



Transporting Students With Special Needs

A Guidebook for IPS Parents and Staff



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to provide parents and staff members with a source of information that addresses issues, responsibilities and concerns within special needs transportation.

The full scope of the Individual Disability Educational Act addresses the special needs transportation operation as a related service and is much broader than can be contained in this booklet. It is not intended to be all-inclusive but rather an attempt to share important information with all parties associated with transporting special needs students. Should you have questions that this booklet does not address, feel free to contact us.

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OUR MISSION AND VISION

IPS empowers and educates all students to think critically, creatively, and responsibly, to embrace diversity, and to pursue their dreams with purpose. We are a family of excellent public schools in which every student has the opportunity to succeed and the power to create their own future.

DISTRICT VALUES

Excellence.

Scholarship.

Respect.

Courage.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The safe and efficient transportation of your child relies on the cooperation and efforts of the school staff; the Transportation Department; the Unified Student Supports Department; the bus driver and monitor; students; and you, the parent. The following sections outline some of the various responsibilities of those involved.

Parent Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the parent to:

- Meet Hand-to-Hand Expectations. IPS policy dictates that any student who requires special transportation **MUST** have an adult walk them to the bus in morning to do a hand-to-hand transfer from the adult to the bus team. In addition, the afternoon drop off **MUST** have an adult present to receive the student from the bus. This adult should be the parent, guardian, or someone the family has authorized to help support the student.
- Assist the school by submitting accurate and timely information. Some of the information may be included on the Student Emergency Card. Incorrect and untimely information delays and hinders the ability to provide safe and efficient transportation services.
- Inform the school administrator, Transportation Department, bus driver and bus monitor of any medical condition or behavior which might affect the student's safety or health on the bus.
- Provide up-to-date emergency information to the school and Transportation Department.
- **Be sure the child's wheelchair is clean and in good working order so IPS can provide safe transportation for our students who use a wheelchair. Transportation recommends, but does not require, that all wheelchairs are equipped with a headrest for the protection of the student. All wheelchairs are required to have their own lap belt and it must be used. Wheelchairs must also have brakes that are in working condition. When brakes are engaged, the wheelchair should not be able to move when any force is applied. In some situations — to ensure safety on the bus for your child and others — transportation must be stopped because of unsafe conditions caused by**

wheelchairs in need of repair.

Be sure the student is ready to meet the bus 10 minutes prior to the scheduled target time. Buses may arrive 10 minutes prior or up to 10 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time each day. The bus driver is not required to wait for a tardy student as this can create late pick-up times for other students.

In addition, please note the following:

- Drivers are not required to blow the horn when arriving at a bus stop to notify a parent the bus has arrived.
- During cold weather, students must be ready to exit the home when the bus arrives. The bus driver must maintain a schedule.
- Inform the school of any changes of address or telephone number as soon as this information is available. Address changes may require up to five working days to establish a new route and time schedule. New stops will begin Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Obey the rules established by the bus driver, attendant and school system while on the bus.
- Respect the rights of other student passengers.
- Be at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to the target pick-up time.

Driver and Attendant Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the bus driver and attendant to:

- Be within the time window for pick-up and drop-off times. The driver is not required to wait for tardy students. This procedure must be adhered to because of the number of students to be transported in a fixed period of time. If the driver arrives earlier than the designated pick-up time, the driver is required to wait.
- Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- Provide a seating chart of all students and provide updates when needed. The seating chart is to be turned into the Transportation Department after the second week of school and after each update.
- Display appropriate care and patience.
- The attendant must be in a position inside the bus that best meets the needs of all students.
- Maintain an emergency evacuation plan, listing each passenger, for use by medical personnel in the event of a vehicle accident.
- Be prepared to evacuate the bus effectively and efficiently in the event of an emergency.
- Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality of the families whose children they transport.
- Complete and submit a FirstACTS Bus Referral to the designated school administrator if a behavior problem occurs on the bus.
- Use the FirstACTS Bus Referral to inform the school administration of any significant changes in a child's behavior.
- Assist students on and off the bus. This is required. At the school, it is the administrator's responsibility to make appropriate arrangements to assist the driver and the attendant in loading and unloading students. **Note:** No child is to be carried on or off the bus unless it is an emergency.

School Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the school to:

- Ensure registration is done correctly the first time. Upon enrollment, it is the responsibility of the registrar to verify that registration is fully completed, and the address is verified and correct.
- If the family of a student who receives special transportation provides the registrar with an updated address, the registrar needs to inform the TOR who will need to submit an updated request for the student.
- Work with Unified Student Supports (formerly the Special Education and Student Services departments) in the formulation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Involve the Transportation Department in any special transportation arrangements that maybe necessary prior to completing the IEP. Unified Student Supports will submit a transportation request to the Transportation Department for routing.
- Submit timely and accurate updates of school attendance, arrival and departure times, equipment needs, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), seizure plans, and the pick-up and drop-off location to the Office of Enrollment and Options to assist in routing and scheduling.
- Update the information contained on the Transportation RequestForm when necessary. An additional request form should be submitted if the pick-up/drop-off location changes during the school year.
- Be sure the students are ready for dismissal at the scheduleddismissal time.
- Notify parents of schedule changes that may affect pupil transportation (e.g., early dismissals, inclement weather, etc.).

- Provide appropriate arrangements for those students needing assistance in boarding and discharging from the bus at the school. These arrangements should be detailed in the Special Transportation Request Form.
- Refer parent or guardian requests involving alternate transportation needs to the Unified Student Supports Department. The bus driver must be notified by the school principal or his/her designee when approval is given for the student to go home by another method. Notify the driver if the student arrives at school by means other than the bus and the student requires bus transportation home.
- Accept and act on discipline forms submitted by the bus driver or attendant. The principal or his/her designee is responsible for disciplinary action, including suspension of the student's transportation privilege, when appropriate.
- Inform the bus team of any behavior that may affect a successful ride home.

Unified Student Supports Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Unified Student Supports Department to assist the IPS Transportation Department in getting appropriate updates from the schools at the beginning of and throughout the school year.

NOTE: Some students may require special accommodations, including shortened school days, and other case conference committee decisions. Prior to making these changes, please contact Benjamin Burchfield in the Transportation Department at 317.954.9818.

Transportation Department Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the IPS Transportation Department to:

- Assign each eligible student to a bus stop. No one may assign a student to a bus or reassign a student to a different bus or bus stop without permission of the IPS Transportation Department.
- Determine stop locations according to the need of the student and the accessibility of the residence or non-residence (corner stops).

- Route and schedule specially equipped buses. The routing and scheduling plan will ensure the safest and most effective use of vehicles. Beyond the onset of the school year, a minimum of three to five working days may be needed to establish a new route and schedule any pick-up/drop-off changes.
- Address concerns of the parents, school administrators, contractors, drivers, attendants, and the public regarding special needs transportation.
- Provide the appropriate training and screening for bus drivers and attendants.
- Establish and enforce transportation guidelines, procedures and rules.
- Provide assistive devices as needed, including, but not limited to, safety vests and car seats — also known as child safety restraint systems (CSRS).

PROCEDURES

The following procedures were established by the Transportation Department to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students riding specially equipped buses. On occasion, the Transportation Department receives requests from parents to deviate from these procedures. The Transportation Department reserves the right to authorize or deny deviations from these procedures based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety for all students on the bus and an acceptable level of service for those who qualify for special needs transportation.

Pick Up/Drop Off

Under certain conditions, special needs transportation provides safest/closest corner service. This means the bus will pick up and drop off in front of the student's home or day care. Some of the exceptions to this procedure are:

- In rare instances, the pick-up/drop-off location may require the student to cross the roadway. The bus attendant will escort the student across the roadway to and from the pick-up/drop-off location.

- Due to road conditions (dead-end roadways, dirt or gravel roadways, or narrow roadways) it may be necessary to place the pick-up/drop-off stop at the safest/closest corner away from the home or day care. Every effort will be made to locate the stop as close as possible to the home or day care.

