Chapter 6
TRAVEL EXPENSES

6.01 Introduction

6.02 References and Resources

6.03 General Information

6.04 Beneficiary Travel Expenses
   a. Initial Evaluation, Reevaluation and Counseling Appointments
   b. Intraregional Travel Expenses
   c. Interregional Travel Expenses

6.05 Authorization for Travel of Attendants
   a. Relatives Prohibited
   b. Attendants not Employed by the Federal Government
   c. Attendants Employed by the Federal Government

6.06 Special Transportation Assistance
   a. Periods When Special Transportation Allowance May be Provided
   b. Scope of Special Transportation Assistance
   c. Determining the Need for a Special Transportation Allowance
   d. Relatives Prohibited

6.07 Payment Methods
   a. Travel Inside the Local Area of the VR&E Office
   b. Travel Outside the Local Area of the VR&E Office
   c. Prepaid Travel Expenses

6.08 VAF 3542 Processing

Appendix O. VA Forms
Chapter 6
TRAVEL EXPENSES

6.01 Introduction

This chapter provides the administrative procedures and guidelines on authorizing and processing payment of travel expenses for Veterans participating in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program.

6.02 References and Resources

Laws: 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 111

Regulations:
38 CFR 21.370
38 CFR 21.372
38 CFR 21.374
38 CFR 21.376

Forms: VA Form (VAF) 3542, Authorization to Report - Voucher for Mileage Allowance
VAF 28-1905d, Special Report of Training
VAF 28-8861, Request for Medical Services

6.03 General Information

Veterans who travel to and from a VR&E office or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation may be entitled to reimbursement for the cost of travel, lodging, meals and incidental expenses. Reimbursement for travel expenses may be authorized at Government expense within limits specified by law in accordance with 38 U.S.C 111. VR&E may authorize and process payments for the following types of travel expenses by following the guidance outlined in this chapter:

- Beneficiary travel
- Authorization for travel of attendants
- Special transportation assistance
6.04 Beneficiary Travel Expenses

a. Initial Evaluation, Reevaluation and Counseling Appointments

In accordance with 38 CFR 21.376, when VR&E asks a Veteran with a service-connected disability to report to a designated place for an initial evaluation, a reevaluation, or a counseling appointment (including personal or vocational adjustment counseling), payment of travel expenses must be authorized to and from the place of evaluation and counseling. Beneficiary travel is not tied to a specific case status. Meals and lodging may be approved if overnight travel is required. When a Veteran reports for counseling or evaluation, an authorized VR&E staff member will certify on VAF 3542 that the Veteran reported.

VR&E staff should note that VA does not authorize payment for scheduled case management appointments, either at a training facility or VR&E Office. VR&E must only authorize payment of travel expenses for a Veteran who comes in without a scheduled appointment, or for a scheduled case management appointment, when the case manager determines that the Veteran was in need of and was provided personal or vocational adjustment counseling. This determination should be documented on VAF 1905d or in a CWINRS note. Refer to section 6.07 of this chapter for travel expense payment methods.

b. Intraregional Travel Expenses

In accordance with 38 CFR 21.370, VR&E may authorize the payment of travel expenses to a Veteran in a rehabilitation program or a program of employment services when travel is within the territory of the Regional Office (RO) of jurisdiction. Intraregional travel must be approved by the case manager. The case manager must ensure that the determination to authorize the travel expense is documented on VAF 28-1905d (See Appendix O, VA Forms) and filed in the Veteran’s Counseling/Evaluation/Rehabilitation (CER) folder or in Corporate WINRS notes. Consideration must be given to the most economical means of transportation (e.g., cost of driving a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) versus purchasing a plane ticket). When approved, authorization of travel is limited to the Veteran’s transportation, and does not include transportation for the Veteran’s dependents, or for moving personal effects.

