

# COMPLIANCE UPDATES AND USEFUL TIPS

## CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF COMPLIANCE

Monthly updates from the MDE Office of Compliance

NOVEMBER 2018

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As public servants, all MDE employees have a responsibility to the citizens of our state to conduct business with integrity, honesty, and accountability. The MDE Office of Compliance is committed to establishing a culture of ethical behavior and compliance throughout the agency.

Each month, *Compliance Updates* will provide MDE employees with helpful reminders of specific day-to-day internal operational procedures to keep our agency in compliance. Employees will be informed of any additions and/or modifications to operational policies and procedures and referred to appropriate website links to obtain more detailed information.

### Code of Conduct

State employees are entrusted to be good stewards of public tax dollars and public programs. These duties must be exercised faithfully and in compliance with the law and ethical standards. Reporting what is reasonably believed to be evidence of wrongdoing is an important service. Employees should never be subjected to or threatened with reprisal for doing so.

To report suspected fraudulent activity, click the [Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse](#) link. Remember, state law grants certain protections to whistleblowers, and any retaliation against employees who report suspected fraud, waste and abuse is strictly prohibited (Mississippi Code Annotated § 25-9-173).

### Procurement/Purchasing

- Vendor payments cannot exceed approved contract amount. Offices must monitor performance and contract expenditures regularly. The program office Chief and any external entity, if applicable, must review and approve all contract modifications, prior to vendor rendering additional services.
- In accordance with [House Bill 1109](#), ALL offices must follow new [Public Procurement Review Board \(PPRB\) Guidelines](#) and [MDE revised Procurement policies](#). (NOTE: Employees must use the [Procurement website](#) to retrieve the most up-to-date Procurement templates and forms.)
- ALL required purchase orders for services or products (Information Technology Services—ITS, PPRB, Purchasing, etc.) must be generated PRIOR to the start of ANY services or the receipt of ANY products.

## **Accounts Payable**

- ALL invoices must be paid within 30 days of receipt unless there are extenuating circumstances. (See **Section 29.60.55** of the DFA MAAP Manual, Late Payments to Vendors)
- Information Request Slips from the Office of Accounting MUST be returned **immediately** with ALL requested information attached.

## **Travel Tips**

### **eWaiver Request Form**

**Section 2.105** of the Office of Purchasing, Travel, and Fleet Management (OPTFM) travel policies requires state employees to use an **eWaiver Request Form** to request a waiver from any standard travel procedures (e.g., to be reimbursed for preferred airline seating or when selecting a hotel other than the conference hotel and rate). eWaivers **are not required** when pricing is found for **less than** the state contract price or in the case of an emergency while traveling.

With the eWaiver Request form, the employee must include documentation that proves the request is economical or otherwise in the best interest of the state **OR** the approval of the eWaiver is necessary for some other reason. The form must be signed by the Agency Head or his/her designee and OPTFM **prior to** making any travel reservations or commitments. For reimbursement, the eWaiver **must be** attached to the travel voucher along with any other required documentation.

### **Other Helpful Tips for MDE Travelers**

- Meal tips should not exceed 20% of the maximum daily meal reimbursement or the actual meal expense, whichever is less. **NOTE:** The Department of Finance and Administration's State Travel Policy Rules and Regulations, Section 2.106 states, "Meal tips should be included in the actual cost of the meal unless the inclusion of the tips causes the meals to exceed the Department of Finance and Administration's maximum daily meal reimbursement. If the daily meal limitations would be exceeded, then the tips can be separated and recorded as Other Expenses."
- Out-of-state travel for MDE employees MUST have prior approval from the State Superintendent of Education.
- In-state travel MUST have prior approval from the Bureau Director or above or a supervisory designee.
- Two competitive quotes MUST be obtained when contract travel agencies are not used to book flights. Flights booked using the two-quote method must be purchased out-of-pocket and reimbursement requested upon return.
- Signature stamps are NOT permitted to authorize travel or approve travel reimbursements.
- Travel reimbursement requests must be approved for payment by the supervisor of the traveler or a supervisory designee ranked higher than traveler. Employees of equal or lower rank of the traveler cannot approve a travel reimbursement request.

### **REMINDERS:**

- **State Government Onboarding for New Employees**
- **Update Fleet Management Records Daily (Retain fuel receipts)**