal fees for cash advances related to approved travel are reimbursable with the exception of ATMs located in a gambling establishment. Due to extremely high processing fees it is prohibited by FTR for a travel card to be used in an ATM located in a gambling establishment.

5. Benefits Derived from Use of the Travel Card and GTA

With the exception of certain promotional items such as frequent flyer miles or discount points, any benefit derived from use of the travel card, hotel, rental cars, or other travel-related expenses, belongs to the Government, and must be used for official travel. The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2002, Section 1116, authorizes federal employees to retain promotional items, including frequent flyer miles, earned on official travel. It is the responsibility of each traveler to communicate directly with a service provider to establish his/her frequent travel promotional benefits account. Any associated costs are to be paid by the traveler, and are not a reimbursable expense to the government.

It is the policy of the Government that employees generally must travel by coach class accommodations unless there is a valid, verifiable disability or special need. The Agency cannot pay for any upgrades, unless the traveler meets one of the exceptions outlined under FTR 301.10. However, employees may upgrade the transportation class of service at their

own personal expense. Therefore, as frequent traveler benefits may now be retained for personal use, the traveler may use any frequent traveler benefits earned to upgrade the transportation class to premium service.

6. Requesting a Travel Card

CSOSA typically approves GTCs for employees who are expected to travel two or more times per year. Travel card distribution may be restricted by CSOSA for those employees with prior instances of fraud or misuse of Government resources. The Agency or travel card contractor must assess the credit worthiness of all new travel cardholder applicants, prior to issuance of a card. The Agency may limit card distribution or restrict card use for employees with poor credit history. The travel card contractor may also restrict card distribution based on an employee's poor credit history. Travel card application packages may be obtained by contacting the APTC. The travel card application package provided by the APTC consists of four documents:

a. Travel Card Application

This form, with applicant's signature, must be completed and returned to the APTC for processing.

- i. Billing Address. Agency employees are required to receive their statements at their home address, unless there are extraordinary circumstances prohibiting it. Card delivery to an office mailroom or through inter-office mail is considered insecure and not permitted.
- ii. Social Security Number: No application will be processed by the travel card contractor without a Social Security Number written in the Verification No. field.
- iii. Date of Birth: No application will be processed by the travel card contractor without applicant's date of birth.
- iv. Work and Home Telephone Numbers
- v. Work E-mail Address.

b. Cardholder Agreement

The Cardholder Agreement is a separate document from the application. The Cardholder Agreement outlines the rules and responsibilities associated with the GTC. Each applicant must be provided with a copy of the Cardholder Agreement at the time they are provided an application. The employee's signature on the Travel Card Application form attests to the fact that he/she has read and understands the information in the Cardholder Agreement. The employee must retain the Cardholder Agreement for their records.

c. Agency Travel Card Policy

The employee must review the Agency Travel Card Policy and retain it for his/her records.

d. Travel Card Policy Acknowledgement of Receipt

This form acknowledges that the applicant has received a copy of the Agency Travel Card Policy and that his/her supervisor has approved the request for a travel credit card. This form, with applicant and supervisor's signature, must be returned to the APTC for processing.

Two copies of the application package forms, the Travel Card Application and Travel Card Policy Acknowledgement of Receipt, must be properly completed and returned to the APTC for processing at least fourteen (14) business days prior to the requesting employee's first day of planned travel. Travel card application packages must be approved by the employee's direct supervisor prior to being returned to the APTC. Agency components may institute their own internal approval process to control travel card applications submitted to the APTC.

When the required forms are completed and approved, the applicant can either mail or hand deliver the application package to the Office of Financial Management. Once the application package is reviewed for proper information and approved by the APTC, it is provided to the travel card contractor for processing.

Routine processing and delivery for all travel card applications takes approximately 7-10 business days from the time the travel card contractor receives the application. In extreme emergencies, a card can be delivered within three business days via messenger service to the Office of Financial Management. The APTC will contact the new cardholder to pick up the travel card.

The cardholder will receive a separate notice directly from the travel card contractor containing the Personal Identification Number (PIN) for Automated Teller Machine (ATM) transactions. Cardholders who forget or lose their PIN should call the travel card contractor using the toll-free Customer Service Number on their GTC and cardholder agreement.

