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**UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM**  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT SUPPORT  
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BUDGET BULLETIN	NUMBER 316	February 11, 1999
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TO: Holders of the Financial Planning and Control Manual

SUBJECT: American Express Travel Card Program - Update

Now that American Express Corporate Cards have been in circulation and use for a month in most jurisdictions and the first monthly bills have been received by district/administrative offices, it would be appropriate to review some of the procedures governing the use of the travel cards by UCS judges, justices and nonjudicial staff.

#### Tax Exemption Certificates

The American Express Corporate Cards issued to all New York State employees are imprinted with language indicating that business-related charges to the cards are "Tax Exempt". This language notwithstanding, individual cardholders remain responsible for providing hotels, common carriers, travel agencies and other merchants with a Tax Exemption Certificate (AC 946) to ensure that inappropriate taxes, from which the State is exempt, are not assessed. Such taxes are not reimbursable expenses and UCS travelers, not district/administrative offices, will be responsible for obtaining credits for taxes which should not have been imposed.

#### Submission of Vouchers

The success of the American Express Corporate Card Program is dependent upon the timely submission of travel vouchers by cardholders so that travel card charges can be reconciled with the monthly central bills received and paid by district/administrative offices. Even if no other reimbursable expenses were incurred, travelers using the Corporate Cards are responsible for submitting their travel vouchers to the appropriate UCS district/administrative office as soon as possible, but no later than thirty

(30) days following completion of their trip or assignment. Failure to promptly submit travel vouchers constitutes grounds for revocation of the traveler's American Express Corporate Card.

#### Travel Expenses Chargeable to the Corporate Card

UCS policies which limit the use of the American Express Corporate Card to transportation and lodging were not designed to limit card usage or traveler convenience, but were intended to: 1) provide a replacement for Lodging and Transportation Requests (LR's and TR's); and 2) simplify the reconciliation of travel card charges by district/administrative offices by serving as an incentive for the timely submission of travel reimbursement vouchers. It is recognized, however, that circumstances will arise which necessitate the use of the travel card for other properly reimbursable travel expenses. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, room service and other hotel meals which are incorporated into the traveler's lodging bill, hotel parking charges and the like.

Accordingly, at local option, district/administrative offices may authorize the use of the American Express Corporate Cards for any reimbursable business-related travel expense. This authorization is subject to the \$200 monthly retail limit per cardholder imposed upon all New York State American Express Corporate Cards. This monthly maximum applies to purchases at stores, some restaurants and other retail establishments, but parking garage charges, car services and purchases at certain food establishments may also be classified as "retail" establishments by American Express. It is therefore possible that very frequent travelers may encounter situations in which the \$200 monthly limit has been exceeded. There is, however, no monthly limit on card usage at hotels, for common carrier transportation tickets, automobile rental expenses, or travel agent billings.

#### Official UCS Committee / Commission Expenses

Effective April 1, 1999, all judicial and nonjudicial travel expenses incurred relative to the activities of authorized UCS committees / commissions, including but not limited to those expenses which are charged to American Express Corporate Cards or Business Travel Accounts (BTA's), are to be paid from "local" budget allocations in the first instance. Then, on a quarterly basis (end of June, September, December and March each fiscal year), a Request for Transfer of Official Committee / Commission Expense form (see attached) should be prepared for each traveler for whom expenses are to be recouped. These forms, along with copies of the associated vouchers and a proposed Journal Voucher (AC 22) should be sent to the OCA Office of Administrative Services for review and entry of the appropriate cost center and accumulator to which the local expenses are to be transferred. Expenses for multiple employees may be consolidated into a single Journal Voucher if practical. Administrative Services staff will assign batch and document numbers and a copy of the Journal Voucher will be returned to the district/ administrative office once executed.

Quarterly requests for transfers, along with copies of the required travel vouchers and a proposed Journal Voucher should be submitted as follows:

OCA Office of Administrative Services  
25 Beaver Street, Room 810  
New York, New York 10004  
Attention: Ms. Lorene Cicitta

Initial requests for travel expense transfers should be directed to Administrative Services in July 1999, for expenses incurred between April 1, 1999 and June 30, 1999.