Intraregional travel includes travel to and from the Veteran’s residence and a training location if that location is outside routine commuting distance in the geographic area. A normal daily commute is defined as 50 miles one-way. A Veteran participating in the VR&E Program would not normally receive reimbursement for daily travel to and from a training facility except as

6-2
authorized under 38 CFR 21.154 (refer to section 6.06 of this chapter for guidance on Special Transportation Assistance).

VR&E may authorize travel expenses that are beyond the normal daily commute for a Veteran to travel within the territory of the RO of jurisdiction under any of the following conditions:

1. The Veteran is reporting to the chosen school or training facility for the purpose of starting training.

2. The Veteran is reporting to a prospective employer or trainer for an interview prior to starting training when there is definite assurance that the Veteran will be found acceptable to start training.

3. The Veteran is reporting to the chosen school for a personal interview prior to induction into training.

4. The Veteran is reporting to a rehabilitation facility or sheltered workshop.

5. The Veteran is returning to his/her home from the training or rehabilitation facility when travel from his/her home to the place of training or rehabilitation services was at Government expense.

6. The Veteran is returning to the training or rehabilitation facility from his/her home when the purpose of the travel is to continue the rehabilitation program.

7. The Veteran is returning from the training facility after his/her case is placed in discontinued or interrupted status for any reason, except abandonment of training by the Veteran without good reason.

8. The Veteran is reporting to a place of prearranged satisfactory employment upon completion of a rehabilitation plan of services for the purpose of beginning work.

9. The Veteran is returning to his/her home from the place of training following rehabilitation to the point of employability, when suitable employment is not available.

10. The Veteran is reporting to a place to take a scheduled examination required to practice the trade or profession for which the Veteran has been trained. This travel must be limited to points within the state where the Veteran pursued his/her training or, if the Veteran returned to the state that he/she was sent to pursue training, he/she may receive travel expenses related to traveling to a place within that state to take the examination. If there is more than one place within the state that the
Veteran could take the examination, travel must be limited to the nearest place.

c. Interregional Travel Expenses

According to 38 CFR 21.372, a Veteran may need to travel from the jurisdiction of one RO to another in order to accomplish the goals of his/her rehabilitation plan. In this situation, travel expenses must be approved by the case manager. The case manager must ensure that the determination to authorize the travel expense is documented on VAF 28-1905d and filed in the Veteran’s CER folder or in CWINRS notes. Consideration must be given to the most economical means of transportation (e.g., cost of driving a POV versus purchasing a plane ticket). Authorization of travel expenses is limited to the Veteran’s transportation and does not include transportation for the Veteran’s dependents or for moving personal effects.

VR&E may authorize interregional travel expenses under any of the following conditions.

1. The Veteran is entering training in the nearest satisfactory facility and either of the following conditions are met:
   - The nearest satisfactory facility is within the jurisdiction of another VA facility, or
   - There are no satisfactory facilities within the jurisdiction of the VA facility in which the Veteran resides

2. The Veteran is entering training in a state in which the Veteran has long-standing family and social ties, and in which he/she plans to live following rehabilitation.

3. The Veteran is reporting to an employer-trainer when all necessary steps have been taken to establish an On-the-Job training (OJT) program.

4. The Veteran is reporting to a rehabilitation facility or sheltered workshop.

5. The Veteran is returning to his/her home from the training or rehabilitation facility when travel from his/her home to the place of training or rehabilitation services was at Government expense.

6. The Veteran is returning to the place of training or rehabilitation services from his/her home when the purpose of the travel is to continue training or rehabilitation services.

7. The Veteran is returning from the training facility after his/her case is
placed in discontinued or interrupted status for any reason, except abandonment of training by the Veteran without good reason.

8. The Veteran is reporting to a place of prearranged suitable employment or for a prearranged employment interview following completion of his/her training program when each of the following conditions is met:

- There is no opportunity for suitable employment for the Veteran within the jurisdiction of the training facility, and
- The Veteran has a serious employment handicap

9. The Veteran is returning from his/her training facility upon completion a training program when satisfactory employment is not available.

