



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Office of Indian Education Programs
Human Resources Office
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OIEP Human Resources Bulletin: 03-06

To: Office of Indian Education Program Employees (OIEP)

From: *Wey* Human Resources Officer *Kay Dwyer*

Subject: **Use of the Bank Of America (BOA) Charge Card**

References:

Public Law 101-264, DOI Departmental Manual, Part 3, Table of Penalties

Coverage:

All OIEP employees.

Description:

Public Law 105-264 requires Federal employees to use the travel charge card for all payments of official travel expenses unless a specific exemption has been granted. However, the BOA charge card can only be used for officially authorized purposes as defined below. The employee must conform to all restrictions and limitations on officially authorized purposes and must pay the account by the monthly due date regardless of whether or not the employee has been reimbursed for the expenses. Failure to comply with these requirements could result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, recently issued a revised policy on BOA charge card program responsibilities. This policy addresses the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) longstanding problem with charge card delinquency and misuse and identifies procedures to govern the BOA charge card program.

Limitation On Use of the Charge Card:

The employee must limit use of the BOA charge card to expenses incurred by the employee relating to official government travel. The card may not be used for

personal use that is not connected with official government travel and cannot be used for the benefit of the employee.

Employee Responsibilities/OIEP Restrictions:

The BOA charge card may not be used for personal expenses, such as: lodging while not in an official travel status. Travelers must have an approved Travel Authorization when claiming reimbursement for lodging expenses. The BOA charge card must not be used for fuel/maintenance of personally owned vehicles, local restaurant charges, purchase of household furnishings, travel expenses for an individual (Government or non-Government) other than the employee, regardless of the reason, or for withdrawing cash when not in an official travel status.

OIEP employees (current or new) who obtain a BOA charge card must sign a statement of assurance to acknowledge that they are aware of the limitations on the use of the BOA travel charge card. In addition to the limitations listed above, the statement of assurance includes the following:

1. that they will not withdraw cash from a casino ATM or otherwise receive cash at any casino;
2. that they must pay the Government-issued BOA Master card by the due date shown on the statement whether they have been reimbursed or not;
3. that their BOA travel charge card will be suspended if they are 30 days or more past due in paying the account;
4. that disciplinary action may be taken against the employee if they fail to pay the BOA travel charge card account by the due date reflected on the bill or for use of the travel charge card for other than officially authorized purposes. The BOA may initiate collection action, including a salary offset, for any past due amount owed;
5. that they must verify the accuracy of the monthly BOA charge card statement each month, sign the statement and present the statement to their supervisor;
6. that they must submit completed proper vouchers to their approving official within five (5) days after the completion of official travel.

Bank Of America Card Delinquency:

Employees are responsible for paying their BOA charge card account by the due date shown on the statement whether they have been reimbursed or not. When an

OIEP employee does not remit reimbursement to BOA by the due date shown on the statement, the account becomes delinquent and is reported as delinquent to BIA (and to the Education Line Officer/supervisor).

Closure and Re-Opening of Accounts:

Employees whose accounts have been delinquent three (3) times in a 12-month period will have their accounts closed. Accounts that are 30-days or more past due will also be closed. Once an account is closed, the employee will not be able to request use of the Corporate card account for transportation tickets or any other travel related expenses. Deviations from this will be made on a case-by-case basis and it will be the responsibility of the employee to provide sufficient information demonstrating that the delinquency was not the fault of the employee.

Employees who have had their accounts closed cannot request a new account until one year after the repayment of the entire debt. To request a new account (that an account be reopened), the employee will be required to submit, in writing, through their supervisor and/or Office Director to the Chief Financial Officer, their reason for the prior delinquencies, including sufficient evidence documenting that their delinquencies were not the fault of the employee. They must also submit a statement certifying that they understand the importance of paying their bills on time. Supervisors are required to submit information specific to disciplinary actions taken on the cardholder regarding the cardholder's delinquent account in order for the account to be reactivated.

