

DECISION

THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

A. Redinger
PLH

78109

FILE: B-192440

DATE: September 29, 1978

MATTER OF: Ms. Georgie M. Bond - Relocation - House-
hunting trip

DIGEST: Employee accepted a position at new duty station. She made a househunting trip prior to issuance of official written authorization for the trip and the transfer. She may not be reimbursed unless it can be established that the official vested with authority to transfer the employee had verbally authorized the trip before it was taken.

This action is in response to a letter dated July 19, 1978, with enclosures, from Ms. Elizabeth A. Allen, Chief, Fiscal Section, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, requesting a decision concerning the propriety of making payment on a voucher in the amount of \$182.28, in favor of Ms. Georgie M. Bond, an employee of the Internal Revenue Service. The voucher represents expenses incurred by the employee on a househunting trip incident to an official change of station.

The submission indicates that Ms. Bond, an employee of the Internal Revenue Service, Austin Service Center, received a permanent change of station assignment to the Dallas District Office effective August 14, 1977. The facts of record associated with the transfer are that during the period July 30-August 1, 1977, the employee traveled to Dallas, Texas, from Austin, Texas, on a househunting trip; that by agency Form 4282 executed by the employee, dated August 2, 1977, she agreed to remain in the employ of the Government for a minimum of 12 months in exchange for the transfer; that the SF 50, "Notification of Personnel Action", issued in her case was signed and dated August 10, 1977; and that the Form 4253, "Authorization for Moving Expenses" was signed by the Acting Director, Dallas District, and dated August 15, 1977. Among the items listed on the latter form as being reimbursable to her was item 2d., househunting round trip for herself by privately owned vehicle. The expected date of this occurrence was stated as being August 15, 1977.

On the initial claim for reimbursement of travel and transportation expenses, the cost of her pretransfer househunting expense was disallowed based on certain of the provisions of the Internal Revenue Manual which provides generally that a round trip to seek quarters at a new duty station will not be performed at Government expense until

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the employee's executed service agreement is received and a transfer order which includes such authorization is issued before the trip is taken.

Under the provisions of subsection 5724a(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, which is implemented by Federal Property Management Regulation (FPMR) 101-7, Chapter 2, Part 4, an employee and his spouse traveling together may be authorized one round trip to seek permanent residence quarters at a new duty station. Paragraph 2-4.3 of FPMR 101-7, establishes the procedural requirements for the authorization and provides in pertinent part:

"a. After employee's agreement to transfer. A trip for finding residence quarters shall not be permitted at Government expense until after the employee has agreed to the transfer and the date of the transfer has been established * * *.

* * * * *

"c. Authorization prior to trip. The trip for finding residence quarters shall not be made at Government expense unless a permanent change of station travel order has been issued which includes authorization for the round trip and mode of transportation and period of time allowed for the trip, specifies the date for reporting at the new official station, and indicates that the employee has signed the required agreement. * * *"

We have allowed payment of expenses for a househunting trip where the employee was verbally authorized the trip by a responsible official before it was taken, notwithstanding the fact that no prior written authorization had been issued. See B-185511, March 3, 1976, and decisions cited therein. However, where no verbal authorization is given prior to performance of the trip by an official vested with authority to grant such approval, househunting trip expenses may not be reimbursed. See B-182508, June 3, 1975.

In the present case, while the employee contends that she executed several documents on July 29, 1977, including the before-mentioned Form 4282 service agreement, there is nothing to show that any official

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document authorizing her transfer, antedated her househunting trip. Thus, unless it can be established that an official vested with such authority verbally authorized the trip on or before it was undertaken, no reimbursement is authorized.

The employee named several persons with whom she discussed various aspects of her impending move and expenses associated therewith. However, there is nothing of record that indicates that she was verbally authorized by an appropriate official to make the househunting trip at the time she did.

Accordingly, based on the record before us, the employee may not be reimbursed those expenses and the voucher accompanying the submission will be retained in this Office.


Acting Comptroller General
of the United States