

Opportunity. Adventure. Purpose.

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

Dental Externship Program Quick Reference Guide

Dental Externships and Travel Procedures

Dental externships with the Indian Health Service (IHS) Division of Oral Health (DOH) provide students with a unique opportunity to gain practical dental experience working among a team of health care professionals while still attending dental school. DOH externships also provide cultural enrichment and exposure to career opportunities within Indian health facilities.

This quick reference guide (QRG) is designed to help you determine if an externship is right for you. It will also help you plan your experience and navigate DOH externship policies, including:

- Externship participation.
- Budgets, expenses and reimbursement.
- Travel policies.
- Housing policies.

For additional information on our externships, please visit the [IHS Dentistry](#) website.

Externship Participation: Is this the Right Opportunity for You?

The right externship is a priceless career experience. It can shape your views and practice, enrich your knowledge and enhance your work experience. Although these opportunities are unpaid, each externship does include reimbursement of some expenses for travel, housing and per diem needs.

If you apply and are accepted into the program, be prepared to cover your expenses, submit the proper documentation for reimbursement and be responsible for any costs not covered by the reimbursement.



BEFORE YOU APPLY:

- Visit the Dental Externship page of the [IHS Dentistry](#) website for a list of IHS sites participating in the externship program.
- Determine your availability for a minimum two-week externship between May 1 – September 30.
- Ask your school's externship coordinator about existing collaborative agreements between your school and your preferred externship sites.
- Keep in mind that this is a post-travel reimbursement program. Cash advances will not be distributed prior to travel. Please consider your financial situation and your ability to cover your expenses.

NOTE: An extern cannot be preselected for a specific site prior to the opening of the application cycle. All interested participants must apply through the online application and be selected by an externship site preceptor from the applicant pool.

School Agreements

All externships require a collaborative agreement between your externship site and your dental school in order for you to participate in the program. IHS DOH recommends that you work with your school's externship coordinator to identify the list of IHS sites with an existing school agreement before selecting your preferred [IHS Area](#) as part of your application.

If an agreement does not exist, it is your responsibility to connect your school's externship coordinator with the site preceptor in order to establish an agreement with your school. Please note that this process can take at least six months or more to complete, often jeopardizing the opportunity to participate in the program.



The Externship Offer

IHS site preceptors will review and select externs throughout the open application cycle. Please be aware that incomplete applications will not be accepted. When an offer is made, your name will be removed from the applicant pool until you respond either accepting or declining the externship position. If you accept, you will be placed in the pool of selected externs. If you decline, you will be placed back into the applicant pool for other preceptors to review your application. Remember that the popularity of this program, combined with budget limits, keeps IHS DOH from funding every applicant. Therefore, we encourage you to accept an offer as soon as possible if you determine the opportunity is right for you.

When scheduling your externship, remember that:

- IHS only funds travel between May 1 and September 30.
- Most externships require a two-week commitment.
- IHS prefers that externships begin on a Monday and end on a Friday.
- Government travel orders cannot include any personal travel before or after the externship (for example, flying to/from a different location).

Once you have finalized the details of your externship with your school's externship coordinator and the site's preceptor:

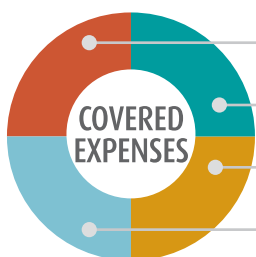
- Send a confirmation email to the [IHS Dental Externship Program](#) and copy your school externship coordinator and the site preceptor. Include the following information:
 - » Your name.
 - » The name of your preceptor.
 - » The name of the site.
 - » The dates of the externship.
- It is imperative that both your school externship coordinator and the extern site preceptor send the [IHS Dental Externship Program](#) an email confirming that a collaborative agreement exists between your school and the externship site. If an agreement does not exist, see the procedure described above in School Agreements for establishing a collaborative agreement with the school and site.

Budgets, Expenses and Reimbursement — Know Before You Go

IHS DOH supports each extern with a travel budget up to \$2,000. This budget includes the cost of airfare (purchased by IHS), baggage fees (first bag only), per diem and lodging (if free housing is not available). You must be prepared to cover the travel costs (other than airfare) related to your externship. IHS will not provide a cash advance, but will reimburse baggage fees, per diem and housing expenses. IHS will begin processing all reimbursements from October 1 through December 31 in the order in which they are received.

IHS processes all externship travel arrangements, including the purchase of airline tickets through official government travel orders, which requires strict adherence to all joint travel regulations (JTRs).

Expenses



- Round-trip, government-contracted airline, which IHS arranges and purchases.
- The cost of your first bag (if the airline charges a baggage fee).
- Per diem for food and other travel expenses.
- Hotel lodging at the government rate (if the site does not offer free housing).

NOTE: Rental cars are not included within the extern travel reimbursement budget. Those choosing to rent a car must personally cover the expense.

Good to Know

IHS only funds travel between May 1 and September 30.



Required Documentation for Travel and Reimbursement of Expenses

Once the **IHS Dental Externship Program** receives your externship acceptance email confirmation, it will forward to you the following documents:

- Invitational Traveler Access Request (ITR) Form
- Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form 1199A
- Form W-9

If you are scheduled to travel in May, you must complete and return this documentation, along with a voided check, by mid March. All other participants must submit the documents and voided check by May 1.

