

# REGULATION

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Related Entries:** IPD  
**Responsible Office:** Office of School Performance

### Travel-Study Programs, Field Trips and Student Organization Trips

#### I. PURPOSE

To publish the procedures for MCPS-sponsored travel-study programs, field trips and student organization trips, to provide definitions, and to establish procedures for obtaining approval and implementing approved trips

#### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. *School-sponsored* means any activity which has a staff member assigned as an agent of the school, and has been approved by the principal and/or community superintendent.
- B. *Field Trip* is a school-sponsored activity that is directly related to the instructional program. A field trip may be an overnight trip.
- C. *Travel-Study Trip* is an activity which combines instruction and travel for an extended period of time on this continent or abroad. Some programs include a specific course of study to be completed, while others place emphasis upon exposure to foreign cultures. Participating students may be from different grade levels or classes. Travel-study trips should be scheduled for nonschool days.
- D. *Student Organization Trip* is an activity which provides extended opportunities related to an officially recognized school organization. Participation is usually limited to members of the organization or club. Student organization trips should be scheduled for nonschool days.

#### III. PROCEDURES

##### A. CANCELLATION OF TRIPS

- 1. Cancellation of trips may occur due to weather, safety, world events, or local school need. Trips will be cancelled only under circumstances under which

appropriate school authorities believe it is reasonably cautious and prudent to do so in order to ensure the safety of students and staff or to ensure the effective operation of the local school. In such cases, every effort will be made to provide as much advance notice as possible.

2. MCPS is not responsible for financial losses to students and parents due to cancellation of trips.
3. The authority to cancel trips rests with the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.

B. PROCEDURES FOR AVOIDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Each employee who participates in a trip is expected to be knowledgeable of MCPS Regulation GCA-RA: *Employee Conflict of Interest*, and to assume the responsibility to ensure that his/her behavior and activities are consistent with the policies and expectations of the Board of Education and are not susceptible to conflict of interest in the areas such as those outlined in Regulation GCA-RA.

1. Employees who engage in work of any type where the source of information concerning customer, client, or employer originates from any information obtained through the school system shall not automatically be in conflict with Regulation GCA-RA, but they are required to affirmatively state in writing that they are not in conflict of interest. This statement must be submitted to the principal along with the trip proposal.
2. Any employee who acts as chaperone is not in conflict with Regulation GCA-RA if his/her basic expenses, comparable to those of the other participants, are defrayed by a travel agency.

C. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL FIELD, TRAVEL-STUDY, OR STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRIPS

In the development of a plan for a trip, the staff is responsible for assuring that:

1. The objectives of the trip are specifically related to the instructional program or to a regularly scheduled extracurricular activity
2. The trip will not significantly adversely disrupt the overall learning environment of the school

3. Individual student grades, eligibility, or course requirements will not be adversely affected by participating in the trip. However, participating students are responsible for and required to make up assigned work in classes missed
4. Appropriate educational experiences will be provided for those students who do not participate in the trip
5. Schools must provide financial options to ensure maximum participation by all interested and qualified students regardless of their economic circumstances. No student may be denied participation, for financial reasons, in a school-sponsored field trip that is integral to the curriculum and the instructional program
6. The proposed program is feasible within the time allotted
7. If possible, there should be a preview visit by the teacher or another staff member unless the trip has been experienced previously
8. Teachers not participating in the trip, who have regularly scheduled activities for students for whom the trip is planned, are informed of the proposed plans
9. Chaperones should be assigned based on the age and number of students, location, and type of activity. Additionally, the appropriate number of chaperones should be based on the age of students and type of activity. (Note: Children who are not a part of the group participating in the trip may not accompany parents when the parents serve as chaperones.)
10. A plan be developed for the administration of medication for any student requiring such assistance

**D. PROCEDURES FOR A FIELD TRIP**

**Sequential Steps in Developing, Obtaining Approval, and Implementing a Field Trip**

1. Plans for the school-sponsored field trip are developed by staff and students, when appropriate, according to the guidelines in item C above and submitted to the principal for approval. A trip must be approved by the principal before any contractual commitments may be made or any payments collected from students or parents.

