

**SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION  
Parent/Guardian Handbook  
DeKalb County School District**



**Department of Pupil Transportation  
5809 Memorial Drive  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083**

## **P u r p o s e**

The purpose of this document is to provide parents and school staff with a source of information that addresses issues, responsibilities, and concerns relating to special needs transportation. The full scope of the special needs transportation operation is much broader than can be contained in this booklet; it is not intended to be all inclusive, but is an attempt to share important information with everyone who has a role in transporting students with special needs. Working together, we can create an effective transportation team which will help provide our students with a safe, timely, and comfortable ride to and from school.

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## **Who Qualifies for Special Needs Transportation and How Is It Arranged?**

Special transportation will be provided for students who need it to access education because of their disability or the location of their program. All other students will ride the regular school bus or walk to school.

Eligibility for transportation for students receiving special education is addressed in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan). If a student is deemed eligible, the parent should complete any necessary forms at the IEP meeting or with the child's teacher. Incomplete forms will delay processing.

Requests for transportation of students with a 504 plan should be initiated through the local School Student Support Team. Requests must be approved by and forwarded to Transportation from Student Support Services.

It takes an average of 3 business days for the school bus ride to be arranged after the request is received. Requests requiring special handling may take longer.

When transportation arrangements are complete, the driver will contact the parents/guardians with information regarding the stop location and pick up time.

Only students assigned to the bus may ride. Space limitations may prevent us from transporting siblings. Any exception must be approved through the school principal/designee and the Diverse Learner Services Department. These exceptions will be subject to change as routes and load counts change.

Parents may ride the bus only as an official chaperone on a school-sponsored field trip. Parents must board the bus at the school.

## **Procedures**

The following procedures have been established by the Transportation Department to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students riding special needs buses. Special Needs Transportation reserves the right to authorize or deny deviations from these procedures based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety and service for all those entitled to special needs transportation

### **Pickup, Drop-off, Locations and Times**

- Bus stop locations will be determined by safety factors, available access for the bus, and the student's disability. Road conditions (dead end streets, narrow roadways, inaccessible apartment complexes) may make it necessary to place the pickup/drop-off site at a safe location away from the home or daycare facility. All stops for students with special needs should be right side pickups so students will not cross the street.
- DeKalb School District buses do not use private driveways or business parking lots (parent/guardian place of employment) in the course of providing transportation services.
- Students who live in communities or apartment complexes with electronic security gates can be picked up inside the gate only if a remote control device to open the gate is provided to the driver. Drivers and/or bus monitors may not get off the bus to use access keys, cards, or key pads. If the remote cannot be provided, the student must meet the bus at the gate. It is the responsibility of the parents to secure the remotes, access cards, etc.
- Bus routes can only allow for one address for the pickup and one address for the drop-off, five days a week.
- Since school assignments are usually based on the home address, child care addresses must be located within the boundary of the child's school of residence, or within the boundary of the child's school of attendance.
- The pickup and drop-off times assigned at the beginning of the school year reflect the driver's best estimate based on a number of variables and are subject to change. Drop-off times will vary based on the dismissal times for each school. In addition,

as students are added or deleted from the route, time adjustments must be made. It is important to talk directly to the driver to confirm pickup and drop-off times.

- Students should be ready and waiting for the bus five minutes before scheduled time. The driver is allowed to wait no more than two minutes past the scheduled stop time for any student. Waiting for students causes delays in the route, placing other students at risk and interferes with time on task in the classroom. The driver is not allowed to blow the horn.

- Bus routes are scheduled to accommodate the arrival and dismissal times for each school and to maximize the efficiency of service for all students transported to and from the school. The Special Needs Transportation office cannot honor requests to lengthen or shorten a student's bus ride to accommodate day care schedules or parent/guardian work schedules.

