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## Pupil Transportation “Vehicle”

Provided by the Transportation Section within the Program Finance Division

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## 1. Student School Bus Safety Training

Remember that districts must provide students in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with school bus safety training twice a year. Accident statistics show that students in these grades are more likely to be killed or injured in a school bus accident. It is important that the younger students be reminded about the safety rules.

Students taking driver's training instructional classes must receive training in the laws and proper procedures when operating a motor vehicle in the vicinity of a school bus.

The school bus safety training must cover the following concepts:

- 1) transportation by school bus is a privilege and not a right;
- 2) district policies for student conduct and school bus safety;
- 3) appropriate conduct while on the school bus;
- 4) the danger zones surrounding a school bus;
- 5) procedures for safely boarding and leaving a school bus;
- 6) procedures for safe vehicle lane crossing; and
- 7) school bus evacuation and other emergency procedures;

Both Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) and the Minnesota School Bus Operators Association (MSBOA) have school bus safety materials to be used for training. For MAPT, visit <http://mnapt.org/> . Click on products and Services. For MSBOA, visit <http://www.msboa.com/> . Click on products.

## 2. Winter Hazard Awareness Info

The State of Minnesota offers a Website link, through the combined efforts of several state agencies, that provides simple safety tips for winter weather-related situations. There are lesson plans, Internet resources and direct links to weather warnings, road conditions and more. Please visit

[http://www.winterweather.state.mn.us/WHAH\\_Home.asp](http://www.winterweather.state.mn.us/WHAH_Home.asp) for Winter Hazard Awareness materials.

### **3. Charter School Transportation**

Charter schools must notify both the Minnesota Department of Education **AND** the district in which it is located of their transportation choice by March 1<sup>st</sup> for existing charter schools and July 1<sup>st</sup> for charter schools in their first year. It is around March 1<sup>st</sup> that many districts are developing bid specifications for their routes for the upcoming school year. If the districts know they must provide transportation for charter schools, the additional routes can be included in their route bid specifications.

Whether the charter school chooses to have the district in which it is located provide transportation or the charter school provides its own transportation, the charter school is responsible for coding the student's Transporting District and Transportation Category in the MARSS enrollment record.

The Transporting District would be the charter school's number for all students when the charter school elects to provide its own transportation. The Transporting District number would be the district in which the charter school is located for all students when the independent school district provides the transportation.

The Transportation Category varies depending on the type of transportation provided. Therefore it is important for the charter school and district to work together in determining the correct Transportation Category for each student when the charter school chooses to have the district in which it is located provide the transportation.

For more information on MARSS Transportation Categories please visit Minnesota Department of Education's website at: <http://education.state.mn.us> > School Support > School Finance > Transportation > Resources.

### **4. Transportation Director List Serv**

The Minnesota Department of Education Pupil Transportation Unit has implemented a Transportation Director e-mail list serv. The list serv will provide information to Minnesota school districts regarding pupil transportation. The e-mail messages will include topics such as state pupil transportation reporting, legislative and MDE policies regarding pupil transportation and the "Vehicle Newsletter".

A contact person's email from each district was selected because at one time that person was indicated as the pupil transportation contact. If you would like to be included in the Transportation Director List Serv, please send an e-mail to [kelly.wosika@state.mn.us](mailto:kelly.wosika@state.mn.us) indicating you would like to receive e-mail news regarding pupil transportation. If you think someone at your district should be included on the Transportation Directors list serv have that person send an email to [kelly.wosika@state.mn.us](mailto:kelly.wosika@state.mn.us) .

## **5. Children of Divorced Parents**

According to the Minnesota Statute 127A.47 subd 3, parents who are legally separated or divorced and residing separately in different school districts must designate the district of residence for their child. In addition, when a child whose parents are legally separated, divorced or residing separately, resides with each parent on alternate weeks, the parents shall be responsible for the transportation of the child to the border of the resident school district during those weeks when the child resides in the nonresident school district.

## **6. Suggestions of Measuring Distance from School**

There is nothing in state law or rule that dictates how a school district must measure the distance between a student's home and the school. Each local school board should adopt a policy on where the measurement will start and end and apply the policy to all schools within the district. Some suggestions on measuring distance include:

Measure the walking distance on public roadways or walkways using the most direct, safe route. Do not use the route taken by the bus unless it is the most direct, safe route.

Begin measurement at:

- ③ Centerline of street – aligned with normal walkway to the student's house, or
- ③ Centerline of street – aligned with driveway to house, or
- ③ Property line of lot.

End measurement at:

- ③ Centerline of street in front of school entrance that the child would use if the child walked to and from school, or
- ③ Centerline of street in front of assigned central entrance to the school, or
- ③ School bus loading and unloading area at the school, or
- ③ Property line of school site.

## **7. Minnesota School Safety Conference**

The Minnesota School Safety conference is scheduled for February 20-21, 2008, at Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park. The conference is for school administrators, board members, transportation and student assistance staff, school liaison officers, law enforcement, emergency managers, public health and others involved in school safety efforts.

The conference will offer keynote speakers, training and workshops related to school safety.

Registration information will be available in mid-December. Please visit Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation at <http://mnapt.org/> for more information on the conference.