7. Travel Training

Employees must receive agency travel training prior to traveling for the first time. It is highly recommended that all employees take a refresher course every year. The Office of Financial Management provides regular travel training in conjunction with the Agency's Training and Career Development Center.

8. Lost or Stolen Travel Cards

Cardholders must report a lost or stolen travel card immediately to the travel card contractor. Travel card contractor representatives are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Once a travel card is reported lost or stolen the account is immediately cancelled by the travel card contractor. The travel card contractor will mail a new travel card, with a new account number, within seven to ten business days. Cardholders will only be responsible for valid

charges made before the travel card was reported lost or stolen. The travel card contractor will provide credits for fraudulent charges. Any previous authorized activity will be transferred to the new account number. Cardholders must also notify their supervisor and the APTC after reporting their travel card as lost or stolen.

9. Accidental Purchases

If the cardholder accidentally uses his/her GTC for a non-official purchase, they must notify their supervisor and the APTC immediately.

10. Disputed Charges

Employees must review their monthly travel card statement immediately upon receipt to ensure all charges are valid. Any disputed amount that an employee believes has been charged in error must be reported by the employee to the travel card contractor as soon as possible. Employees may report disputes and make billing inquiries to the travel card contractor 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The travel card contractor will confirm all disputes in writing within three working days and research the charge with the vendor establishment.

When a charge is identified as an “open or disputed” item, the account receives a notation and the item is assigned a date by which all research by the travel card contractor must be completed. This is usually within 60 calendar days. Until that date, the account is given a pending credit for the disputed amount. Amounts that have been disputed with the travel card contractor will not be considered delinquent.

If, within two billing cycles, the travel card contractor has not had a satisfactory response from the vendor establishment concerning the disputed amount, the charge will be reversed to the vendor and the credit will be made permanent. However, if the vendor establishment supplies the travel card contractor with documentation showing the charge was valid, the pending credit will be re-billed and payment of the amount is due within 30 calendar days. Employees are responsible for resolving re-billed disputes directly with the vendor establishment in question if the employee is still dissatisfied.

The employee may contact the APTC to discuss unresolved disputes or any other account issues that are not resolved by the travel card contractor.

11. Travel Management Contractor

CSOSA uses a Travel Management Contractor (TMC) to assist employees when making reservations for official travel. All air travel reservations for official travel must be made using the TMC. Employees are encouraged to use the TMC for rental car, lodging and other transportation reservations.

12. Airline Ticket Refunds

GSA has established contract Government airline fares with airlines covering most routes. Government contract fare airline tickets purchased through the TMC are fully refundable up until the day of travel. When returning unused contract fare tickets to the TMC for credit, the employee should always request a receipt. If employees elect to mail the unused ticket to the TMC, it should be sent via US Postal Service registered mail, as an unused ticket is equivalent to cash.

Cardholders should follow the instructions for Disputed Charges when charges appear on their travel card statements for returned airline tickets. If credit is not received for a returned or canceled ticket within two billing cycles, employees should contact the TMC or the airline, as appropriate, to determine the status. If no satisfaction is received from the TMC or airline, employees should contact the APTC for assistance.

13. Lost Airline Ticket

In the case of a lost airline ticket purchased with the GTC, employees must file a Lost Ticket Application (LTA) with the airline. This may be done with the assistance of the TMC. The employee should provide a copy of the LTA to the travel card contractor. The travel card contractor will issue a pending credit until the airline issues a refund, which generally takes up to six months. Because the airline charges a fee to process LTAs, that amount will be deducted by the airline from the refund. Since the entire amount of the ticket was disputed and temporarily credited, this fee, at the time of refund will result in a debit to the cardholder's account. The cardholder is liable for this remaining charge. CSOSA, under appropriate circumstances, as determined by the employee's supervisor, Associate Director/General Counsel and Associate Director of Management and Administration may reimburse the employee for the LTA processing charge.

If employees lose a bus or rail ticket, they will be subject to the refund policy of the transportation provider.

B. MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES

The day-to-day management of the GTC program is the responsibility of the APTC within the Office of Financial Management. APTC oversight includes the review of purchase and payment activity reports provided by the travel card contractor. Reports are reviewed for possible misuse or abuse of the card or payment delinquency on the part of an employee.

1. Delinquent Payments to Travel Card Contractor

For payment delinquency, the APTC is required to report the matter in writing (email is acceptable) as follows:

Delinquent Payment Status Schedule

Calendar Days Past <i>Statement Date</i>	Account Status	Comment/Action
		After a charge is made, the first billing includes a <i>Statement Date</i> and a <i>Payment Due Date</i> . The <i>Payment Due Date</i> is within 30 days after the <i>Statement Date</i> .
31 days	Past-Due	The 2 nd Statement is sent 30 days later showing the amount as past due.
61 days	Pre-Suspension	On the 3 rd monthly statement, the account is in <i>Pre-Suspension</i> status. A reminder notice is emailed from the Agency Program Travel Coordinator (APTC) to the Cardholder. The APTC is located in the CSOSA Office of Financial Management.
91 days	Suspension	On the 4 th monthly statement, the account is <i>Suspended</i> by the travel card contractor. Delinquent Payment Memo from the Associate Director of Management and Administration is sent to Cardholder with a copy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor • Human Resources Employee & Labor Relations • Office of Professional Responsibility • Agency Director • Agency Deputy Director • Deputy Associate Director of Community Supervision Services (only if Cardholder is an employee with CSS)
126 days	Cancellation	On the 5 th monthly statement, the account is <i>Cancelled</i> by the travel card contractor. Card Cancellation for Delinquent Payment Memo is sent from the Associate Director of Management and Administration to the cardholders supervisor and copied to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources Employee & Labor Relations • Office of Professional Responsibility • Agency Director • Agency Deputy Director • Deputy Associate Director of Community Supervision Services (only if Cardholder is an employee with CSS)
127 - 180 days	Collections Reported to Credit Bureau	Matter is turned over by the travel card contractor to a Credit Bureau, which may be applied to Cardholder's personal credit rating. Contractor may apply late payment fees, legal fees and/or collection fees, payable by the travel cardholder.

2. Responsibilities of the Supervisors, Branch Managers, Associate Directors and General Counsel

Supervisors, Branch Managers and Associate Directors/General Counsel are expected to work closely with their employees and the APTC to ensure that the travel card is used solely for official business-related expenses, and debts to the travel card contractor are paid promptly. They must coordinate with the Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations, to initiate possible disciplinary action for delinquent employees in Suspension and Cancellation account status or employee's determined to use the travel charge card for non-official purposes.

They should instruct their employees that delinquency, misuse or abuse of the travel charge card may be cause for reconsideration leading to loss of privileges or possible adverse action. They should also advise employees that a consistently delinquent payment history may affect their personal credit rating.

3. Responsibilities of the Agency Program Travel Coordinator

The APTC is responsible for the day-to-day management of the program. This consists of completing charge card applications, receiving and monitoring reports, contacting appropriate persons in the event of misuse/abuse of the card by a cardholder, assisting cardholders as necessary, and acting as liaison between CSOSA and the travel card contractor.

4. Disciplinary Action for Abuse/Misuse of Card

The GTC must only be used for official travel-related purchases during the period of official travel as specified in this Policy Statement. The APTC will provide written notification of questionable transactions to the employee's direct supervisor, the employee's Associate Director/General Counsel (whichever applies), the Associate Director of Management and Administration, the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) and the Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations (ELR). At this time, the APTC will notify the travel card contractor to temporarily suspend the employee's travel card until the matter is resolved.

The supervisor must request a written explanation of the questionable transaction(s) from the employee. The supervisor will promptly meet with the employee to discuss the questionable transaction(s) and the written explanation. The employee may elect to be represented by the Union or other designee at this meeting. The supervisor must forward the employee's written explanation to ELR along with a copy to the APTC.

ELR will issue a determination on the validity of the questionable transaction(s) to the employee's supervisor, the employee's Associate Director/General Counsel, the Associate Director of Management and Administration, OPR and APTC.