- Very young students and students whose disabilities mandate that they not be left at a drop-off point without a designated responsible person to receive them. The designated person must be indicated on your documentation to the school. If such a person is not present at the scheduled drop-off time and the emergency contact is unavailable, the student will be returned to school. If no one is available at the school to receive the child, he or she must be released to the Principal or his designee. Consistent failure to have someone present to receive a child at the stop may result in a meeting at the school, a phone call to DFACS, or an interruption of transportation services.

### **Address Changes**

- An address change may require a bus change. Bus drivers are not authorized to make changes without approval from Transportation.

- Parents should notify the Diverse Learner Services Department (678-676-1800) in advance to report change in address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, or request a change in pickup and drop-off locations. Bus route changes may take five to ten business days to accommodate the change.

- When a student moves into a new school attendance area, the needs will be reassessed and the service school site may be changed.

## **Transporting Items**

- Book bags, projects, and musical instruments may be transported if they can be held in the student's lap. Items may not block the aisle or emergency door, or take up seating needed for other students.

No items can be placed on the bus which might create a danger to students; these include breakables, sharp objects, balloons, animals, insects, or weapons of any kind. Any item which cannot be properly secured cannot be transported, as it becomes a safety

- hazard to the students.
- Medication should be taken to school by the parent. or, in an emergency given directly to the driver. Students should never carry medication on their person or in book bags. Adaptive equipment required on the bus for medical reasons must be secured at all times.
- Parents should deliver refreshments and other special items for school events personally.

## **Loading and Unloading the Bus**

- At the pickup and drop-off locations: The bus driver is responsible for the safe loading and unloading students. Students should be ready and waiting five minute prior to their stop time for the bus. Parents and care providers are strongly encouraged to communicate to the bus drivers any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading. Parents, siblings, and care providers should not board the bus and should be careful not to interfere with the driver or monitor while they are performing their duties.
- At the school: Students should be released to school staff in the bus loading zone. Drivers may not escort students into the school. if they have other students on the bus. When it facilitates a smoother transition to and from the bus, the school personnel are encouraged to help load and unload ambulatory students from seats equipped with restraint devices such as add on seats or safety vests. Only the driver and monitor should load, unload, and secure students in wheel chairs and safety restraints.

## **Mobility Aides and Child Safety Restraint Systems**

- The School Personnel should indicate on the Parent Permission to Transport form if the student will be riding in a wheelchair or will need to have special equipment transported. A transportation staff member may need to see the wheelchair or equipment prior to arranging service to determine the safest way to transport.
- Students who ride to school in wheelchairs are provided service on buses equipped with lifts and securement systems which meet federal standards. Wheelchairs must be in good condition, equipped with operating brakes, foot rests, fully inflated tires and a lap belt affixed to the wheelchair.
- Medical equipment such as oxygen tanks and suction machines must be properly secured during transport. Time must be given to train staff on proper use of the equipment and may extend the implementation of the Transportation request beyond the five days.
- The DeKalb School District follows federal safety recommendations for transporting small children with disabilities. Children under the age of five or weighing 50 pounds or less will be transported in an approved Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS). These systems include car seats, Star seats and safety vests. The type of restraint system will be determined by the size and needs of the individual student.
- Larger children with disabilities that affect their ability to sit in the bus seat without support may use safety vests. These devices are used at the direction of the IEP Committee recommendations. If the use of a safety restraint is mandated in the student's IEP, the student will not be transported without the appropriate restraint.
- Drivers are instructed by the Special Needs Transportation Office not to transport a wheelchair without the student, except in an emergency. Transporting a chair without the student often affects the driver's ability to serve other students in wheelchairs on subsequent routes, and may result in a chair being left unattended outside the student's home. (An example of an emergency would be when a student is taken to the hospital during the school day, leaving the chair at school.)

## **Behavior on the Bus**

The school bus is an extension of the classroom, and bus behavior should reflect that expected in the school building. An incident which might be simply distracting in class can be deadly on a school bus.

