



Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment: Beneficiary Travel Training

Introduction

Veterans/Service members and dependents who travel to and from a Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) office or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation may be entitled to reimbursement for the cost of beneficiary travel (BT). Reimbursement for BT may be authorized at Government expense within limits specified by law in accordance with 38 U.S.C 111.

The purpose of this training is to highlight and provide clarification on the revised Beneficiary Travel Procedures according to M28R.V.B.6.

Learning Objectives

This training will clarify the following:

- Who is eligible to receive BT
- When to authorize BT
- How to reimburse BT
- How to prepay BT

Who is Eligible to Receive Beneficiary Travel



The following individuals are eligible to receive BT:

Veterans and Service members participating in the Chapter 31 program are eligible to receive BT expenses.

Dependents attending counseling under Chapter 35 are eligible to receive BT only when counseling is required.

Dependents receiving services under Chapter 18 are eligible to receive BT comparable to BT provided under Chapter 31.

Remember, Servicemembers attending counseling under Chapter 36 are not eligible to receive BT unless the counseling is required, as in the case of an individual who has been determined incompetent. In this situation, educational and vocational counseling must be provided prior to the selection of a program of education or training (38 U.S.C. 3697A).

Refer to M28R.VII.A for more information on other benefits case management.

When to Authorize Reimbursement of Beneficiary Travel

BT may be authorized for reimbursement in the following situations:

- Initial Evaluation, Reevaluation and Counseling Appointments
- Intraregional Travel (with prior approval by the Case Manager)
- Interregional Travel (with prior approval by the Case Manager)

Remember, attendants may receive BT to enable an individual to attend appointments for initial evaluation, counseling, or intraregional or interregional travel.

When to Authorize Reimbursement of Beneficiary Travel: Evaluation and Counseling



VR&E must authorize reimbursement of BT when an individual with a service-connected disability is asked to report to a designated place for an initial evaluation, a reevaluation, or a counseling appointment (including personal or vocational adjustment counseling) in accordance with 38 CFR 21.376

if requested by the individual. During the appointment, VR&E staff should ask the individual if they wish to claim travel for the appointment and also inform the individual that requests for reimbursement of travel expenses must be received within 30 days after completion of travel.

Anytime an individual reports to a VR&E Office for evaluation or counseling, BT may be reimbursed regardless of the case status or if the amount of miles traveled is over or under 50 miles. For local travel under 50 miles, individuals may receive reimbursement for public transportation costs, 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 (with receipts).

Remember, VA does not authorize BT for scheduled case management appointments, either at a training facility or VR&E Office unless the individual is in need of and provided vocational exploration or vocational adjustment counseling (this determination must be clearly documented in a Corporate WINRS [CWINRS] note).

When to Authorize Beneficiary Travel: Intraregional Travel



VR&E may authorize BT for travel to and from an individual's residence and a training or employment location when travel is within the territory of the Regional Office (RO) of jurisdiction and meets the conditions outlined in 38 CFR 21.370 (Click the Hyperlink or scroll down to access the Code of Federal Regulation Conditions).

38 CFR 21.370: Conditions for Beneficiary Intraregional Travel

VR&E may authorize BT that is beyond the normal daily commute for an individual to travel within the territory of the RO of jurisdiction under any of the following conditions:

1. The individual is reporting to the chosen school or training facility for the purpose of starting training.
2. The individual is reporting to a prospective employer or trainer for an interview prior to starting training when there is definite assurance that he/she will be found acceptable to start training.
3. The individual is reporting to the chosen school for a personal interview prior to induction into training.
4. The individual is reporting to a rehabilitation facility.
5. The individual is returning to his/her home from the training or rehabilitation facility when training is not available for a period of 30 days or more (including summer vacation periods).
6. The individual 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 individual 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 individual without good reason.
8. The individual 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 individual 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 individual is reporting to a place to take a scheduled examination required to practice the trade or profession for which he/she has been trained. This travel must be limited to points within the state where the individual pursued his/her training or, if the individual 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 individual could take the examination, travel must be limited to the nearest place.

Intraregional BT requires prior approval from the individual's case manager unless the case manager determines that the individual was acting in good faith or the individual is participating in an approved retroactive induction plan of services.

Requests for intraregional BT must be received in writing from the individual (an email from the individual meets this requirement).

The case manager must ensure that the determination to authorize intraregional BT is documented in CWINRS notes.

Travel must be outside routine commuting distance in the geographic area and only includes travel to and from the individual's residence and a training or employment location (a normal daily commute is defined as 50 miles one-way).

An individual participating in the VR&E Program would not normally receive BT for daily travel to and from a training facility or place of employment except when Special Transportation Assistance is needed (refer to M28R.V.A.1).

Authorization of intraregional BT is limited to the individual's transportation, and does not include transportation for the individual's dependents, or for moving personal effects, to include expenses for a moving truck or related services.