10. The Veteran is returning from the training facility without authorization because VR&E did not issue the necessary travel authorization in a timely manner.

6.05 Authorization for Travel of Attendants

In accordance with 38 CFR 21.374, travel expenses may be authorized for an attendant to accompany a Veteran traveling for rehabilitation purposes when made necessary by the severity of the Veteran's disability. Attendants may only be used to enable a Veteran to attend appointments for initial evaluation, counseling, or intraregional or interregional travel.

a. Relatives Prohibited

VR&E must not pay the attendant a fee if he/she is a relative of the Veteran in accordance with 38 CFR 21.374. A relative is defined in 38 CFR 21.374 as a person who by blood or marriage is considered to be any of the following:

- A spouse
- A parent
- A child
- A brother
- A sister
- An uncle
- An aunt
A niece

A nephew

b. Attendants not Employed by the Federal Government

VR&E may authorize persons not in regular civilian employment of the Federal Government to act as attendants when they are not considered to be a relative. Payment of travel expenses for attendants will be authorized on the same basis as for the Veteran the attendant is accompanying.

c. Attendants Employed by the Federal Government

VR&E may authorize a person in the regular civilian employment of the Federal Government to act as an attendant. When assigned, the attendant will be entitled to transportation and expenses or may be allowed per diem in place of subsistence in accordance with the provisions of Federal Travel Regulations. VR&E must not pay a fee to civilian employees of the Federal Government who act as attendants.

6.06 Special Transportation Assistance

According to 38 CFR 21.154, a Veteran may be provided a transportation allowance to defray travel expenses caused by the effects of a disability that are in addition to expenses incurred by individuals without disabilities. The assistance provided in this section is in addition to provisions for interregional and intraregional travel.

a. Periods When Special Transportation Allowance May be Provided

A special transportation allowance may be provided during the following periods:

- Extended evaluation
- Rehabilitation to the point of employability
- Independent living services
- Employment services, including the first three months of employment

b. Scope of Special Transportation Assistance

According to 38 CFR 21.154, transportation assistance includes the following expenses:
• Mileage
• Parking fees
• A reasonable fee for a driver
• Transportation furnished by a rehabilitation facility or sheltered workshop
• Other reasonable expenses which may be incurred in local travel

The Veteran’s monthly transportation allowance may not exceed one-half of the subsistence allowance of a single Veteran in full-time institutional training, unless extraordinary arrangements, such as transportation by ambulance, are necessary to enable a Veteran to pursue a rehabilitation program.

c. Determining the Need for a Special Transportation Allowance

The case manager must determine the Veteran’s need for a special transportation allowance and must ensure that the determination to authorize the transportation allowance is documented on VAF 28-1905d and filed in the center portion of the Veteran’s CER folder, or in CWINRS notes. The case manager must use the assistance of a Veteran’s Health Administration (VHA) medical consultant to determine the need for special transportation assistance and to develop transportation arrangements that do not unduly tax the Veteran’s ability to travel and pursue a rehabilitation program. A referral to the VHA should be completed. The case manager should use VAF 28-8861 (see Appendix O, VA Forms) to describe the reason(s) he/she believes special transportation allowance may be needed and to request that VHA conduct an evaluation and provide any necessary services (e.g., transportation by ambulance). Refer to M28R.V.A.5 for further guidance on completing VAF 28-8861.

d. Relatives Prohibited

A relative of the Veteran must not be paid any part of a special transportation allowance. The term relative has the same meaning described in section 6.05.b of this chapter pertaining to the use of a relative as an attendant.