Supervisors' Responsibilities:

Supervisors are responsible for reviewing and approving all employee BOA charge card statements to ensure that charge cards are used appropriately and only for official government-related business. Supervisors must investigate and address all delinquencies and/or misuse of the charge card and take appropriate disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include written counseling, letter of reprimand, suspension or removal, as appropriate based on a case-by-case review. Supervisors will be held accountable for their responsibility in addressing charge card delinquencies and/or misuse. Supervisors are also required to review and approve proper travel vouchers and forward them to the paying office within five (5) days of receipt.

Basis for Taking Disciplinary Actions:

In order to control delinquency and misuse of BOA charge cards, it may be necessary to take disciplinary action against employees who fail or refuse to pay their bills by the monthly due date or who knowingly make inappropriate charges.

To discipline an employee for misuse of the travel charge card, it is essential to remember that the card is provided for official government travel and travel-related expenses away from the duty station. The card and the account are not to be used for

personal purposes. Use of the BOA charge card for other than official government travel and travel-related expenses is, therefore, a violation of specific written guidelines and instructions. Any use of the travel charge card for other than official government travel and travel-related expenses may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may also be initiated based on the employee’s failure or refusal to pay their BOA travel charge card account by the monthly due date reflected on the statement.

Initiating Disciplinary Action Against An Employee:

Supervisors must work with the OIEP Human Resources Office to initiate disciplinary actions on employees with delinquent accounts or on whom it is believed that there has been misuse of the BOA travel charge card.

According to the following Department of Interior (DOI) Table of Penalties, a supervisor may issue disciplinary action for the first offense of failure to pay the full balance on the BOA charge card account or for unauthorized purchases on the charge card. The supervisor must work closely with the Human Resources Office to review individual circumstances and to determine the level of penalty. If a second offense occurs, the supervisor should consider initiating a more severe disciplinary action.

NATURE OF OFFENSE	FIRST OFFENSE	SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES	POSSIBLE CHARGES
14a. Failure to pay the full balance on the Government-issued charge card; using the charge card for personal/unauthorized purchases.	Written Reprimand to Removal	Written Reprimand to Removal	Misuse of a Government-issued charge card; Failure to pay the full account balance on a Government-issued charge card.

Consideration of Individual Circumstances:

Supervisors need to consider individual circumstances when assessing the appropriate penalty against an employee for failure to pay the full balance on their Government-issued charge card account or for using the charge card for personal or unauthorized purchases. Supervisors must also consider all mitigating and aggravating factors, such as: the nature and seriousness of the offense, the potential for the employee’s rehabilitation, the relationship of the offense(s) to the duties and responsibilities of the employee’s position, the clarity with which the employee was notified of the rules concerning appropriate use of the travel charge card (including any previous counseling) and the employee’s past performance and disciplinary record.

The OIEP Human Resources Office will work with each supervisor to ensure that all individual circumstances and aggravating and mitigating factors are considered in assessing the appropriate penalty in each case.

Awareness of policies:

Supervisors should ensure that employees are made aware of their responsibilities regarding limitations on use of the charge card. Before taking disciplinary action, the supervisor/manager should determine whether the employee in question was made aware of these policies prior to the alleged misconduct. To ensure that all employees are aware of the limitations on use of the charge card, a copy of this HR Bulletin should be given to all employees.

Supervisory Accountability:

Supervisors can be held accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities regarding use of the Government-issued BOA travel charge card, including their responsibility for taking appropriate disciplinary action against employees who are delinquent in paying their accounts or who are suspected of misusing the Government-issued charge card.

Reports to the Office of Inspector General:

Instances of suspected fraud regarding use of a Government-issued BOA Master card are to be reported to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) as soon as possible. Whether or not the OIG elects to pursue the allegation by initiating an investigation should not influence your decision to report the suspicion. All reports of suspected fraud could be used to support disciplinary actions, as well as, any proposal to remove an employee from his or her position.

Contact Information:

If you have questions concerning the above policy, please contact the OIG at 1-800-424-5081 or the Human Resources Office at (505) 248-6359.