## **8. Using Public Mass Transit System to Transport Students**

Occasionally, school districts may use public transit systems or their community bus systems to transport children to and from school or to a school-related activity. Federal transit laws and regulations place limitations on the use of public transportation to transport students.

Generally, recipients of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants cannot provide transportation for students if that transportation excludes the general public or competes with private school bus operators. Public scheduled mass transit services may be used that are open to the general public. Such regular transit service may be designed or modified to accommodate the needs of school students using various fare collection or subsidy systems. This is commonly known as "tripper service".

Buses may stop only at stops that are accessible to the public and that are clearly marked like all systems stops. Stops may not be located on private property or on property that restricts access to the public. A school name can be a designated destination only if the destination is the final destination of a regularly scheduled mass transportation route.

An FTA grantee that provides "on demand responsive service" (such as "Dial-A-Ride") may provide this level of service to students as long as the service does not exclude the general public.

Transportation of Head Start participants can be done on public transit buses because Head Start transportation is not school bus service; it is transportation to a human service program.

## 9. Transporting Homeless Students

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (federal law) requires school districts to provide students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, with transportation to and from their school of origin if requested by the parent, guardian or homeless education liaison. School of origin is defined as the school the students attended before they lost their housing.

### **Transportation Responsibility**

Effective with the 2005-06 school year, the district that enrolls the homeless student will be responsible for the transportation even when the student is living at a location outside the district where the school of origin is located. This is true regardless of whether the student is living in a shelter or nonshelter location. Minn. Stat. 127A.47, subd. 2, Payments to Resident and Nonresident Districts provides that “For all school purposes, unless otherwise specifically provided by law, a homeless pupil is a resident of the school district that enrolls the pupil.”

Minn. Stat. 125A.51 (f) provides that when a nondisabled homeless student is in a shelter the district that enrolls the students is responsible for transportation. However, if the district that enrolls the student and the district in which the student is temporarily placed agree, the district where the student is temporarily placed may provide the transportation.

Transportation could be provided by:

- Rerouting regular school bus routes past shelters, motels and other places where students live,
- Using existing routes such as those set up to serve special education programs, desegregation programs or nonpublic schools,
- Contracting with the parent or guardian of the child,
- Issuing public transit passes,
- Using a taxi service,
- Contracting with other districts, and
- Collaborating with other public agencies.

## **Transportation Funding**

The cost of transporting students experiencing homelessness will be recorded in Finance Dimension 728, Special Transportation of Selected Students, on the year-end Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) report. This includes students with IEPs that do not require special transportation and students without IEPs. For students that have IEPs that require special transportation accommodations, record the transportation expenditures in UFARS Finance Dimension 723, since Finance Dimension 723 prevails over 728. Costs reported in both finance dimensions are funded through the special education transportation formula. This is true whether or not the student is living at a shelter or nonshelter location. However, when a student is transported from a shelter on a regular bus route and the regular bus route does not have any special accommodations, then the cost of the service should be recorded in Finance Dimension 720, Regular, on the year-end UFARS. (Minn. Stat. 123B.92, Subd. 1 (b) (vii), Minn. Stat. 125A.51, Minn. Stat. 127A.47).

## **Formerly Homeless Students**

School districts that elect to transport a formerly homeless student from his or her permanent home in another district to the school of origin can claim this transportation cost under Finance Dimension 728 on the year-end UFARS report. Even though this transportation service is not mandated under either state or federal law, districts may provide this transportation in order to prevent the student from being forced to change schools during a school year. The average homeless student attends three to four schools in one year. Statistics show that students who change schools often have lower test scores and lower overall academic performance than students who do not change schools. If districts elect to provide this transportation service, the funding would only be authorized through the end of the academic year.

## **Other Important Points About Transportation**

- ③ Students have the right to enroll in a school immediately so transportation services may have to be arranged quickly. It is important that there is regular communication with the district's transportation office and/or the other district's Homeless Education Liaison and transportation office.
- ③ Students can stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless. This may be longer than one academic school year.
- ③ Students must receive transportation services comparable to those provided other students. For example, districts providing late activity bus service for resident (housed) students must also provide this level of service for students experiencing homelessness.

## **Other Important Information About Student Transportation in Minnesota**

- ③ It is illegal to use a vehicle with a seating capacity of more than 10 persons to transport students unless the vehicle meets school bus construction requirements (yellow in color, stop arm, flashing lights, etc.). In other words, large vans (greater than 10 persons) cannot be used to transport students to and from school or on school-related trips in Minnesota because they do not meet school bus construction requirements.

The State Patrol must inspect most vehicles before they are used to transport students. The exceptions would be parents transporting their own children, taxis if used occasionally, public transit buses, and any vehicle used to transport a student in an emergency situation (sick child home from school).

### **Questions**

If you have questions about transportation requirements, contact John McLaughlin, State Coordinator for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth, at 651-582-8657. You may also contact Bob Fischer at 651-582-8776 or Kelly Wosika 651-582-8855, who are in the Pupil Transportation Office at the Minnesota Department of Education.

## **10. Stay Up-to-Date**

MDE provides a number of ways that users of MDE's Website can stay up-to-date. These methods involve obtaining your e-mail address for the purposes of notification. Please be assured that we have a strict privacy policy governing the use of your e-mail address.