6.07 Payment Methods

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. 111, VR&E may pay a Veteran actual necessary travel expenses (including lodging and subsistence), or an allowance based upon mileage (at a rate of 41.5 cents per mile) in lieu of actual travel expenses. Actual necessary travel expenses include the reasonable costs of airfare if travel by air is the only practical way to reach a VR&E office or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation. Reimbursement for the actual cost of
ferry fares and bridge, road and tunnel tolls in addition to mileage allowance may also be allowed under 38 U.S.C. 111. VAF 3542 should be used when reimbursing the current mileage rate plus ferry fares and bridge, tunnel and road tolls in lieu of actual expenses. When the Veteran lives outside the local area of the VR&E office (50 miles one-way), a properly executed VAF 3542 may be sent to the Veteran prior to the appointment date for travel 12 hours or less. VAF 3542 should also be used to claim meal and lodging expenses incurred en route to and from the VR&E office or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation for travel beyond 12 hours.

If travel expenses have been authorized for a Veteran, he/she may be reimbursed using one of the following methods:

a. Travel Inside the Local Area of the VR&E Office

If the Veteran pays his/her own actual necessary expenses of travel, then the Veteran may be reimbursed at the local public transportation rate, or if public transportation is not available, the current mileage rate for the total mileage (round trip) plus cost of parking, ferry fares and bridge, road and tunnel tolls. This allowance is in place of all travel expenses to include cost of meals and lodging.

b. Travel Outside the Local Area of the VR&E Office

If the Veteran pays his/her own expenses of travel, then the Veteran may be repaid for actual necessary travel expenses or an allowance based upon mileage (at a rate of 41.5 cents per mile) in lieu of actual travel expenses. The cost of meals and miscellaneous expenses (for example, taxi fare, mileage to airport) may be reimbursed after the fact in accordance with GSA per diem limits using VAF 3542 when reimbursing actual necessary travel expenses. (Refer to www.gsa.gov/perdiem to find the rates.) It should be noted that per diem is not authorized for official travel of 12 hours or less. Travel expense payments must not exceed the current maximum rate for three meals and one night’s lodging for a 24-hour period plus the cost of round trip by public transportation. The Veteran must furnish itemized receipts for sleeping accommodations and for each additional item to substantiate claimed travel expenses. VR&E staff should inform Veterans that claims for reimbursement of travel expenses must be received within 30 days after completion of travel and that failure to claim reimbursement within 30 days will result in forfeiture of travel benefits.

c. Prepaid Travel Expenses

When the Veteran does not wish to pay his/her own necessary travel expenses, prepayment of a Veteran’s travel expenses must be completed via
the RO’s Centrally Billed Account (CBA) travel card that is funded through Readjustment Benefits (RB). Actual costs are recorded in CWINRS with costing charged to the RB account, BOC 4146. The CBA travel card is used to pay for the travel expenses of Veterans, and expenses are paid directly by the agency. These accounts contain a unique prefix identifying the account as a CBA travel card for official Government travel.

6.08 VAF 3542 Processing

To process a VAF 3542 for a Veteran authorized to receive travel expenses, VR&E staff should use the following steps:

a. Ensure that the payment of travel expenses is in accordance with the guidance outlined in this chapter.

b. Process the VAF 3542 by selecting beneficiary travel in the CWINRS View Financial Data screen.

c. Print a copy of VAF 3542.

d. Obtain the Veteran's signature on the CWINRS form.

e. Obtain the signature of an authorized VR&E staff member.

f. Submit the VAF 3542 to the Finance activity to process the payment. The method used to submit forms to Finance may vary according to local policy.

g. File a copy of the VAF 3542 and itemized receipts (as applicable) on the left side of the Veteran's CER folder.

VAF 3542 may be used to reimburse lodging, meals and other expenses (i.e., parking, taxi fare, ferry fares and bridge, road and tunnel tolls). The Veteran must furnish itemized receipts to substantiate claimed travel expenses. For assistance with completing the CWINRS Add/Edit/View Beneficiary Travel Transaction screen, refer to the CWINRS User Guide: Chapter 6, Case Management.