2. Once the trip is approved, the following steps shall be carried out by the responsible school personnel:
  - a) MCPS transportation should be utilized where available and economically feasible. When an MCPS bus is required, procedures outlined in Regulation EEA-RA: *Transportation of Students* are followed
  - b) When commercial carriers are used, only those approved by the Office of the Chief Operating Officer may be utilized
  - c) When transportation is provided as in (a) or (b) above, all students should be transported as a group
  - d) If school or private carrier transportation with an employee or designated adult driver over 21 cannot be arranged, it is permissible to utilize student transportation under the following conditions:
    - (1) Written parental consent and the written consent of the owner of the motor vehicle in which transportation is to be provided, must be obtained. (When the student owns the car, parental consent is still required.) Proof of insurance may be required. Approval is obtained by the use of (a) MCPS Form 560-31, *Application To Participate in an Activity Away from School for Which MCPS Transportation Is Not Provided* or (b) *Parental Approval for Field Trip*. Students who have reached the age of majority may authorize their own participation
    - (2) Written parental consent by the student passengers shall likewise be obtained and retained on file
  - e) Parents are provided with specific written information about objectives of the trip, costs, alternative payment options, and transportation arrangements, including departure time and approximate time of return. Parents will also be provided with information regarding cancellation procedures of this regulation, as outlined in section III of this regulation, and general information about travel insurance
    - (1) Chaperones who are not employees of MCPS are not covered by MCPS health insurance unless an injury occurs on an MCPS vehicle and the MCPS operator is negligent

- (2) Students who hold the student accident policy (available at the beginning of each school year or at the time of entry) are covered on an approved program or activity within the liability limits of the policy as described in the insurance brochure
- (3) The principal is responsible for:
  - (a) Obtaining and retaining on file written parental permission for students who have not established age of majority to participate in a field trip
  - (b) Signing any contractual agreement with a public carrier and/or any other service provider
  - (c) Assuring that all plans and arrangements are understood by the participants and their parents
- (4) School staff is responsible for:
  - (a) Setting behavior expectations for both participation in the trip and the behavior expected on the trip, as well as communicating these expectations and the consequences for failure to meet them to students and parents prior to the trip
  - (b) Carrying a list of the names of students and chaperones participating and their emergency information and submitting a copy of the list to the principal prior to the trip
  - (c) Emphasizing responsible student behavior and providing reasonable supervision
  - (d) Notifying the principal of any emergency situation, e.g., an accident involving student (s), student missing from the group, etc.
- (5) Students participating on a trip during school hours are permitted and expected to make up any school work missed, and the student's absence is recorded as "excused."

- (6) All designated private drivers will observe the following safety rules and requirements. These rules will be distributed to the drivers and will be followed by them or excess coverage shall not be in force:
  - (a) Every driver and passenger must use safety belts
  - (b) The driver must hold a valid license
  - (c) Approval will only be given for travel to the site and back to the school or home as specified

E. PROCEDURES FOR TRAVEL-STUDY AND STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRIPS

Sequential Steps in Developing and Obtaining Approval for Travel-Study and Student Organization Trips.

Plans for the school-sponsored trip are cooperatively developed by staff and students and reviewed with the principal.

1. If the principal approves the plan, the staff and students, with the cooperation of the parents, jointly develop and prepare a detailed written proposal according to the guidelines in section D. above.
2. The fully developed proposal, with supporting data, is submitted to the principal for approval. The principal is responsible for reviewing and approving or disapproving all proposed school-sponsored trips. In considering a proposal, all factors relating to the program as outlined under section D. above will be assessed and verified. The principal is responsible for assuring that every effort has been made to provide a learning experience that is aligned to the instructional program or enhances the instructional program and that all reasonable provisions are made for the safety of the students.
3. Upon approval by the principal, the school-sponsored trip proposal, MCPS form 210-4, *Travel Study Approval for Overnight and Extended Trips Out of the Washington Metropolitan Area*, all supporting data, and the recommendations of the principal must be submitted to the community superintendent a minimum of four weeks in advance of the scheduled departure date and prior to parent notification of and the collection of any payments for the proposed trip. The community superintendent is responsible

for reviewing the proposal, notifying the principal of his/her approval or disapproval of a proposed program, maintaining a file of approved proposals, and approving professional leave for participating staff members when appropriate.

4. Conferences and/or orientation sessions involving students and their parents, as appropriate, are scheduled to assure that all plans are clearly understood. These activities should not occur until approval from the appropriate community superintendent has been received.
5. During conferences and orientation sessions, parents should be notified of cancellation procedures as outlined in section III.A. of this regulation.