If the questionable transaction(s) are determined by Agency management to be in accordance with established policy regarding use of the GTC, the APTC will notify the employee in writing, and the matter will be considered resolved. The APTC will reinstate the employee's travel card.

CSOSA will take appropriate disciplinary action when it is determined by Agency management that the Government contractor-issued travel charge card was used for non-official purposes. Disciplinary action may range from a reprimand to removal.

5. Employee Travel After Card Suspension/Cancellation/Closure

If the employee is required to travel while his/her travel card privileges are suspended or closed by the Agency, the appropriate supervisor or management office must submit a request to the APTC to have the card reinstated. The request must be approved by the Associate Director of Management and Administration prior to reinstatement of the card by the APTC.

If card privileges are suspended or cancelled by the travel card contractor, the card cannot be reinstated by CSOSA.

CSOSA does not have a means for directly issuing cash or funds for official travel in advance. Employees with travel cards in suspended, cancelled or closed status must use a centralized Agency account, managed by the Office of Financial Management, or personal funds to purchase common carrier transportation tickets for official agency travel. All other travel expenses incurred during official agency travel must be paid for by the employee's personal funds. CSOSA will reimburse employees for all authorized and allowable travel expenses incurred during official travel, in accordance with FTR 301-52.

6. Employee Payroll Deductions for Delinquent Payments

CSOSA may deduct delinquent, undisputed amounts due the travel card contractor from an employee's disposable pay in accordance with Public Law 105-264 for valid purchases made with the GTC. Disposable pay is defined as that part of an employee's compensation remaining after deduction for amounts required by law to be withheld. In accordance with Public Law 105-264, collections must be carried out with procedures required under 31 U.S.C. Section 3716(a). Delinquent amounts are undisputed amounts in Cancellation account status with the travel card contractor.

- a. CSOSA may only collect undisputed delinquent amounts for which the employee has been reimbursed.
- b. CSOSA must promptly forward all amounts collected by payroll deductions, in accordance with federal law, rule or regulation, to the travel card contractor.
- c. CSOSA may not recover amounts that the employee owes the contractor through misuse of the card.
- d. If the employee has an active dispute with either CSOSA or the travel card contractor, CSOSA cannot collect delinquent amounts owed to the contractor.

- e. Prior to making deductions from the employee's disposable pay, CSOSA shall notify the employee in writing via certified letter sent to the employee's home address of the following:
- The type and amount of the claim, the intention to collect the claim by deduction from his/her pay within 45 days, and the explanation of his/her rights as a debtor, including notice that CSOSA cannot initiate offset of pay if the employee disputes the delinquent amount with either CSOSA or the travel charge contractor.
 - The employee has the opportunity to inspect and copy CSOSA records related to the claim.
 - The employee's right to a review of CSOSA's determination of travel reimbursement still due the card contractor, and the decision to collect the amount.
- f. If the employee has not submitted a proper travel claim within the timeframe requirement of 41 CFR Section 301-52.7, and there are no extenuating circumstances, CSOSA may collect the undisputed delinquent amounts.
- g. If the employee has not entered into a written agreement with the travel card contractor to repay the delinquent amount, and if the employee has not otherwise disputed the claim, then CSOSA may deduct up to 15 percent per pay period of the employee's disposable pay, unless the employee consents in writing for CSOSA to deduct a greater amount. The employee may also request in writing that an amount less than 15 percent per pay period be deducted, based on the employee's ability to pay. Prior to reaching any agreement with the employee on the deduction of a lesser amount, the employee may be asked to submit documentation to verify this request.

7. Employees Separating from CSOSA

If a cardholder leaves the agency for any reason, it is his/her responsibility to personally return his/her travel card to the APTC for cancellation. The card should never be forwarded in the mail. The APTC will immediately close the travel card account with the contractor. The cardholder (or former cardholder) shall receive a receipt verifying the return of the travel card to the APTC office.

Travel cardholders separating from CSOSA with outstanding balances due to the travel card contractor remain personally responsible and liable for this debt. The CSOSA APTC may, at the request of the ex-employee, continue to work with ex-employee cardholders to resolve outstanding discrepancies with the card contractor.