

PLM II

11981

**DECISION**



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

FILE: B-194413 DATE: November 9, 1979

*[Request for Reimbursement of]*

MATTER OF: Vernice C. Bruce - Travel Expenses in Early Return  
From Temporary Duty

**DIGEST:** An employee, who returned to her permanent duty station from a training course at a temporary duty site due to illness in her family, but who later completed the course test and was awarded a "Certificate of Training" may be reimbursed for the cost of return travel, as her assignment was "substantially completed" before her return.

*Accord 14*

By a letter dated March 19, 1979, Mr. Donald J. Campbell, an authorized certifying officer, with the Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior, requested an advance decision concerning the supplemental travel voucher of Mrs. Vernice C. Bruce. The voucher in the amount of \$65.35 is for the cost of return travel from Fort Worth, Texas, to Amarillo, Texas.

Mrs. Bruce, whose official duty station is Amarillo, had been assigned to attend a training course entitled "Small Purchase/Federal Supply Schedules" in Fort Worth from January 14 until January 19, 1979. On January 18 Mrs. Bruce returned to Amarillo due to an illness in her family. The \$65.35 claimed by Mrs. Bruce was administratively disallowed in accordance with our decision 47 Comp. Gen. 59 (1967). In that decision we held that an employee was not entitled to return travel expenses upon abandoning his temporary duty station due to a death in his family because his assignment had not been substantially completed.

In submitting the reclaim voucher the certifying officer states that Mrs. Bruce was mailed a copy of the test given in the Training Course. She completed the test and was awarded a "Certificate of Training" for completion of the course.

Generally travel in connection with the death or illness of a family member is personal travel and cannot be reimbursed. Thus, if an employee abandons a temporary duty assignment and returns to his official station due to the death or illness in the family,

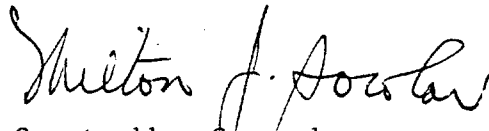
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that travel is at the expense of the employee. See 45 Comp. Gen. 299 (1965). However, an exception to the general rule permits payment of the cost of return travel where an employee has "substantially completed" the assignment or the duties are completed at no additional cost to the Government. See Matter of Raymond Eluhow, 56 Comp. Gen. 345 (1977) and B-175511, April 25, 1972. Since Mrs. Bruce completed the course test and was awarded a "Certificate of Training," it appears that the training was "substantially completed" and that her case falls within the exception.

Accordingly, the voucher may be certified for payment if otherwise proper.



For the Comptroller General  
of the United States