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TO: Holders of the Financial Planning and Control Manual

SUBJECT: Amended Judicial and Nonjudicial Travel Reimbursement Procedures

In an effort to streamline the administration of employee travel reimbursement procedures, the Office of the State Comptroller has announced, on behalf of the Executive Branch of State Government, a number of new initiatives, many of which affect Unified Court System business travelers. Effective immediately, UCS judicial and nonjudicial travel rules are amended as follows:

Mileage Calculations - Departure from Home or Official Station

For purposes of calculating personal car mileage reimbursement, employees may be reimbursed, at the prevailing mileage reimbursement rate, for personal car mileage costs incurred while traveling to and from a work site other than their official station. Previously, such reimbursements were limited to the mileage from the employee's home or official station, which ever was closer to the employee's ultimate travel destination. The previous policy was the source of much misunderstanding and often required rather complex mileage calculations.

Elimination of Lodging and Transportation Requests

Lodging and Transportation Requests (LR's and TR's) are being eliminated as valid forms of payment, effective December 31, 1998. This change is being made to reduce the administrative overhead costs and internal control problems associated with the use of LR's and TR's.

While the Judiciary's travel rules clearly require judges, justices and nonjudicial personnel to provide sufficient personal funds to cover all travel expenses in the first instance, the UCS will be

providing a suitable alternative to LR's and TR's so as to reduce personal funds outlays. Working with the Executive Branch, the UCS will make a government-issued American Express Corporate Card available to UCS judges, justices and nonjudicial personnel. The provisions of the UCS travel card program are described herein.

UCS / American Express Travel Card Program

The Unified Court System and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, the provisions of which allows the UCS to participate in the Executive Branch contract with American Express Corporate Services. Pursuant to this contract, judges, justices and nonjudicial personnel are eligible to receive an American Express Corporate Card, to be used to reduce out-of-pocket expenses incurred while conducting business-related travel on behalf of the UCS.

The use of the American Express Corporate Card provides UCS business travelers with a convenient way to pay for transportation and lodging expenses incurred during the conduct of authorized business travel on behalf of New York State. Use of the Corporate Card should be limited to hotels, common carriers, vehicle rental/leasing companies and travel agencies. The card is not intended for use at retail establishments and should not be used for the payment of meals and other business-related incidental travel expenses, or for any personal expenses.

Charges to the American Express Corporate Card will be billed directly to the appropriate UCS District/Administrative Office, rather than to individual travelers. As such, the Corporate Card serves as a suitable alternative to the use of Lodging and Transportation Requests (LR's and TR's). While authorized business-related travel expenses charged to the Corporate Card will be centrally paid by the UCS, individual cardholders remain personally liable for any inappropriate charges and for any amounts charged which exceed authorized reimbursement rates.

Each prospective cardholder must complete a card application and is subject to a personal credit history check to be performed by American Express prior to card issuance. A cardholder acknowledgment form must be completed and signed by each prospective cardholder before an American Express Corporate Card may be issued. Corporate Card application and acknowledgment forms can be obtained by contacting the appropriate UCS district /administrative office.

If a Corporate Card is lost or stolen, both American Express and the appropriate district / administrative office should be notified immediately. Assuming such notification is timely, neither the cardholder nor the State of New York is responsible for any charges to a card which has been lost or stolen.

Corporate Card central bills must be paid in full (including any inappropriate personal expenses to be recovered from employees) by UCS district / administrative offices a minimum of three (3) days prior to the close of each thirty (30) day billing cycle pursuant to the provisions of the contract between the State of New York and American Express. Delinquency charges will be assessed against central accounts which are not paid within sixty (60) days of the billing cycle closing date and affected accounts will be suspended from activity (i.e. all cardholders in the jurisdiction will have their cards suspended). Any central bill charges which are disputed must be immediately communicated to American Express so as to avoid suspension of the account.

Because all American Express Corporate Card charges will be paid centrally by the UCS, it is extremely important that travel vouchers be submitted promptly in order for all charges to be reconciled. Failure to promptly submit travel vouchers may result in card revocation.

New travel vouchers (AC 132 and JC-2007) are under development which will facilitate the reconciliation of travel expenses charged to the American Express Corporate Card. Until new forms are available, UCS travelers should append a Travel Voucher Detail Sheet (AC 148) or other continuation page to reconcile Corporate Card charges using the following format:

<u>Category of Expense</u>	<u>Amount Claimed</u>
Lodging Expenses	\$
Transportation	\$
Meals (Breakfasts and Dinners)	\$
Mileage	\$
Incidental Expenses	\$
Total Expenses Claimed	<u>\$</u>
Less: Amounts Charged to Corporate Card	-\$
Less: Amounts Paid via Judicial Travel Advance <i>(Inter-district judicial assignments only)</i>	-\$
Other Adjustments <i>(e.g. amounts in excess of authorized UCS travel reimbursement rates)</i>	<u>-\$</u>
Net Amount to be Reimbursed to Traveler <i>(If this amount is negative, traveler should attach his/her personal check payable to "NYS Unified Court System" for any amounts owed)</i>	<u>\$</u>

A travel card program coordinator has been designated in each UCS jurisdiction. Please contact the appropriate district / administrative office with any questions you may have relative to the American Express Corporate Card Program.

More Flexible Time Limits for Meals Reimbursement

Consistent with the Judiciary's policies regarding flexible work schedules, UCS travel rules have been amended to ensure that all travelers are subject to comparable time limits for meals reimbursement eligibility. Travelers may henceforth be reimbursed for breakfast if departure from home or official station occurs at least one hour prior to his or her normal work start hour. Travelers may be reimbursed for dinner if their return occurs at least two hours after their normal work ending hour. Supervisors are responsible for being aware of employees' scheduled work hours and for verifying that the traveler met the appropriate meal eligibility requirements when signing the supervisor's certification on travel vouchers.

Increased Payment Threshold - Quick Pay Travel Reimbursements

UCS district/administrative offices responsible for the processing of travel reimbursements via the State Comptroller's Central Accounting System are hereby advised that the UCS Quick Pay threshold for travel reimbursements (batch type KTV) has been increased from \$500 to \$2,500. With this increase, virtually all UCS travel reimbursements will be eligible for processing as Quick Pay vouchers, thereby expediting the issuance of reimbursement checks to business travelers. All existing Quick Pay internal control procedures, as described in New Accounting Procedures Bulletin number 241, remain in force and effect.

Preferred Sources for Travel-Related Services

The Office of General Services has awarded term 'P' contracts for various travel-related services. These preferred sources should always be considered when determining the most economical means of business travel. The travel services currently available via OGS contract include:

- discounted air fares
- centralized travel agent services
- short and long term car leasing services

For term contract information, please refer to the OGS Web site at <http://www.OGS.state.ny.us>, or by calling OGS at (518) 486-2110.

The above provisions are effective immediately. Appropriate amendments to the UCS Financial Planning & Control Manual, including updated calendar 1999 per diem travel reimbursement rates, will be forthcoming in the near future.

Please note that with the increased flexibility that some of these provisions allow comes a corresponding increase in the oversight responsibilities that UCS supervisors and managers must assume relative to employee travel. Please ensure distribution of this bulletin to all personnel within your respective jurisdictions who may be responsible for the processing of, or the monitoring of internal controls relating to, business-related travel reimbursements.

NYS UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM
FOR ADMINISTRATIVE
PURPOSES ONLY

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