### **Rules of Conduct**

1. Be on time and come to the bus properly
2. Stay in your seat with arms and legs out of the aisle
3. Talk quietly and politely; no profanity is allowed
4. Always follow the driver's directions
5. Treat the driver and other students with respect
6. No eating or drinking is allowed on the bus

- All students are expected to follow the bus safety rules so that everyone will have a safe ride.
- The bus driver must have complete control of the bus to ensure the safety of everyone. The driver may assign seats and use behavior modification plans, when appropriate, to make the bus safe.
- The bus driver will submit a discipline referral to the principal/designee for students whose behavior continues to be unsafe after a warning. The bus driver will also inform the Supervisor.
- The principal/designee will determine what disciplinary action will be taken to enforce student behavior on the bus. Actions may include assigned seating, bus behavior check sheets, loss of privileges at school, parent conferences, suspensions from the bus and/or suspension from school, or other consequences as determined.
- Parents can help by supporting the bus driver, reinforcing the school bus safety rules, and encouraging appropriate bus riding behavior.

- Parents may be asked to respond to behavior check sheets and/or to meet with the driver and teacher to work on behavior strategies.

### **Bus Evacuation Drills**

Georgia law mandates that emergency evacuation practice drills be conducted for all buses twice each school year. Drivers of special needs buses prepare individual plans based on the unique needs of their students and conduct their practice drills at school sites with the assistance of school and transportation staff.

The evacuation plan includes identification of students who have special medical conditions, such as brittle bone syndrome, who are dependent upon a respirator need to be considered during an evacuation. A list of written instructions of the proper procedures for each student should also be a part of the bus evacuation plan.

The evacuation plan should also include an exact designation of the roles of the driver and monitor during the evacuation.

### **Bladder and Bowel Accidents**

The following guidelines have been established to protect the health and safety of all passengers on the school bus.

Bus drivers may not accept students for transport with soiled clothes from bowel or bladder accidents. Parents are requested to keep extra clothing at school so that any needed change may be made before this time.

If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip, drivers and monitors are instructed to proceed to the scheduled stop at the school or home. At that point, the student should be immediately released to a parent/guardian (home) or school staff member for appropriate attention. The bus driver and monitor will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting any affected surfaces on the bus utilizing the body fluid cleanup kit.

## **Responsibilities**

The safe and efficient transportation of your child depends on the cooperation of all members of the Transportation Team, which includes the Pupil Transportation Office, the Department of Student Support Services, the school staff, the bus driver and monitor, the parent and the student. Each team member has responsibilities in this effort.

### **Student Support Services Responsibilities**

- Identify students who are eligible for special needs transportation based on the appropriate guidelines and submit transportation requests to the Transportation Office.
- Provide all information about the student which is necessary for the driver/monitor to provide safe and appropriate service to the student to the transportation staff.
- Assist the Transportation Office in getting appropriate updates on students throughout the school year and at the end of each school year.

### **Special Needs Transportation Office Responsibilities**

- Assign each eligible student to a bus. No one may assign a student to a bus or reassign a student to a different bus without permission of the Transportation Office.
- Determine bus stop locations according to the disability of the student and the accessibility of the residence.
- Route and schedule special needs buses, ensuring the safest and most effective use of the vehicle. A minimum of five working days may be needed to establish a new route and/or schedule pickup and drop-off changes.
- Work cooperatively with Student Support Services to ensure that transportation services are in compliance with IEP mandates. Provide a transportation representative to attend IEP meetings when transportation related issues are involved.
- Address and document concerns from parents, school administrators, drivers and monitors regarding special needs transportation.

- Provide appropriate training and supervision for bus drivers and monitors.
- Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules, and regulations.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

- Provide accurate and timely information on the Parent Permission to Transport form, including an alternate drop-off location within a one mile radius of the route structure and the names of persons authorized to receive the child. This is an emergency location only and not intended as an alternate location for drop off.
- Inform the school administrator and bus driver of any medical condition or behavior which might affect the student's health or safety on the bus.
- Assure that the student meets the bus at the scheduled time. Accompany the child to the bus stop if appropriate, based on his/her disability. (Buses are scheduled to arrive within five minutes of the designated time each day. The bus driver cannot wait more than two minutes past schedule time for any students, as this creates late pickup times for other students).

