

# Special Education Transportation

Information and Guidelines for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

## **FNSBSD Transportation Department**

907-452-2000, option 4

Fax: 907-451-0608

520 Fifth Ave

Fairbanks, AK 99701

## **Special Education Department**

907-452-2000, ext. 11448

## **Transportation Provider**

### **Durham School Services**

1-907-206-7789, option 1 (dispatch)

Under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), transportation is identified as a related service on a special education student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Related services are defined as supportive services that assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education. Transportation as a related service includes travel to and from schools and between schools, travel in and around school buildings, and specialized equipment (such as special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps) if required to provide special transportation for a student with a disability. (Reference: 34 CFR 300.34)

To determine if your child requires transportation as a related service to benefit from special education, an IEP team meeting will need to be scheduled. Typically, the IEP team will review any assessment data or other information that indicates a student demonstrates specific needs that require transportation. The IEP team must determine that without the related service, the student would not benefit from special education.

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**SCHOOL BUS SERVICE**

Special education transportation is a related service and may be included as part of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Transportation Department personnel are responsible for developing all school bus routes. School bus drivers or the District's transportation contractors are not authorized to alter routes without prior approval of the Transportation Department. The following guidelines are used to regulate the transportation program.

**SCHOOL BUS DRIVER AND ATTENDANT QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING**

Special education transportation requires drivers and attendants who are especially competent to give the best service and protection to your child. To ensure safe drivers for your child, the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District and the Alaska Department of Education require all school bus drivers to complete a minimum of forty (40) hours of training prior to being issued a school bus permit. Once licensed and assigned to a route, drivers attend regularly scheduled safety meetings and in-service training sessions to improve their skills in transporting special education students. District policy also requires each driver to be at least 21 years of age, have First Aid and CPR training, pass a physical examination, obtain a traffic and criminal clearance annually or on request, and undergo drug and alcohol screening. All special education school bus drivers and attendants receive a minimum of sixteen (16) hours of classroom and on-the-job training prior to being assigned to a route.

Attendants are also required to obtain a physical examination and have First Aid and CPR training. Drivers and Attendants may also be required to receive individualized training in order to accommodate your child's specific needs. If special training is necessary, you may contact your school nurse or the Special Education Department at 907-452-2000 ext. 11448.

**SCHOOL BUSES**

To ensure safe use of equipment, all school buses are inspected daily by the bus driver before they begin their route. Buses also receive a thorough preventative maintenance check every 3,000 miles and are inspected twice annually by the Alaska Department of Education.

**TRANSPORTATION ADDRESS**

A student will be picked-up and delivered at the same address every day. Morning and afternoon addresses may be different, but are to be consistent each day. In the event that your child is an apparent no show, and you have not contacted the bus terminal to inform them that your child will not be attending school that day, the driver will contact dispatch and continue en route. The District is not able to change addresses temporarily. If your child is provided transportation from your home address, please ensure that the address is displayed on the outside of the house or on a non movable landmark that can be seen from the street. In the event that an unexpected emergency arises and your child needs to be picked-up or delivered at an address other than the assigned one, you must call the FNSBSD Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4, in advance to see if the accommodation can be made as per your request. Safety will always take precedence over other criteria when establishing a pick-up and drop-off location. As part of the safety criteria established by the District, we often reference the Alaska Department of Education regulation 4 AAC 27.101 (a)(2) which may apply: The entire route must be over regularly maintained roads, having at least a gravel surface, which are under the supervision and all-weather maintenance of the Alaska Department of Highways, a public utility district, a municipality, a borough service area, or any other agency supported by public funds, adequate turn around space for transportation vehicles must be available on the route.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

The IEP team will determine the need for specialized equipment such as harnesses, harness clips, child safety seats, or other devices that students with disabilities might need to ensure proper positioning on the bus, and

include it in the IEP. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school nurse and the Transportation Department of a particular special requirement such as child safety seats, oxygen, or any other equipment that will need to be transported on the bus. The contractor provides child safety seats. However, special ordered items must be verified before the contractor will provide them for transportation. The Transportation Department must be notified before service can begin for a student with special equipment requirements.

### **BEHAVIOR**

Students are expected to behave appropriately on the bus so that safe transportation can be provided. Students whose behavior is related to their disability may have individual accommodations or plans developed. Contact your child's special education teacher or principal if assistance is needed in this area.

### **HYGIENE**

Please make sure that your child has the opportunity to use the bathroom before they board the bus. The bus route can be very long for a child. We do not wish to cause embarrassment or have a child be uncomfortable while en route to school or home.

### **MEDICAL NEEDS**

Specific medical needs are managed on an individual basis. Contact the school nurse or principal if you need assistance in this area. You may also contact the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4 if you have questions about transportation of medication.

### **PROPER DRESS**

During periods of inclement or extremely cold weather, make certain that your child is dressed appropriately as the door on the bus is opened and closed many times during the course of a route. On wheelchair buses the door is open for a long period of time while the lift is in operation. Buses

occasionally break down and can be without heat until another bus is dispatched.

### **PICK-UP PROCEDURE**

All children must be ready for pick-up five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Buses must operate on a definite schedule in order to provide a consistent service and for schools to start on time. Buses will wait only one (1) minute after arrival and then continue on the route. They will not depart your stop prior to the designated pick up time. It is imperative that your child be ready on time. If the bus was required to wait for each child on the route the bus would be late for school. The parent/guardian is responsible for assisting the child from the house to the bus in the morning and from the bus to the house in the evening. Drivers and Attendants will not come to your door. You will be notified if your child's pick-up changes more than five (5) minutes from the previous schedule.

