

NACS TRANSPORTATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK



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

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Responsibilities

The safe and efficient transportation of your child relies on the cooperation and efforts of the school staff, transportation office, bus driver and parent. The following is an outline of various responsibilities of everyone involved.

Parent Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the parents to:

- Assist NACS by submitting accurate and timely information. Some of this information may be included on a Transportation Confidential Student Information card. Incorrect or untimely information hinders the ability to provide safe and efficient transportation services.
- Inform NACS of any medical or behavioral condition which may affect the students' safety or health on the school bus.
- Provide up-to-date emergency information to NACS. Inform school and transportation of any address or telephone changes ASAP. Address changes may require up to 5 working days to establish a new route time and schedule.
- NACS prefers wheelchairs to be WC19 compliant. All chairs must be inspected by transportation to be determined to be safe for transportation. Assure that the wheelchair for your child is in proper working order and clean in an effort to provide safe transportation for your student. In some situations, transportation must be stopped because of unsafe conditions caused by wheelchairs in need of repair.
- When possible the student should transfer to a forward facing seat.

- Assure that the parent or person you have authorized is at the bus stop to meet the child on time.
- We receive many last minute cancellations for special needs transportation. This may cause 5-15 minutes or more in the change in your child's pick up or drop off times. Please be prepared for early pick up and drop off times.
- Notify the driver or the Transportation Office ASAP if your child doesn't need transportation. You may leave a message on the main line anytime of the night. 260-637-6165
- **PLEASE REMEMBER** the bus driver is NOT required to wait for a tardy student as this can create late pick-up times. If your child misses the bus, the driver will not return for the student.
- If your child is required to wear a safety vest, the vest **MUST** be on the student prior to pick up. If the vest is lost or damaged due to irresponsibility of the parent or student, the parent will bear the responsibility for the cost of replacing the safety vest.
- Your child is receiving special services due to his/her needs. For that reason it is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver **to accompany the child to and from the bus.**



School Bus Rules

1. Do not be noisy or loud.
2. Do not eat or drink on the bus.
3. Stay in your seat.
4. NO teasing, pushing, tripping or hitting.
5. Cooperate with the driver.
6. Do not smoke or light matches.
7. Keep head, hands and feet inside the bus.
8. Be courteous, NO profane language.
9. Do not throw things in/out of the bus or be destructive.
10. Bus driver will assign seats.

Student Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the student to:

- Obey the bus rules.
- Respect the rights of other students.
- Be ready prior to the bus arriving.



Bus Driver Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the driver to:

- Be within a designated time frame for pick-up and drop-off. The driver is not required to wait for tardy students. This procedure must be adhered to because of the number of students we transport in a fixed period of time. If the driver arrives earlier than the designed time of pick-up, they are asked to wait. The Driver will wait no longer than 3 minutes and will proceed if no contact has not been established with the driver. Drivers are not required to honk their horn.
- Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- Display appropriate care and patience.
- Be prepared to effectively and efficiently evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
- Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality of our families whose children we transport.
- Complete and submit a violation form in the event that a student experiences behavioral issues on the bus.
- When behavior issues become a pattern, contact the student's teacher.

Transportation Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the transportation office to:

- Assign each eligible student to a bus stop. Determine stop locations according to both the need of the student, and accessibility of the residence.
- Route and schedule specially equipped buses to ensure the safest and most efficient use of the vehicle.
- Address concerns of the Parents, School Administrators, Drivers and the Public regarding special needs transportation.
- Provide the appropriate training and screening for bus drivers.
- Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules and regulations.
- Inspect and maintain all buses and maintain them in accordance with state and local statutes and regulations.
- Provide all child safety restraint systems to assist our students when necessary or required due to safety concerns.

Procedures

The following procedures were established by the Transportation Office to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students riding specially equipped buses. On occasion, the Transportation Office receives requests from parents to deviate from these procedures. The Transportation Office has the authority to either grant or deny requests or deny deviations based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety for all students on the bus and an appropriate level of service for those students entitled to special needs transportation.

1. Pick-Up and Drop-Off Locations

Your child will be picked up and dropped off at your home or PERMANENT babysitter. The driver cannot deliver to different addresses for the convenience of the parent.

A parent or caregiver must accompany the child to and from the bus.

- Due to certain road conditions (dead end road, narrow roadways, construction, etc.) it may be necessary to place the pick-up and drop-off stop at a safe location away from the home or day care.

Drivers are permitted to discharge students only at the school or designated bus stop. When there is not an authorized person to accept the student at the bus stop the following steps will be taken:

- Driver may take other students home and attempt to return, if possible.
- Attempts will be made to contact parent or guardians using telephone numbers on file.

- If there is no one to receive the student, the driver will contact the school and return the student to authorized school personnel.

2. 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 Office's best estimate based on a number of variables. These are target times only. In addition, as students are added to or deleted 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 speak directly with 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 Office will not honor requests to lengthen or shorten a student's bus ride to accommodate day care schedules or parent work schedules.