When to Authorize Beneficiary Travel: Interregional Travel



VR&E may authorize BT when travel from the jurisdiction of one RO to another is needed to accomplish the goals of his/her rehabilitation plan and meets the conditions outlined in 38 CFR 21.372 (Click the [Hyperlink](#) or scroll down to access the Code of Federal Regulation Conditions).

38 CFR 21.372: Conditions for Beneficiary Interregional Travel

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

1. The individual is entering training in the nearest satisfactory facility.
2. The individual is entering training in a state in which he/she has long-standing family and social ties, and in which he/she plans to live following rehabilitation.
3. The individual is reporting to an employer-trainer when all necessary steps have been taken to establish an On-the-Job training (OJT) program.
4. The individual is reporting to a rehabilitation facility.

5. The individual is returning to his/her home from the training or rehabilitation facility when training is not available for a period of 30 days or more (including summer vacation periods).
6. The individual 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 individual 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 individual without good reason.
8. The individual 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:
 - A. There is no opportunity for suitable employment for the individual within the jurisdiction of the training facility, and
 - B. The individual has a serious employment handicap
9. The individual is returning from his/her training facility upon completion a training program when satisfactory employment is not available.
10. The individual is returning from the training facility without authorization because VR&E did not issue the necessary travel authorization in a timely manner.

Interregional BT requires prior approval from the case manager unless the case manager determines that the individual was acting in good faith or the individual is participating in an approved retroactive induction plan of services.

Requests for BT must be received in writing from the individual (an email from the individual meets this requirement).

The case manager must ensure that the determination to authorize the travel expense is documented in CWINRS notes.

Authorization of interregional BT is limited to the individual's transportation, and does not include transportation for the individual's dependents, or for moving personal effects, to include expenses for a moving truck or related services.

Remember, the individual must have a serious employment handicap to be eligible for BT to report to prearranged suitable employment or for a prearranged employment interview that is outside the jurisdiction of the RO.

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel

When authorized, VA has authority to provide reimbursement to eligible persons for mileage driven in a private vehicle (at a rate of 41.5 cents per mile) or for transportation by common carrier/public

transportation with the presentation of an itemized receipt within 30 calendar days of travel (plane, bus, taxi, etc.); reimbursement for the cost of rental vehicles is prohibited.

Ferry fares; bridge, road and tunnel tolls; luggage fares; or parking associated with travel may also be provided on presentation of an itemized receipt within 30 calendar days of travel.

However, consideration must be given to the most economical means of transportation (i.e., reimburse the mileage rate or actual cost, whichever is less, or pay the mileage rate if no actual costs are claimed).

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel: Special Considerations



In order to receive reimbursement of BT, an individual must actually incur an expense.

Should one or more individuals travel together in a private vehicle, only the owner of the vehicle is actually incurring expenses and therefore is the only person entitled to reimbursement.

Should multiple individuals share a vehicle where passengers must pay for their transport such as a taxi or where one individual pays another individual for transport, then all are entitled to reimbursement either at the mileage rate or actual cost, whichever is less.

Individuals who take non-pay transportation such as DAV transportation or VA transportation Systems (VTS) are only eligible to be reimbursed for any travel to and from his/her residence to point of pick-up/drop-off as they are not otherwise incurring an expense.

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel: Lodging and Meals



For travel beyond 12 hours, the cost of lodging and meals may be reimbursed up to 50% of the local government employee rate upon the presentation of itemized receipts within 30 days of completion of travel.

Refer to the [GSA Per Diem Website](#) to find the current rates.

Reimbursement for lodging and meals may be provided for conferences, supplemental short-term trainings and other required travel beyond 12 hours in connection with vocational rehabilitation with prior approval from the individual's case manager.

NOTE: Reimbursement for lodging and meals must not be provided for training that encompasses the individual's entire rehabilitation program or solely because the individual chooses to stop or take a less direct route.

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel: VAF 20-0968

VAF 20-0968 must be used to reimburse BT.

To ease the administrative burden on VR&E staff, VAF 20-0968 may be completed by the individual requesting reimbursement for BT.

A properly executed VAF 20-0968 should be enclosed with the initial appointment letter for individuals who live outside the local area of the VR&E office and contain a request that the individual bring the completed form to the evaluation/counseling meeting along with proof of mileage from his/her home to the office, such as a Mapquest® printout.

Failure on the part of the individual to complete the form and/or provide mileage does not impact the delivery of BT for evaluation/counseling appointments.

VR&E staff must inform individuals that failure to provide itemized receipts within 30 calendar days when claiming actual cost or when claiming mileage for BT will result in forfeiture of BT benefits.

VR&E staff must offer assistance and/or complete the form as needed.

The date of an application for BT is the postmark date if mailed or the date of submission if hand delivered or requested verbally.