### **DELIVERY OF STUDENTS**

No child will be permitted to leave a bus at a point other than the school or designated bus stop. If the parent is unable to meet the bus, and has not made other arrangements to have a responsible person receive their child at the designated drop-off point, the bus driver will proceed to the next stop. Every effort will be made to contact you or a person designated by you on the Authorization to Release form, which will be provided to you during the first week of school. If you do not receive a form, you may contact the bus contractor or the Transportation Department. Only children that are responsible enough to go into the home unattended may be released with prior authorization from the parent or guardian. If the child cannot get into the residence and there is not a designated person to take the child, they will be kept on the bus until a parent/guardian can be contacted. In the event that no one is available, children will be transported to the Alaska State Trooper Office in Fairbanks or the Fairbanks Police Department. Drivers may ask to see the identification of the person who a child is released to. Continued problems with delivery of your child may cause a disruption in service.

**MOVING OR CHANGING ADDRESSES DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR**

Should it be necessary to change your child's pick-up or drop off point during the school year, you must notify the Special Education Department at 907-452-2000 ext 11448. You may also contact the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4. The change can usually be processed within five (5) school days. It is important to request a change of address as early as possible so that transportation is not interrupted. Due to the large number of students transported, the District is not able to change addresses temporarily for parents who wish to take vacations or plan to be away for short periods of time during the school year.

**DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS**

The Transportation Department begins developing school bus routes during the month of July for the following school year. If you move during the summer months or must make day-care arrangements, do so early so that service is assured on the first day of school. During the summer months changes can be reported to the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4. Any changes requested after the first week in August may result in transportation not being provided for the first two weeks of school.

**ROUTE CHANGES**

Parents should be prepared for changes in buses, routes, and times of pick-up and delivery throughout the school year as a result of additions or withdrawals of students in the program. Overall route travel time will vary from route to route depending on the school and student home locations. After the initial adjustment period at the start of school or upon reorganization of routes, the pick-up or delivery time should be consistent within five (5) minutes. Buses may run later during days of unfavorable weather conditions such as snow and ice. You will be notified if your child's pick-up or delivery times change due to changes in the route. If your child is

rerouted to another bus, the new driver will contact you and introduce themselves and confirm the new times. If you have any questions or concerns about the new route change, please contact the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4.

### **PERSONAL ARTICLES**

Each item a child takes to school should be clearly marked. In case of lost articles, check with your school or the school bus driver. However, the bus driver and the school will not be responsible for personal belongings.

### **ILLNESS OR PARENT TRANSPORT**

Please notify the transportation provider and the school when you do not intend to send your child to school. Children who are obviously ill will not be transported. If a child becomes ill at school, the parent is responsible for transporting the child home. In the event that your child will be out of school for more than ten (10) school days for any reason, please notify the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4. If you intend to take your child to school, please notify the transportation provider at least one (1) hour before the scheduled pick-up time. Whenever possible, please notify the school in advance if you intend to pick your child up at school. If the student is put on the bus and the bus leaves the school site, the bus will not return to the school and other arrangements will need to be made.

### **WHEELCHAIRS**

Students accepted for transportation must be in wheelchairs designed and capable of being transported on the standard school buses. Wheelchairs must be easily secured within the bus without any modifications having to be made to the bus. The wheelchairs must also adjust to the normal system used to secure wheelchairs in buses. Students in wheelchairs not meeting these requirements may be denied transportation service due to the potential danger to themselves or other students. Each wheelchair must be equipped with functioning and properly maintained brakes. Motorized wheelchairs must utilize spill-proof batteries and must be operated manually while loading and unloading. Head and trunk support may be

required to provide safe transportation. Non-operating chairs will not be transported.

### **OXYGEN**

Oxygen bottles, if not properly secured, may present a safety hazard on the school bus. If your child requires oxygen during transportation, please contact the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4. Arrangements for securing the oxygen bottle and any special training for the driver/attendant will be arranged by the Transportation Department. If your child is semi-dependent on oxygen, please notify the Transportation Department on the days oxygen will be transported so that the driver and attendant will be sure to have the proper securing devices on board the bus.

### **SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENTS**

Although school buses are among the safest forms of ground transportation, accidents do happen. In the event that your child's special education bus is involved in an accident, you will be notified as soon as possible following the accident. When an accident is reported to the dispatcher, they will make all necessary contact in the following order: police, paramedics (if required), transportation department and the school principal. Parents will be notified as soon as possible after information is available on the nature of the accident.

### **ATTENDANCE NOTIFICATION**

To provide the least disruptive service to our students, we request that you notify the transportation provider in the event of an illness, vacation, or any other circumstance, which prevents your child from riding the school bus. In the event that the transportation provider or the Transportation Department is not notified after a period of three (3) days, the service may be discontinued. After a period of ten (10) days of non-notification the child may be taken off of the existing route. It could take up to five (10) days to reinstate your child's transportation.

**SERVICE DIFFICULTIES**

In the event of a problem with bus service, or if you have any questions regarding your child's transportation, we ask that the transportation provider be contacted first. All numbers for the transportation providers and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District are listed on the front of this handbook. All routing inquiries, such as arrival time of a bus, or notification of your child not riding the bus should be directed to the dispatch office of the transportation provider. Routing problems should be referred to the Transportation Department at 907-452-2000, option 4. It is important that you provide as much information as possible regarding a complaint. Information such as dates and times of the incidents as well as the names of the persons who have been contacted will assist district personnel in solving problems.

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