It is very common for student ridership to change on a daily basis. The bus driver or Transportation will make every attempt to contact the parent or guardian of the pick up or drop off time change.

Most changes are last minute when phone calls come in the mornings. This may alter the morning pick up times. We apologize for any inconvenience this might cause you.

Drop off times may also be altered when students don't ride home. We ask that the parent or guardian be at the designated drop off when the students are dismissed from school in the afternoon.

Private Driveways and Parking Lots

Transportation prefers to load and unload wheel chairs off the roadway. In the course of providing transportation, at times we must refuse driveways due to a number of factors:

1. Due to the weight and size of our buses, driveways might not be conducive to use for pick-up and drop-off locations.
2. Size, design and shape of driveway might not be appropriate for proper function of the wheel chair lift.
3. Homes with long private stone or dirt driveways must be kept reasonable smooth and plowed during winter months.
4. Trees limbs and wires that obstruct or will damage the bus.



Loading and Unloading at the Bus Stop

It is the responsibility of the driver to assist the loading and unloading of students at the bus stop location. Parents and child-care providers are required to communicate to the Bus Driver any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading. Parents and child care providers should be careful not to interfere with the driver while they are performing their duties. DO NOT send students to the bus with food, drink or medication to be consumed on the bus. We recommend that you take your child's medication to the school, and do not send it with your child.

Carrying Students On/Off Bus

To avoid the risk of injury to students or adults, students will not be carried up or down the bus steps. If a student can not negotiate the bus steps with a reasonable degree of assistance, the driver should consult Transportation and or the school PT (physical therapist) to implement an alternative procedure.



Students are safer to ride in a bus seat. Students who are physically capable will be transferred from a wheel chair and placed in a bus seat.

Transporting Wheelchairs

Wheelchairs must be in proper working order and have the appropriate safety equipment for the child. Chairs **MUST** have factory installed and functional positive latching seat belt and functioning brakes.

NACS prefers wheel chairs that meet WC19 compliance. Sports chairs or chairs with low supporting backs will not be transported on the bus with the students in the chair.

In rare instances, transportation will have to refuse a wheelchair if it is deemed unsafe for the child to be transported in. If you have any questions, you may always call the transportation office for some assistance.

Please **DO NOT** send your child's wheelchair home without the student, unless it is an emergency. We do not allow the bus driver off the bus except to operate the wheelchair lift. We cannot be responsible for an unattended wheelchair left in the student's driveway.



Student Behavior

It is our goal to provide safe transportation for all students in Northwest Allen County Schools who ride our buses to and from schools and on school-related trips. The bus driver 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.

Appropriate accommodations are made for special education students in accordance with Federal, State and local laws and board policies. The bus rules and procedures for discipline have been outlined for the drivers. All inappropriate behavior will be documented on an NACS Violation Form, and when applicable, administrators are to follow a progressive discipline procedure.

Dangerous Behavior on the Bus

- Any unsafe behavior will be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible and followed up with a Student Violation Form.
- When the behavior of a student with special needs poses a danger to themselves or others, the driver should notify Transportation immediately. The Transportation office will respond by sending appropriate assistance.
- Acceptable student behavior may be different from classroom to the school bus due to the difference in the environment. The school bus driver must be able to drive the bus safely with minimal distraction. If the student's behavior is not conducive for safe transportation the driver may refuse to transport the student.

Child Safety Restraint Systems

State and Federal laws have set forth guidelines to speak directly to Child Safety Restraint Systems on school buses. At NACS we maintain very high standards for child safety and will determine the need for such safety equipment based upon a number of considerations.

- Child's Height and Weight
- Physical Needs
- Age
- Behavioral Concerns
- Emotional Issues
- Disability



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 are instructed by the Transportation office not to accept students for transport with soiled clothes from bowel and bladder accidents.
- If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip, drivers are instructed not to attempt to clean up the accident in route, but to proceed to the scheduled stop at the school or home. The driver is then responsible to clean and disinfect any affected surfaces on the bus.

Unauthorized Items on Bus

- IDOT: Office of School Transportation & Emergency Planning has guidelines on what's allowed on the school bus.
- Students are allowed to only bring school essentials.
- Loose objects: Large items and items that will not fit in their book bag or on their laps are not permitted on the bus. Parents will be expected to find alternate transportation for those items to and from school.

Emergency Evacuation

The primary responsibility of the school bus driver is to provide safe transportation for students. Being involved in a traffic collision is always difficult. No driver expects a traffic collision or vehicle breakdown.

The most important part of a safe school bus evacuation is developing and practicing a safe plan before an emergency actually occurs.

Your child will participate in an emergency bus evacuation plan during the school year.

The Transportation Office is committed to providing safe and efficient transportation services for special needs students. It is our sincere hope that this handbook will contribute to a better understanding of special education transportation services.



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