

# Overnight Travel Frequently Asked Questions

## **Coaches/Advisor Role**

As the main coach/advisor for the overnight trip, is the expectation that all coaches/advisors remain with the group at all times?

*Yes. They are the ones from start to finish that propose the trip and should be responsible for the group and their activities from start to finish. Because this is a school sponsored activity, policy AA409 'Scope of Employment' applies to all employees traveling with the group.*

In case of emergency and the coach/advisor is pulled away, who would take responsibility for the group?

*In the event of an emergency, the other identified chaperones need to take responsibility until the head coach/main advisor can return to the group.*

Do the required chaperones have to travel to/from and following the itinerary of the trip?

*The expectation should be that they travel to/from the trip with the group. Any chaperone traveling at the expense of the students or school has the responsibility to follow the proposed itinerary. Exceptions may be considered and verified through the principal and confirmed with the appropriate Administrator of Schools. In the case of an exception, the cost associated for the adjustment will be the chaperones responsibility as agreed upon with the principal/director. (Ex. food, hotel costs, car rentals, etc.)*

Is the coach/advisor responsible for putting together all the paperwork and communicating with the district travel buyer?

*Yes. The coach/advisor is the first signature on a travel request and should be the one filling out the paperwork to present to the principal for approval. In addition, the coach/advisor should be the contact with the district travel buyer after the appropriate district Administrator of Schools and the district Business Administrator have granted approval. Parents should not be the main contact for approved district travel.*

## **Participants/Chaperone Role**

As participants who have signed up for the trip, is the expectation that all group and team members will follow the approved itinerary and travel to and from the destination as a group or team? Do they need to stay with the group during the entire trip?

*Yes. It is expected that all participants, including required chaperones, will abide by the approved itinerary and travel to and from the destination as a group. It is also expected that they remain with the group during the entire trip.*

Exceptions have been practiced in the past, but are now at times expectations. Does the principal in cooperation with the coach/advisor have latitude to determine when the exception will or will not be made?

*Yes. Only in cases of emergencies or at the discretion of the traveling administrator can these arrangements be altered. In the case where no administrator is present, it is recommended that the coach/advisor call an administrator to discuss a potential exception. If the administrator is unavailable, it will be the discretion of the coach or advisor to make a decision followed by a phone call to the appropriate building administrator to inform them of their decision.*

If an exception were made, would these pre-arranged exceptions require the parent to make separate accommodations and travel outside of the school booking?

*Yes. A student may only be released to their immediate guardians under any circumstances. The district travel buyer must be used for approved overnight travel trips and should only be made for the attendees and the required chaperones.*

Additional Chaperones have been enlisted to travel with students and coaches on Overnight Travel. They have been welcome on trips but expected to follow the group itinerary if travel arrangements have been made with the group. Do additional chaperones have to follow the group itinerary?

*Yes. If a chaperone is listed as an additional chaperone and has had their travel arrangements made with the traveling group, they must follow the same itinerary.*

More and more we have parent couples and families joining trips and then wanting to vary and set their own itinerary. Can they waiver from the set itinerary?

*No. If they travel with the group and made their travel arrangements as part of the group, they must follow the group itinerary. If they do not want to follow the itinerary then they must make their own travel arrangements separate from those made by the district travel buyer.*

## **Academic Goals/Additional Purpose**

Is the purpose of overnight travel is to enhance the learning opportunities for students beyond the classroom?

*Yes. All overnight travel experiences should clear in its purpose and identify experiences that cannot be had otherwise.*

Are schools required to protect academic time set by Advanced Ed. accreditation standards? If so, how sensitive do we need to be to the loss of academic time?

*Advanced Ed has jurisdiction over our high school accreditation review. It is important to maintain the integrity of these expectations. The Board of Education has set maximums to the number of school days a group can miss which is two school days. Only with a clear "academic experience" or a "scheduling consideration" that is out of the control of those traveling may the principal of the school write a letter requesting for an additional day exception. This must be done on school letterhead and submitted with the preliminary request prior to trip approval.*

Should overnight travel requests prioritize the importance of curriculum, competition, and unique academic experiences over entertainment or sightseeing goals?