### Business Travel Accounts (BTA's)

BTA's are essentially accounts for which no plastic card is issued. BTA's are intended to be used by specifically authorized district/administrative staff to provide transportation and lodging for UCS travelers (judges, justices, nonjudicial staff and non-employees providing services to the UCS) who do not travel with sufficient frequency to warrant the issuance of an individual travel card. BTA's require that special internal controls be implemented to prevent account misuse.

BTA's are designed to be utilized via the travel agency specified in each jurisdiction's BTA application, although some hotels will accept BTA reservations directly. While American Express documentation indicates that BTA's are to be used for transportation only, a blanket BTA Lodging Waiver has been filed by the Division of Financial Management on behalf of all UCS courts and agencies and no further action is required.

Initial vendor understanding and acceptance of BTA's for ticket purchases and hotel reservations has been limited thus far, but is improving. The attached form, once the appropriate BTA account number information is entered, may be photocopied and presented to travel agents or lodging establishments to facilitate lodging reservations to be billed to a BTA.

### Monthly American Express Corporate Card Bill Payments

In many large organizations, including American Express, the remittance advice and the check are separated upon receipt for internal control purposes. As a result, proper accounting becomes more difficult. To assist in the proper crediting of your account, please do the following:

- American Express payments are credited based on the Central Bill Number, not the Basic Control Number for your jurisdiction. The Central Bill Number is normally at the top of the invoice from American Express. The Central Bill Number can be differentiated from the Basic Control Number by examining the fifth (5) number from the left in each number. The Central Bill Number is nine (9) and the Basic Control Number is seven (7), as follows:

3782 - 9xxxxx (Central Bill Number)  
3782- 7xxxxx (Basic Control Number)

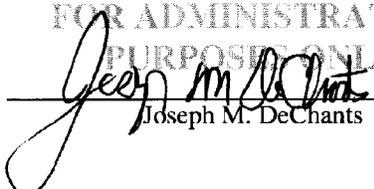
- You should also take steps to ensure that the Central Bill Number is included on your check. To do so, enter the Central Bill Number in second 'Payee Name' field of payment vouchers. You should also enter the Central Bill Number in box 5, 'Ref/Inv No.' field to assure that it appears on the remittance advice.

#### Lodging and Transportation Requests (LR's and TR's)

UCS travelers are reminded that LR's and TR's have been replaced by the American Express program and no longer constitute a valid form of payment. All unused LR's and TR's should be returned immediately to the district/administrative office which issued them.

An amended Part VI / Chapter 1.040 of the Financial Planning & Control Manual reflecting the provisions referenced herein is promulgated via this bulletin. Except as otherwise specified, these provisions are effective immediately.

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  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph M. DeChants

Unified Court System  
Request for Transfer of Official Committee / Commission Expenses

Fiscal Year \_\_\_\_

For Quarter Ending \_\_\_\_\_

Traveler's Name	Official Committee / Commission Name
Traveler's District / Dept.	Traveler's Court / Agency
Traveler's Official Workstation Address	Office Phone
Date(s) of Event	Decription of Event (e.g. Meeting, Seminar, Business Meal, Site Visit)

Expenses Originally Charged As Follows:

For OCA Administrative Services Use Only:

Cost Center	Accum	Yr	Object	Amount	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
				\$	
Total				\$	

Prepared By (please print/type)	Preparer's Signature	Date

Preparer's Phone:	Preparer's Fax:

\* Attach copy of associated voucher(s) and mail to:

*OCA Administrative Services  
25 Beaver Street, Room 810  
New York, NY 10004  
Attn: Ms. Lorene Cicitta*



**Corporate  
Services**

**American Express  
Corporate Services**  
One Airport Way  
Suite 205  
Rochester, NY 14624

January 1, 1999

TO: LODGING SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT

RE: AMERICAN EXPRESS BUSINESS TRAVEL ACCOUNT

This State of New York agency has established a Business Travel Account (BTA) with American Express that will periodically be used as the payment vehicle for hotel charges for certain travelers while on official State of New York business.

This Business Travel Account Number, 3782-9\_\_\_\_\_, is a valid American Express centrally billed account number, and is a "ghost account" whereby there is no plastic issued. Hotel charges can be processed directly to this account number, in lieu of using an individual charge card.

Any questions on the usage and/or authorization of this Business Travel Account number as a valid American Express billing account can be directed to:

*American Express Authorizations: 1-800-528-2121*

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Cynthia P. Randall  
Manager, Account Development  
American Express - Corporate Services  
(716)235-5990, Ext. 22