F. CONTENT OF A PROPOSAL FOR A TRAVEL-STUDY OR STUDENT ORGANIZATION TRIP

A proposal jointly developed by staff and students should include:

1. A statement of the objectives of the travel-study or student organization trip and an outline of anticipated educational experiences and/or of the course of study to be followed
2. An itemized statement of basic costs, including transportation, meals, and accommodations, with evidence that the fees charged are competitive for the services provided, and other expenses not included in basic costs
3. A statement of expenses (if any) not included in the basic costs as appropriate to the school-sponsored trip such as required inoculations, passport and visa expenses, costs of a personal nature, and optional trip insurance
4. Procedures for maintaining financial records for purposes of auditing
5. Description of transportation arrangements with assurance that:
  - a) When an MCPS bus is required, procedures outlined in MCPS Regulation EEA-RA: *Transportation of Students* are followed
  - b) When public transportation is required, only a government approved carrier with a certificate of insurance will be employed and/or

- c) When transportation is provided by MCPS, as in 1) or 2) above, all students are transported as a group and individual students are not permitted to drive or ride with a fellow student in a privately owned vehicle
- d) When private transportation is required for a small group or team event involving travel to a school-sponsored activity, motor vehicles must be driven by consenting employees and designated adults over 21 years of age. These persons should be advised that their own insurance coverage is primarily responsible but that MCPS does provide excess liability coverage

Teachers will not be required to drive students to activities which take place away from the school building, however, teachers may do so voluntarily with the advance approval of their principal or immediate supervisor. They will be compensated at the rate per mile (specified in the negotiated agreement) for all driving done in their own automobiles

- e) If it is necessary for students to drive or ride with a fellow student or to be transported in a vehicle other than one owned by MCPS, students must submit Form 560-31: *Application to Participate in an Activity Away From School for Which MCPS Transportation Is Not Provided* (Required to comply with federal, state, and local law)

6. The following information regarding insurance coverage is made known to teachers, chaperones, and parents:

- a) Chaperones, who are not employees of the MCPS, are not covered by the MCPS health insurance unless an injury occurs on an MCPS vehicle and the MCPS operator is negligent
- b) Students who hold the student accident policy available at the beginning of each school year or at the time of entry are covered on an approved program or activity within the liability limits of the policy as described in the insurance brochure
- c) Additional liability insurance coverage is available for trips where obvious safety hazards exist

7. Identification of accommodations to be used with assurance that they:

- a) Are nondiscriminatory
  - b) Have adequate health and safety standards
  - c) Are adapted and suitable for the disabled
8. The detailed itinerary -- departure, travel schedule, and return
9. The names of qualified individuals who will serve as chaperones
10. Identification of a travel agency, if appropriate, and evidence that the agency:
- a) Has experience in handling school groups
  - b) Can provide proof of satisfactory service
  - c) Can provide customer references (individuals who have used the service for similar group programs)
  - d) Has quoted a fee which is competitive for services provided
  - e) Has well-defined procedures for handling personal emergencies of the participants
  - f) Is a member of the Better Business Bureau and the American Society of Travel Agents
11. Orientation plans for parents and students including written information concerning the program such as:
- a) The aims and objectives of the program of travel
  - b) The standards of conduct established for the program
  - c) The responsibilities students assume by participating in the program
  - d) The basic cost of travel, meals, accommodations, and other expenses not included in the basic fee
  - e) Cancellation procedures as outlined in section III.A. above

- f) Travel arrangements, overnight accommodations, if appropriate, and the itinerary
- g) Arrangements for coping with illness, accidents, or other emergencies
- h) Need for special equipment and clothing

#### G. IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROVED PROPOSAL

1. The principal or designee is responsible for (1) obtaining and retaining, on file, written parental permission for students who have not reached the age of majority to participate on a trip, (2) signing any contractual agreement with a public carrier or travel agency, and (3) ensuring that all plans and arrangements are understood by the participants and their parents.
2. Upon approval of the school-sponsored trip from the community superintendent, the responsible school personnel provide parents and students with written information concerning the trip and obtains parental permission for student participation, including approval of the transportation to be used. Approval is obtained by the use of the appropriate form: MCPS Form 560-31: *Application to Participate in an Activity Away From School for Which MCPS Transportation Is Not Provided*. Parents must also sign MCPS form 555-6, *Parent Financial Responsibility*.
3. In implementing the approved plan, the responsible school staff will:
  - a) Notify the principal of any situation which will require a change in plan
  - b) Carry a list of the names of students and chaperones participating and their emergency information and submit a copy of the list to the principal prior to the trip
  - c) Emphasize responsible student behavior and provide reasonable supervision
  - d) Notify the appropriate MCPS office of any emergency situation, e.g., an accident involving student (s), a student missing from the group
  - e) Comply with the time schedule approved for the trip

**Regulation History:** Formerly Regulation No. 301-5, July 20, 1981, revised December 1986; revised October 14, 2004.