*Yes. The purposes of these trips are for students to experience things that cannot be experienced close to home. An overnight travel trip is not set up for the purpose of a vacation.*

Who determines the line to be drawn when ensuring value for time spent on a trip but not crossing the line from a purposeful trip to an entertaining vacation?

*The administration and advisors involved need to agree on the purpose of the trip and gain approval prior to presenting it to parents for final approval. The value of the experience must be agreed on and clear before asking parents to financially support a trip for their students. This way, all the facts are laid out ahead of time and parents can determine if the trip has enough purpose to fund.*

In the past principals have declined days for trips that had no curriculum/competition value (i.e. academic time lost in order to visit theme parks). Will principals continue to have this latitude?

*Yes. Principals and advisors are always the first signatures on an overnight travel preliminary request form. It is important that discussions to identify an overnight travel trip request are happening with the teacher/advisor and the local administration before any other parties are involved. It must be agreed and signed prior to presenting to the district for consideration.*

Does the district and school principal have the latitude to determine when travel can occur and prioritize school goals over group interest in scheduling travel?

*Yes. This is why it is important for the principal to be in conversation with advisors because sometimes one group or organization can't always see the big picture of the school. The district must then review and sign off for approval for the same reason. There may be district-wide or school-wide issues that need to be considered before a trip can be approved for parent consideration.*

District calendar days may not designate an academic day, but significant academic and educational activities are taking place at those times. (i.e. parent teacher conference, ACT testing, PLAN testing). The scheduling of such days for travel would seem to give the stakeholders and students a mixed signal regarding our priorities and focus. Can these days be considered as having academic purpose?

*Yes. It is important to take all things into consideration when submitting for an overnight travel trip request. ACT and PLAN tests that are being paid and administered for students in their local schools have very valuable educational purposes. Parent Teach Conferences are also valuable educational experiences for parents and teachers that might otherwise be asked to miss if gone for an overnight travel trip.*

## Travel Scheduling and Costs

Are we expected to schedule all overnight travel with the District travel buyer?

*Yes. The travel buyer is hired to make sure that all travel arrangements are following state required bid processes as well as serving as an unbiased service to keep employees out of trouble for fear of actual kickbacks or even the perception of kickbacks. The travel buyer will also make the arrangements for the required post-departure travel insurance for all participants. Only under special circumstances can arrangements be made by another party and must be done in communication with the district travel buyer to assure that all requirements are being met. This is typically done when attending an event where all travel arrangements are done with that organization because of their own guidelines and requirements.*

Can a group exceed their approved missed days when scheduling flights in an effort to get a cheaper flight?

*No. Groups should only miss the approved days and make their travel arrangements accordingly. Often times a cheaper flight earlier will result in an extra night of hotel costs and so the costs are not lowered.*

Do we have to count leaving school an hour or two early as a missed day of school?

*Yes. A missed day of school is still a missed day of school even if it is only the last period of the day. If travel arrangements costs are so out of balance and the travel buyer recommends a third day exception be requested, the principal may write the request on letterhead for consideration to save the group a significant amount of money. Where a third day exception has already been granted, this will not be an option.*

Can parents arrange bookings on behalf of the school for overnight travel?

*No. Parents are not always aware of the requirements schools must follow in order to be compliant with bid processes, travel insurance and other expectations. Because these are school-approved functions the responsibility of travel falls with the advisor, building principal, traveling administrator, district employees, and the district travel buyer. The employed individuals need to be the involved and informed of all travel decisions with parent approval.*

Will parents and families traveling to the same events be allowed to reserve and pay through the school for their costs? Or will we only book and pay for required chaperones and students?

*No. It is strongly recommended that travel arrangements only be made by through the school by the travel buyer for students, required chaperones and additional chaperones willing to follow all the requirements of a chaperone. This includes background checks, chaperone responsibilities and traveling to/from the trip as indicated on the approved itinerary. If parents or other family member want to attend to support their student, they are welcome to do so through their own arrangements and at their own expense*