Once your ITR and other documents are received, the **IHS Dental Externship Program** will place your information in the monthly travel queue for processing. You will receive your official government travel orders, including a travel authorization letter, via email no later than two weeks prior to your departure date. The email will provide specific details about your travel arrangements and your approved expenses.

Reimbursement

Per your travel authorization letter, you must submit your reimbursement request to the **IHS Dental Externship Program** within 30 days of completion of your externship. IHS will only reimburse expenses authorized in your travel authorization letter. IHS will begin processing all reimbursements from October 1 through December 31 in the order in which they are received. You must send the following required documentation with your reimbursement request:

- Receipt from the airline(s) documenting expense for baggage fees, if applicable. Only charges for your first bag will be reimbursed.
- If a hotel stay is required, the original hotel receipt with the name and address of the hotel and the name of the traveler, showing a zero balance and itemized daily rates and taxes. A handwritten receipt will not be accepted.

Travel Policies

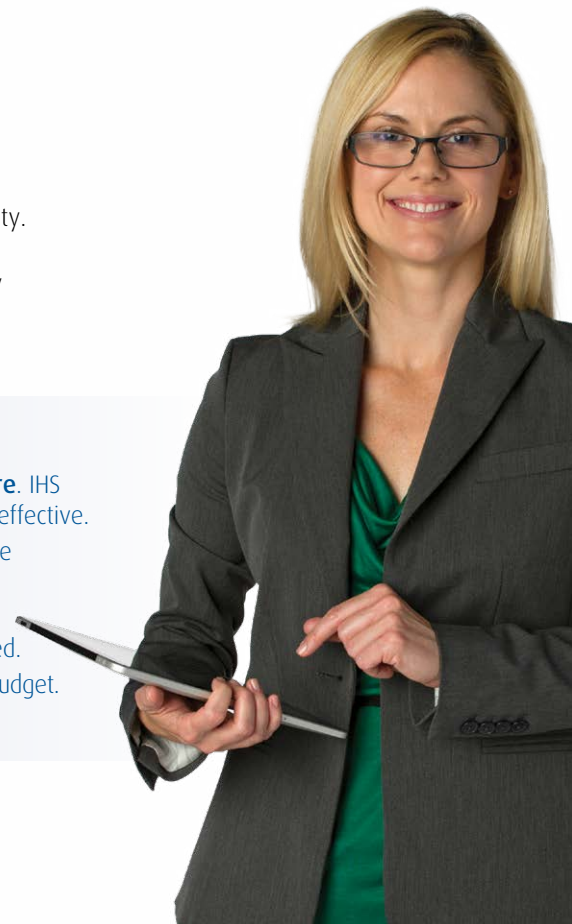
- Do not purchase your own airfare. IHS is required to make all airline reservations.
- You must disclose any plans for personal trips, such as overnight travel exploring locations outside your externship site. This will be noted in your government travel order to confirm your whereabouts while on official government business travel.
- Any travel and hotel costs incurred while away from the externship site are your responsibility.
- While on government travel orders, you must submit in advance any travel changes to the **IHS Dental Externship Program** for approval; the site preceptor does not have the authority to change your government travel orders.
- The cost of a rental car will not be covered as part of your reimbursement allowance.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Driving is a travel option, but carefully compare the cost of driving to using **government airfare**. IHS will reimburse you for mileage or the value of an airline ticket, whichever option is more cost effective.
- Discuss with the site preceptor the distance from the airport and transportation options to the externship site to budget appropriately prior to your arrival.
- Coordinate travel to the site with externs arriving from other locations at the same time and split the costs of transportation. Ask the preceptor to facilitate such discussions as needed.
- Consider sharing a room with another extern if free housing is not available to help stay within budget.
- It is your responsibility to research and reserve a federal government rate hotel room.

Good to Know

You must submit your reimbursement request to the **IHS Dental Externship Program** within 30 days of completion of your externship.



Housing Policies

- Ask the site preceptor about housing arrangements at your selected site.
- You must use free housing provided by the extern site, if available.
- You will be responsible for the cost of a hotel if you choose not to use free housing.
- Nonhotel rentals will not be reimbursed (such as Airbnb).
- If housing is not available, you will be approved to stay at a local hotel that honors government rates.
- Do not prepay for a hotel; travel and hotel booking sites cannot provide the required receipts needed for your hotel reimbursement. Hotels will often be unable to provide a required itemized receipt at checkout if you used one of these websites to prepay.
- Obtain an itemized hotel receipt upon departure for reimbursement purposes.

Contact Us

Indian Health Service
Division of Oral Health/OCPS
5600 Fishers Lane
Mail Stop: 08N34 A
Rockville, MD 20857
Phone: (301) 443-0029
DentalExtern@ihs.gov

ENSURE GOVERNMENT RATES

Begin contacting hotels immediately upon confirming your externship dates to make a refundable reservation. Government rate hotel reservations should be held at no cost using your personal credit card. If you wait and can't get the government rate, IHS will only reimburse for the government rate. As long as the reservation is refundable or held with a credit card, there is no risk in securing a room early to help you stay within the government room rate and avoid out-of-pocket expenses.

Visit [FedTravel.com](https://www.fedtravel.com) or [FedRooms.com](https://www.fedrooms.com) to find hotels near your externship site that honor government rates. Government rates can be found at [GSA.gov/travel](https://www.gsa.gov/travel).