It will be the responsibility of the parent or the parent's designee to escort the student to and from the pick-up/drop-off location. The bus driver and attendant are not responsible for escorting the student to or from the home or day care.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Times

- The pick-up and drop-off target times assigned at the beginning of the school year reflect the Transportation Department's best estimate based on a number of variables. These are target times only. In addition, as students are added or removed from bus routes, the actual pick-up and drop-off target times will change. The most effective method for parents to confirm accurate pick-up and drop-off times is to talk directly to the bus driver.
- Bus routes are scheduled to accommodate the arrival and dismissal times for each school and to maximize the efficiency of transportation for ALL STUDENTS transported to and from school. The Transportation Department will not honor requests to lengthen or shorten a student's bus ride to accommodate day care schedules or parent work schedules.
- Drivers are permitted to discharge students only at the school or designated bus stop. When there is no authorized person to accept the student at the bus stop, the following steps will be taken:
 - The driver may take other students home then return to the stop. Attempts will be made to contact guardians using telephone numbers in the student's file.
 - In the event that a student cannot depart from the bus alone, and there is no authorized person to receive the student, transportation will notify IPS Police and the student will then be transported by an officer.

FirstView App

FirstView is an innovative mobile device app and website. FirstView is available for students and families to view the real-time location of a student's bus. For more information and to download the app, please go to www.firstviewapp.com. If you are having difficulty using the app, please contact First Student at the toll-free number 888.889.8920 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. Parents can also email customer support at support@firstviewapp.com.

Private Driveways and Parking Lots

- Buses do not use private driveways while providing transportation services.
- On occasion, condominium/apartment management companies deny school buses access to their parking lots. In these cases, the bus stop will be placed at a safe location close to the student's home or day care.

LOADING/UNLOADING

(parent/teacher/aide responsibilities)

At the Bus Stop

It is the responsibility of the driver and attendant to load and unload students at the bus stop location. Parents and day care providers are strongly encouraged to communicate to the bus driver and attendant any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading.

Parent and day care providers should be careful not to interfere with the driver or attendant while they are performing their duties. If a student requires help getting up into the bus seat, the parent will need to board the bus and assist the student. Drivers and monitors are not permitted to lift students unless there is an emergency.

Parents/guardians should not send students to the bus with food, drink, or medication to be consumed on the bus.

At School

When it facilitates a smoother transition to or from the bus, school personnel are encouraged to help load and unload ambulatory students routed with any of the following child safety restraint systems: lap belts, car seats, safety vests or any other CSRS.

The bus driver and attendant have the ultimate responsibility to check these devices before leaving the school. The driver and attendant are responsible for loading and unloading, operating the wheelchair lift, and securing students in wheelchairs.

If a student requires help getting up into the bus seat, a staff member from the school will need to board the bus and help the student. Drivers and attendants are not permitted to lift students unless there is an emergency.

Carrying Students On and Off the Bus

To avoid the risk of injury to students or adults, students will not be carried up or down the bus steps during the loading or unloading procedure. If a student cannot negotiate the bus steps with a reasonable degree of assistance, the bus driver and attendant should consult with the Transportation Department to implement an alternative procedure.

Transporting Wheelchairs Without Students

Drivers and monitors are instructed by the Transportation Department not to transport a wheelchair without the student except in an emergency. Transporting a chair without the student often affects the driver and attendant's ability to properly serve other wheelchair students on subsequent bus routes or results in the chair being left unattended outside of the student's home. An example of an emergency would be a situation where the student is taken to the hospital during the school day, leaving the chair at school.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

IPS School Board Policy

It is IPS' responsibility to provide safe transportation for students who ride school buses to and from school and on school-related trips. In the absence of a teacher or school administrator, the school bus driver/attendant is responsible for ensuring that students behave in a safe and responsible manner.

Any behavior which interferes with the safe transportation of students must be reported. This policy applies to all students, public and nonpublic, for whom bus transportation is provided. Behavior problems involving special education students are dealt with in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

The procedures outlined in the policy are applicable to special education students. Specifically, drivers and attendants are to use the FirstACTS Bus Referral to report inappropriate behavior to school administrators, and when applicable, administrators are to follow a progressive discipline procedure.

Dangerous Behavior on the Bus

Any unsafe behavior should be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible. A Bus Referral is submitted as a follow up.

