

Administrative Policy No.: 19.70.10

Subject: Coffee and Light Refreshments

Information Contact: Office of Accounting Services
Chief, (360) 664-5716

Authorizing Source: RCW [43.03.050 \(4\)](#)
State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM)
[70.10](#), Coffee and light refreshments

Effective Date: August 1, 2006

Revised: December 28, 2023

Approved By: **Original signed by Richard Pannkuk**
Assistant Secretary / Chief Financial Officer

Purpose

This establishes the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) policy and procedures for light refreshments when conducting official state business.

Scope

This policy applies to all:

1. DSHS employees, officers, and volunteers, including board and commission members.
2. Contractors that do not have specific contractual arrangements and are reimbursed under [chapter 10](#) and [chapter 70](#) of the *State Administrative and Accounting Manual* or [DSHS travel rules and policies](#).

This policy does not apply to contractors reimbursed under specific contractual arrangements.

Additional Resources

Department of Health - [Recommended food and beverages](#)
DSHS administrative policy
18.86, Healthy eating and nutrition
[DSHS forms picker](#)

Form 17-186, Meeting expense pre-authorization
[Executive order 13-06](#)

Definitions

Coffee includes any non-alcoholic beverage, such as tea, soft drinks, juice, water, milk, or coffee.

Eleven hour rule is the rule that requires an employee to be in travel status for at least eleven hours to qualify for a meal reimbursement. This is for non-overnight travel on a scheduled work day, they have to be in travel status for at least 11 hours and during the entire meal period to qualify.

Healthful options means meeting the standard of the Washington state healthy nutrition guidelines and any federal health and sustainability guidelines.

Light refreshments are food and drink that may be served between meals.

Official state business means activities performed by an official or state employee, authorized volunteer, or contractor, work experience program participant, student or employee of another governmental jurisdiction as directed by their supervisor in order to accomplish state programs or as required by the duties of their position or office.

Regular workplace means the location where the traveler normally performs their work (excludes meeting and conference rooms).

Volunteer is a person who, of their own free choice, performs any assigned or authorized duties for the state or any agency thereof. A volunteer receives no wages and is registered and accepted as a volunteer by the state or any agency thereof, for the purpose of engaging in authorized volunteer service.

Policy

A. DSHS may serve light refreshments in certain circumstances.

1. All authorized boards and commissions may provide coffee and light refreshments at their official public meetings, including executive sessions.
2. **DSHS** may provide coffee and light refreshments for certain occasions if ALL the following conditions are met:
 - a. Coffee and light refreshments are approved by the administration accounting office, supervisor, and division director (or authorized designee) in writing, using form 17-186 or memorandum with equivalent information in advance of the meeting or event.

- The request must identify the purpose of the meeting and the names of the state program (e.g., commission, boards, etc.) or people attending the meeting.
 - Coffee and light refreshments at reoccurring events may be approved annually by including the dates of all scheduled meetings on the request. Recurring approvals should be resubmitted every July and must be approved by the division director or authorized designee.
- b. The coffee and light refreshments are an integral part of the meeting or training.
 - c. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct state business, recognize agency or employee accomplishments, recognize volunteers, or to provide formal training that benefits the state.
 - d. The meeting or training session takes place away from the employee's, official's, or volunteer's regular workplace.
 - e. The cost of the coffee and light refreshments per person does not exceed ten percent of the authorized daily meal per diem amount for the location in which the event takes place.
3. When determining what food and beverages to offer as coffee and light refreshments, the organizer of the meeting will, whenever possible, provide healthful options and consider the [recommended food and beverages](#) provided by the Department of Health.

B. DSHS must not incur expenditures for coffee and light refreshments in the following situations:

1. Employee or agency anniversaries.
2. Receptions for new, existing, or retiring employees or state officials.
3. Election celebrations.
4. Any "hosting" activities intended to lobby a legislator or a government official.
5. Social events.

C. Documentation of approval and purchase

1. Required documentation includes:
 - a. A copy of the approval memorandum or approved form 17-186.
 - b. All original receipts.
 - c. A supporting document showing the date, event purpose and list of participants.
2. Use account code **Sub Sub Object EA-A130** to process payment.