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel: Calculating Mileage



When reimbursing authorized BT at the current mileage rate, mileage must be calculated to and from the individual's residence and the place of evaluation and counseling or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation (i.e., door-to-door not zip-to-zip code).

The number of miles should be calculated using Mapquest® as the principal standard for determining approved reimbursement.

Other standards (e.g., Rand McNally, Yahoo, Bing) may be used if data is not available in Mapquest.com®. Deviations from Mapquest® or other standard results are allowable when an identified route is impassable or documented as inappropriate.

VR&E staff that do not have access to manually enter mileage in the CWINRS Add/Edit/View Beneficiary Travel Transaction screen must complete VAF 20-8824e to request access from the local Information Security Officer (ISO).

How to Reimburse Beneficiary Travel: Processing the VAF 20-0968

To process [VAF 20-0968](#) for an individual authorized to receive BT, VR&E staff should use the following steps

1. Complete VAF 20-0968 or obtain completed form from the individual.
2. Ensure that the reimbursement of BT is in accordance with the guidance outlined in M28R.V.B.6.

3. Ensure that the dates of travel are correct (see #6 and #9 of VAF 20-0968).
4. Ensure that mileage is consistent with Mapquest® or other standards (e.g., Rand McNally, Yahoo, Bing) if data is not available in Mapquest.com® (see #17a of VAF 20-0968).
5. Ensure that the total amount claimed is correct (see #20 of VAF 20-0968).
6. Ensure that the individual's Social Security Number (SSN) is annotated for tracking purposes (see #3 and #22 of VAF 20-0968).
7. Ensure that the form is signed by the individual and an authorized VR&E staff member (see #15, #25 and #29 of VAF 20-0968).
8. Enter information in the CWINRS Add/Edit/View Beneficiary Travel Transaction screen but do not select the print VAF 3542 option. For assistance, refer to the CWINRS User Guide: Chapter 6, Case Management.
9. Submit the VAF 20-0968 to Finance to process the payment.
10. File a copy of the VAF 20-0968 and itemized receipts (as applicable) on the left side of the individual's CER folder.

NOTE: If mistakes or inappropriate charges are found on forms, VR&E staff must strike out, subtract and annotate reasons then provide due process following guidance located in M28R.III.C.2.

How to Prepay Beneficiary Travel

When VR&E authorizes prepaid travel for an individual who is not able to use personal funds to report to a place of evaluation and counseling or other place in connection with vocational rehabilitation, prepayment of transportation by common carrier and/or lodging expenses, as applicable, must be completed via the RO's Centrally Billed Account (CBA) travel card that is funded through Readjustment Benefits (RB). VR&E staff must contact the local Support Services Division (SSD) for assistance with the purchase of prepaid travel expenses. A memo signed by the case manager authorizing the purchase of transportation and lodging, as applicable, must be submitted to SSD when requesting prepayment of travel expenses using the CBA travel card. The memo must include traveler name (as shown on the individual's identification), date of birth (if flights are required), travel dates, location, purpose of trip, amount, date and description of purchase, and any constraints that should be considered when booking (e.g., arrive by 9am, depart no earlier than 5pm, disability-related needs, etc.).

As confirmation of flights and hotel are received by SSD, they are forwarded to VR&E, who then provides the information to the individual. VR&E staff are the liaisons between SSD and the individual during this process. Actual costs associated with prepaid travel must be recorded in CWINRS with costing charged to the RB account, Budget Object Code (BOC) 4146. Other reimbursable expenses (meals, mileage, etc.) that are not charged on the CBA travel card must be processed using VAF 20-0968 and recorded in CWINRS.

It is VR&E's responsibility to ensure that the individual traveled and incurred the travel expenses purchased with the CBA card. VAF 28-1905m (see Appendix O, VA Forms) may be used for this. Documents related to prepaid travel, such as the SSD memo and VAF 28-1905m, must be filed on the left side of the individual's Counseling/Evaluation/Rehabilitation (CER) folder. SSD will maintain records of the CBA transactions and expenses paid with the associated obligation documents in accordance with National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), General Schedule 6.

Questions

Thank you for your participation in this training. VR&E Service hopes that this training provided clarity to the new expectations for processing beneficiary travel for our Veterans, Servicemembers and dependents. Please contact your assigned VR&E Field Liaison for any questions related to this training.

District	E-mail
North Atlantic	VAVBAWAS/CO/VRE/NA
Southeast	VAVBAWAS/CO/VRE/SE
Midwest	VAVBAWAS/CO/VRE/MW
Continental	VAVBAWAS/CO/VRE/CONT
Pacific	VAVBAWAS/CO/VRE/PA

To ensure training is recorded to your "Learning Plan", please log in to the [Talent Management System](#) and complete the evaluation in TMS.

If you have any problems with this process, please contact [Lamoyd Figures](#) or 407-835-5617.