

Tidewater Youth Services Commission

Operating Instruction 1.3

Subject: Establishing Work “Base Points” for Non-Residential Field Staff

Issued by: Shawn Sawyer, Executive Director

Effective Date: April 1, 2013

Revised: October 26, 2018

Issued to: Deputy Director, Program Directors, Administrative Staff

Expiration Date: None

As an agency providing services to a large geographical area, it is necessary to assign work to those delivering services in the home and community in ways that are efficient and cost effective. Because those performing work in the field do not work out of a given “office”, the issue of establishing where one “works” becomes problematic. Since this directly affects how we reimburse staff members for mileage and other work-related expenses, it has become necessary to develop this operating instruction to provide clarity and consistency in our management of travel related expenses.

There are two principles informing this operating instruction:

- Commutable Miles: under both state and federal laws governing the difference between *reimbursement* and *income*, there is general agreement that all employees incur a cost to commute to their work site. The length of the commute is not an issue for the employer since, in most instances, the employer does not dictate where the employee lives. If mileage is paid to the employee to commute to work, it is no longer *reimbursement* but *taxable income*. The following is an excerpt from the policy from the Office of the Comptroller of Virginia:

“An employee can have only one assigned base point. **Commuting mileage and other commuting costs incurred on normal**

workdays are considered a personal expense and are not reimbursable”.

- Assignment of work to a specific geographical area: as a general practice, TYSC programs assign staff to carry cases from a discreet part of the region so as to reduce travel time, limit travel costs, increase the staff person’s knowledge of resources within their catchment area, and to strengthen relationships with referral sources, courts and human service professionals. Because of these specialized work assignments, it makes sense to determine a base point for travel reimbursement that is within the assigned geographical area.

According to Virginia’s State Travel Regulations (General Accounting Section no. 20300-Cash Disbursements Accounting): “An employee can only have one base point, even if the employee has multiple work locations. It is the agency’s responsibility to assign the base point to be used for reimbursement purposes.”

Therefore, the following procedures will apply with regard to the employee’s base point and mileage reimbursements:

- Every staff person performing field work will be assigned a base point which will be the location from which mileage will be calculated. This will typically be the Court Service Unit whose referrals comprise the majority of the staff’s caseload or the Commission’s main office. In situations where the staff person maintains office space or a work station at a permanent location, that will be the base point (i.e., school or CSU counselor, or residential staff). The base point will be assigned by the Program Director and approved by the Deputy Director or Executive Director. *All persons assigned to the same geographical area will be assigned the same base point. The location of the employee’s residence will not be the deciding factor in assigning a base point; the factor dictating the base point will be the locality or geographical area in which the majority of the staff person’s work takes place. If it is impossible to determine a base point based on geographical work assignment, the base point will be the Commission’s main office.* There is no

guarantee that *all* work assigned will be in the primary geographical location. Therefore, the base point will remain the same even if a staff person is carrying a case(s) in another locality. Once the base point is established, it will not be changed unless there is a permanent geographical reassignment. Program Directors or Assistant Directors are not authorized to change an employee's base point without approval from the Deputy Director or Executive Director.

- ALL mileage for the day is to be recorded. At the end of each day's mileage record the round trip mileage from home to and from the assigned base point will be subtracted from the total. The round trip commutable miles should be the same every day.
- As stated in Section 9.1C of the TYSC Personnel Policy Manual, "If an employee has completed his/her normal workday, or if he/she is off for the day and is called in to work for an emergency, the employee is eligible for mileage reimbursement from home to work and back".
- Travel routing in the course of planning and executing the Commission's business shall be the most direct practicable route.