

Charleston Research Institute Policy Memorandum

Title: Meeting Meals and Refreshments Policy
Reviewed by: Board of Directors
Implementation Date: February 11, 2013
Revision Dates: April 26, 2016, July 30, 2019
Next Scheduled Review Date: July 30, 2022
Approval: Amanda C. LaRue, Ph.D., Chairperson

Policy Statement:

CRI payment for meals should be kept to a minimum and reserved for special situations. CRI may pay for and VA employees may accept meals paid for by CRI provided that the expenditure is incidental to a business meeting that has a legitimate research or operations purpose. Federal employees are not restricted to federal per diem rates when being reimbursed by a non-governmental organization; however, both VA and IRS regulations prohibit extravagance.

CRI will not support

- Meals for routine VAMC or CRI staff, committee or department meetings
- Meals for a single person or group of persons on such a frequent basis that it could create the appearance of attendees using their official VA positions to derive a personal benefit
- Alcoholic beverages

Background:

Meetings, conferences, workshops, seminars, grand rounds, town halls, symposia, and other similar meetings are accepted features of conducting research. Meetings held for recruitment purposes should be documented with an agenda. Additionally, certain events, such as retreats and board meetings as well as fundraising and public relations, are necessary for the conduct of business. Incidental to the business purpose of such meetings, it may be appropriate to serve meals or refreshments.

Guidelines:

Meals are considered gifts, but refreshments that are not part of a meal have so little intrinsic value that they may be accepted without undue concern about who is giving them or why. As a result, federal employees generally may accept refreshments.

Various regulations, the federal ethics standards and the statute that authorizes CRI influence whether expenditures for meals are appropriate for CRI support. A meeting must have a documented research or CRI business purpose. CRI will not support "entertainment" expenses such as social activities, parties, ceremonial occasions or those that provide amusement.

Requests for CRI support will be reviewed and approved by the executive director. CRI will provide direct payment or reimbursement for reasonable meeting costs based on submission of original receipts. In the event of disagreement, the request will be referred to the full board as appropriate.