

School Transportation for Children with Special Health Care Needs

A recent survey of parents commissioned by the American School Bus Council found that six in ten parents are concerned about having their children ride on public school buses. Parents cite safety issues, ranging from accidents and misbehaving children to unsafe drivers and a lack of information, as primary concerns. The majority of parents, six in ten, consider the public school bus to be an important part of the education system and want to be informed about safety features and procedures.

Relevance:

- Nine million or 13% of U.S. children younger than 18 years old have a special health care need.
- There are even greater transportation concerns for the families of children with special health care needs because of higher rates of travel-related injury.

Actions to Take:

- Discuss your child's special transportation needs with school personnel.
- Work with school personnel to develop safe and appropriate transportation plans for your child.
- Insure that safe and appropriate transportation specifications are incorporated in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Review and update these specifications at least yearly.

Good Practices:

- Schools develop a plan to insure the most current and proper support for children with special transportation requirements.
- Schools create a written plan that outlines procedures for emergency evacuation of each child from a school bus, and by requiring, at a minimum, an evacuation drill for each school year.
- Individual Transportation Plans (ITPs) are developed for students with special needs in conjunction with IEP/504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) plans, to assure safe and appropriate travel to, from and between schools.
- ITPs are developed or modified at the beginning of the school year or prior to any transportation changes.
- Transportation personnel are included in the development of ITPs during IEP/504 team meetings.
- The student and his/her parents are included in the development of the ITP.
- The school provides the student with travel training awareness to enable the student to develop an awareness of his/her environment, and learn the skills necessary to move safely from place to place within the environment.

Basic Facts:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees students with special needs a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Special education must be designed to meet each student's unique educational needs. How these needs are to be addressed is described in the student's individual educational plan (IEP). Transportation is identified as a "related service" under IDEA. As described in Wrightslaw: Special Education Law, 2nd Edition, transportation includes:

- Travel to, from and between schools.
- Travel in and around school buildings.
- Specialized equipment (such as special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps), if required to provide special transportation for a child with a disability. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(26)).

The school's IEP/504 team must plan the safest possible transportation services for children with disabilities traveling to and from school, and comply with other federal and state laws, local guidelines, and policies relating to the transportation of students with disabilities.

Resources:

National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) The role of the NHTSA is to save lives, prevent injuries and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes, through education, research, safety standards and enforcement activity. [nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/UpdatedWeb/topic_9/handout1.html](https://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/UpdatedWeb/topic_9/handout1.html)

National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) promotes safety and enhances the efficiency of pupil transportation through communication, education, and government relations which expand the safety initiatives that affect pupil transportation. www.azdps.gov/studenttransportation/napt/13IEPSpecialEdRequest/Individual%20Transportation%20Plan.rtf

American School Bus Council is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for the more than 25 million school children who ride more than 475,000 school buses each day. Americanschoolbuscouncil.org

Wrightslaw provides parents, educators, advocates and attorneys with accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law and advocacy for children with disabilities. www.wrightslaw.com/info/relsvcs.defs.htm