

Transportation - Students with IEPs

District Responsibility for Transportation of Students with Disabilities:

For most students in Minnesota, transportation by school bus is a privilege (M.S.121A.59). For students with disabilities, however, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team may determine that transportation is a "related service" that is needed to enable the student to benefit from special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes transportation within its definition of "related services." This means that students with IEPs have the right to receive special transportation services if needed. Transportation includes travel to and from school and between schools, as well as the use of specialized transportation equipment when required (CFR 300.34(b)(16))

- In many cases, students with disabilities are able to ride the regular education school bus if bus personnel are informed of disability-related needs and supports. Since this option is less restrictive and more likely to foster greater independence, it should be considered before special transportation. All other students with special needs ride the regular school bus without assistance or walk to school.
- Special transportation is a related service and determined by the IEP team. Substantiating documentation must be on the student's IEP, along with any special conditions or assistance, (i.e., car seat, lift bus, bus aide, etc.) For a student to qualify for special education transportation, one of the following reasons must be valid:
 - **Accessibility** - The regular bus is not accessible for the child.
 - **Social / Emotional** - The student's bus conduct requires a different mode of transportation. This should only be offered after the school implements and documents interventions for the regular bus.
 - **Health - Medical** - A health/medical condition exists which involves the safety of the child or others. Health issues may include seizures, oxygen equipment, fatigue that causes the student to fall asleep on the bus, assistive devices needed to maintain a sitting position, communication issues (hard of hearing, visually impaired, nonverbal), or assistance in walking up and down stairs.
 - **Center-based Program - (Special Placement)** - The student is attending a special program to receive the special education services identified in his/her IEP (out of district or within district).
- For students with temporary disabilities, who require special transportation over a short period of time, a doctor's order is required.
- Bus aides on special transportation vehicles are assigned when the age, behavior, physical needs, or vulnerability of the students riding warrant such support to guarantee safety. The school bus aides work with the driver to maintain a safe, positive bus environment. S/he secures seat belts, wheelchairs and car seats. The aide maintains discipline, sees that the students stay in their seats and reports problems to the transportation provider, who will contact the school. They will make efforts to seek emergency assistance when situations warrant this type of intervention.
- The IEP case manager's responsibility is to share necessary IEP information with the bus driver and aide(s) to ensure accommodations, health/medical information and supports are clear to bussing staff. Accommodations should be reviewed periodically during progress monitoring and adult support reduced or eliminated if the IEP team determines the student can be successful riding the bus independently.

Specialized Transportation Clarifications and Information:

- The school district provides curb-to-curb special transportation service for students whose IEP teams determine the related service is necessary (see qualifying reasons listed above). Bus aides may only work with students in the area in and around the bus. They may not assist a student beyond the curb or bus door.
- Suspensions from special education busses/vehicles for behavior on the bus are handled by the Director of Special Services in conjunction with the transportation provider and school administrator.
- It is the parent's responsibility to call the transportation provider's office at least 1 hour before pick-up, when their child will not be riding the special services bus/vehicle, so that the driver can be notified. When a student fails to appear for the bus/vehicle on three consecutive days with no contact from the family, the transportation provider will notify the special services office and drop the student from the route until further notice.
- An address change may require a bus/vehicle change. When families move mid-year, parents/guardians should call the Special Services Office in advance to communicate the moving date, the new address and the new phone number.
- Pick-up and drop-off locations must be within the ISD 200 school district boundaries.
- The school district will honor variable pick-up and drop-off sites for students only under the following conditions:
 - Parents/guardians make a request through the Special Services Office at least 5 days before the variable schedule is to begin.
 - The child is picked up or dropped off regularly at predetermined sites.
 - Parents/guardians submit a written monthly schedule to the transportation provider at least one (1) week in advance.
 - For the sake of safety and in respect to the transportation schedules of the other riders, same day changes cannot be made nor can incidental changes in a student's pick up or drop off locations.
- At pick-up time, the driver will wait a maximum of 2 minutes. If the student misses the bus, the driver cannot always come back because of other scheduled commitments. It is then the parent's/guardian's responsibility to transport him/her to school.
- At drop-off time the bus/vehicle will wait for 2 minutes to see if a responsible adult is available to meet students who are young or have a mental or physical disability. If it appears that no one is at home to welcome and supervise such students, they will be taken to Hastings Bus Company or will remain on the bus while attempts are made to reach the parents/guardians. The police may be called if a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached.
- Only in special circumstances, and with prior authorization from the Special Services Office, will a special education vehicle enter a private road or driveway to pick up or drop off a student with special needs. In such situations it is the responsibility of the homeowner to make sure that driveways are properly cleared of snow and sanded. If, in the opinion of the driver, the driveway appears unsafe, the bus will not enter.
- Flashing red signals and stop signal arms will be used on all special education vehicles, in accordance with Minnesota statute, except when the bus is waiting for the student to come out of the house or when the student is safely on the vehicle and the driver is waiting for the bus assistant to secure a wheelchair, buckle a seatbelt or fasten a car seat.

The IEP Team reviewed this related service at least annually.