- At the school: While drivers and attendants are never to refuse to transport a student, there are times when alternate means of transportation will be required for the safety of all on the bus. If a student is experiencing a crisis or is emotionally dysregulated, the family or school staff should not put the student on the school bus. If the bus driver is distracted by student behaviors or outbursts, the safety of the bus and the student's safety can be jeopardized. If a student cannot be transported safely, the school should contact the family, explain the situation, and ask them to transport the student. If the family does not have personal transportation, the school social worker should work to help the family reach out to friends, relatives or neighbors who may be able to help transport the student

- On the road: If the bus is on the road and the behavior of a student poses imminent serious danger to the student and/or others on the bus, the driver should pull off the road to a safe location and immediately call the dispatcher. The dispatcher will call for assistance.

Securement Devices/Car Seats

By law, the state of Indiana requires the use of car seats in personal vehicles. It is best practice to use a child safety restraint in school buses. Most small children can be comfortably secured in conventional car seats.

The following guidelines are generally used to determine the appropriate CSRS for each student:

- Infants who weigh 20 pounds or less should be in a rear-facing infant car seat.
- Toddlers who weigh from 20 to 40 pounds, who are 26 to 40 inches in height and younger than 5 years old, should ride in a forward-facing car seat.
- Children who weigh over 40 pounds and are younger than 5 years old, may ride in another CSRS that will accommodate their weight.

Safety Vests

A CSRS may be used at the direction of the Transportation Department after consultation with the school staff and parents and in accordance with state requirements.

A safety vest is designed for students with physical, behavioral and/or emotional disabilities who need to be secured while on the bus. The safety vest is equipped with a zipper in the back that, when properly attached, is not accessible by the student. The safety vest is attached with a cam wrap to the bus seat. The cam wrap stays on the bus and the safety vest is hooked to the cam wrap by way of four mounting rings.

Bus Evacuation Plan

Unified Student Supports students who are able to get on and off the bus independently are expected to participate in the bus evacuation drills conducted each fall and spring. Drivers who transport non-ambulatory or orthopedically impaired students are expected to maintain an up-to-date bus evacuation plan.

Bowel and Bladder Accidents

The following procedures for addressing bowel and bladder accidents on the bus were developed to best protect the health and dignity of the individuals involved.

- Bus drivers and attendants are instructed by the Transportation Department not to accept students for transport who have soiled clothes from bowel or bladder accidents. Bus teams are required to document a child who is continuously escorted to a bus with soiled undergarments.
- If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip, drivers and attendants are instructed not to attempt to clean up the accident while en route, but to proceed to the scheduled stop at the school or the home. At that point, the student should be immediately escorted to the parent/guardian (home) or staff member (school) for appropriate attention. The bus driver and attendant are then responsible for cleaning and disinfecting any affected surfaces on the bus by utilizing the body fluid clean-up kit.
- It is the responsibility of the parent, guardian or school staff to ensure a student is not soiled prior to putting them on the bus. If a student soils themselves in the morning or prior to dismissal, the appropriate party should change the student before escorting them to the bus.

TITLE IX POLICY

Forbidding Sex Discrimination and Harassment:

Excerpt of Policy 5518

1) POLICY AGAINST SEX DISCRIMINATION

In accordance with applicable law, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Indiana Civil Rights Law, it is the policy of Indianapolis Public Schools that no person will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any education program or activity on the basis of sex. A student or employee may not, on the basis of sex, be limited in the enjoyment of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity, including courses, extracurricular activities, benefits, facilities or employment. "On the basis of sex" includes because of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

2) PROHIBITION AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND TEEN DATING ABUSE

- a. The policy against sex discrimination includes a prohibition against sexual harassment, including teen dating abuse. Sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, sexual gestures, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwelcome. This also includes the aforementioned behavior that arises in the context of teen dating, including teen dating abuse/violence.
- b. This policy prohibits sexual harassment by a student, employee, or agent of IPS, and by third parties who come in contact with students at school or at school-related activities. This policy also prohibits any employee from being in a locked room with a student.

3) TITLE IX COORDINATOR

- a. IPS has designated a Title IX Coordinator, who has responsibility for IPS' compliance with Title IX, including directing the investigation of complaints and reports of sex discrimination and harassment, including teen dating abuse, and assuring that prompt and effective corrective action is taken.

The IPS Title IX Coordinator is:

Kim Kennedy
120 E. Walnut St., Room 114
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317.226.4644
Email: TitleIXCoordinator@myips.org

Questions or Concerns? Contact:

Benjamin Burchfield
Special Education
Transportation Manager
317.954.9818
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