Assure that, when applicable, an authorized person will be at the

- bus stop on time when the child is dropped off.
- Notify the Transportation DISPATCH Office AT 678-676-1305 if the child will not be riding. If a child does not ride the bus for five consecutive days and no communication is received from the parent or the school, bus service will be discontinued.
- Provide some type of identification on the child's book bag or equipment.
- Inform Student Support Services at 678-676-1800 and the school of any change of address or telephone number as soon as this information is available.

### **Driver and Assistant Responsibilities**

- Notify the parent/guardian of the bus number and approximate time of pickup. and drop off.
- Be on time for the pickup and drop off. If the driver arrives earlier than the designated time of pick up, he or she must wait until the scheduled time. If the

student is not exiting the home on time, the driver can wait no more than two minutes past the scheduled pickup time.

- Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- Be familiar with special needs of students assigned to the route based on information received from the Student Support Services; follow any IEP mandated directives related to the student's transportation.
- Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality of the families whose children they transport. Maintain the confidentiality of information received in the performance of duty as a school official.
- Follow appropriate loading and unloading procedures for all students based on disability; ensure that all child safety restraints and mobility devices are properly secured and children appropriately positioned.
- Display appropriate care and patience.

Assign clearly defined roles for the driver and monitor. The monitor should be in a position inside the bus that best meets the

- needs of all students.
- Communicate and cooperate with parents, guardians, school and transportation staff to resolve safety and procedural concerns.
- Maintain an emergency evacuation plan as trained and be prepared to evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
- Maintain discipline on the bus to ensure student safety; refer students who violate safety rules to the proper school administrator.
- Attend all mandated training sessions and keep required certifications current.

#### School Responsibilities

- Work with Student Support Services and the Transportation Office to maintain current information on each student's address, telephone number, and emergency information.

- Verbal & email notification to the Transportation Supervisor from the Principal/Designee, of any school action which affects a student's transportation service, (i.e. hospitalization, a school or bus suspension, etc). Suspension notification should be submitted to by close of business one-day prior.
- Work with the bus driver to address discipline and safety concerns resulting from the student's bus behavior.
- Provide staff to receive students in the morning.
- Assure that students are ready for dismissal at the time established by the Principal and the Transportation Office.
- Notify parents of schedule changes that may affect pupil transportation (i.e. early dismissal, inclement weather, school building safety, bus accidents, etc.)

#### Student Responsibilities

- Obey the rules established by the bus driver
- Respect the rights of the other passengers
- Be ready for the bus at the designated pickup time.

## Questions and Concerns

Questions about discipline should be addressed to the school principal.

Parents may call the Special Needs Transportation District Supervisor for their child's school with questions or concerns about special needs transportation.

Supervisors and their office numbers are listed below:

<u>Gara Martinez-Central 1 Manager</u>	Office 678-676-1427
Albert Holmes - District 160	Office# 678-676-1386
LaShonnette Thomas-District 161	Office# 678-676-6199
Daisy Harris - District 165	Office# 678-676-6808
Nadine Henry - District 166	Office# 678-874-7646
<u>Lanetta Mills, Central 2 Manger</u>	Office # 678-676-1458
Angele Powell-District 122	Office# 678-676-5508
Michelle D. Smith - District 162	Office# 678-676-4008
Charles White - District 164	Office# 678-874-4589
Cathy Douglas –District 167	Office # 678-874-4959

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Please contact your child’s school or Special Needs Transportation if you are unsure of the appropriate supervisor, then record that information below for future reference:

Telephone List

School \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Exceptional Education Department 678-676-1800

Transportation Department 678-676-1333

Driver’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Driver’s Number \_\_\_\_\_ Bus# \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Supervisor Number \_\_\_\_\_

