Anchorage School District
Pupil Transportation Department

Transporting Students with Special Needs

Information and Guidelines for Parents, Teachers, School Bus Drivers and Attendants

Dear Parents,

One of the populations within the Anchorage School District is children with special needs. Transporting these children to their respective schools is an integral part of their school day. The Anchorage School District has prepared this information to acquaint you with the procedures and guidelines regarding school bus transportation. We need your assistance and cooperation to maintain timely and reliable service. Your familiarity with and adherence to these guidelines will aid considerably in transporting your child in a safe and efficient manner.

We will do our best to provide safe transportation that meets the specific needs of your child. If you have questions or concerns regarding school bus service, please contact the appropriate person listed in the back of this booklet.

ASD Transportation Department
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Safety

Special needs transportation requires drivers who are especially competent to give the best service and protection to your child.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

To assure safe drivers for your child, the Anchorage School District and the Alaska Department of Education require all school bus drivers to complete a minimum of forty (40) hours training prior to being issued a school bus permit. The Alaska Department of Public Safety requires all School Bus Drivers to pass the written and driving test to obtain a Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL) to operate a school bus on public roads. The District also requires that all drivers spend at least two days with an experienced driver before they are allowed to transport children. Once licensed and assigned to a route, drivers receive First Aid and CPR training and attend regularly scheduled safety meetings and in-service training sessions to improve their skills in transporting special needs students. The District also requires each driver to be at least 21 years of age, pass a physical examination, obtain traffic and criminal clearances annually or on request, and undergo drug and alcohol screening.

A driver may 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 building principal. A Behavior/Disability Information Form will be completed should it be determined that one is needed. This form is available by request from your school nurse or special education teacher. This information will help the driver and attendant know how best to assist your child.

SPECIAL NEEDS ATTENDANT TRAINING

All special needs school bus attendants receive a minimum of twenty (20) hours of classroom and on-the-job training prior to being assigned to a route. Additional training includes First Aid and CPR training. Bus attendants attend regularly scheduled safety meetings and in-service training sessions to improve their skills in transporting special needs students. Attendants may also receive specific training to accommodate your child's individual needs. Note: Not all special need buses will have an attendant on board at all times.

SCHOOL BUSES

To assure use of safe 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.

BEHAVIOR

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

MEDICAL NEEDS

Specific medical needs can be managed on an individual basis. Contact the school nurse or principal if you need assistance in this area.

ADULTS ON THE BUS

Parents/Guardians are generally not permitted on the bus. There may be occasions when a Parent/Guardian may need to assist in Loading or Unloading a special education student; these occasions must be pre-approved through School and Transportation.

School Bus Service

In special education, transportation is a related service and may be included as a part of your child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Anchorage School District 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 district Transportation Department.

Siblings of transported special education students may ride with pre-approval on a space available basis. If seating space for siblings is not available, parents will be notified in writing by the Transportation Department.

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 of the week. If a child is to be picked up or delivered at an address other than the residence of the parent or guardian, the child's school must be notified in advance. We are not able to change addresses on a temporary basis. All pickup and drop addresses must be within the busing boundary of the home-school or the busing boundary of the District placement program school for the student. If your child is provided transportation from your home address, please ensure the address is displayed on the outside of the house and is easily seen from the street.

LOCATION OF BUS STOPS

Bus stops will be designated at locations within a reasonable distance from the child's home. Every effort is made to establish stops in safe and accessible locations. However, safety will always take precedence over other criteria. Those students requiring curb-to-curb service due to a disability will be picked up as close to the home as possible, and the following will 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, the Municipality of Anchorage, or any other agency supported by public funds. Adequate turnaround space for transportation vehicles must be available on the route.

Due to limited visibility, backing the bus can be extremely dangerous. Therefore, the District will not establish school bus stops which require backing the bus. School bus stops will not be established in areas with extremely narrow streets, steep grades, private roads, dead end streets or cul-de-sacs, which do not meet municipal

standards. During Alaska winters, snow berms may decrease the width of streets and the turning radius in cul-de-sacs. Your child's pick-up point may need to be relocated if the bus cannot safely negotiate certain streets. Cars parked in cul-de-sacs and on narrow streets create problems for school bus access. The Municipality of Anchorage has been cooperative in removing snow when notified that a child is on a special needs bus route requiring curb-to-curb service. The number for MOA street maintenance is listed in the back of this manual. All bus stops are subject to the approval of the ASD Transportation Department.

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 consistent service and for schools to start on time. Buses will wait only one (1) to two (2) minutes at the bus stop before continuing on the route. The bus will not depart your stop until it is within five (5) minutes of the designated pick-up time. It is imperative your child be ready on time. If the bus is required to wait for each child on the route, the bus will be late for school. The parent 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/attendants will not come to your door. The Transportation Routing Department processes hundreds of route changes as a result of students' being added, withdrawn or changes of address. Parents should be prepared for changes in equipment, routes, and pickup or delivery times throughout the school year. The first six to eight weeks of school will have the most fluctuations. Parents will be notified by the Routing department if a student's pickup or delivery time is adjusted more than 5 minutes. Notification is done with automated calls to the parents' main phone number on record at school.

DELIVERY OF PUPILS

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 take the child back to school, where the parents must pick up the child as soon as possible. In the event that no one is available at the school, children will be transported to the Anchorage Police Department. Please provide the individual designated to receive your child with written permission to do so. The school bus drivers may require that the designee provide identification.

Continued problems with delivery of your child will be cause to discontinue transportation service.

UNATTENDED DROP-OFF

All students must be met by a responsible person authorized by the parent or guardian. Parents requesting an unattended drop off must complete, sign and submit an "Unattended Drop Request" form at school each school year. Unattended drops will not be approved for cul-de-sacs unless the drop location is moved to the closest corner. The route rosters will be revised to reflect an unattended drop. Drivers are not authorized to drop a student unattended unless it is indicated on the route roster.

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. The access door on wheelchair buses is open for a long period while the lift is in operation. Buses occasionally break down and can be without heat until another bus is dispatched.

MOVING OR CHANGING ADDRESSES

Should it be necessary to change your child's pick-up or drop-off point during the school year, it will be necessary to contact the child's school. School staff will submit the appropriate information to the Transportation Department. The Transportation Department will usually be able to process the change within ten (10) school days. It is important to request a change of address as early as possible so that transportation is not interrupted. Route changes are implemented at the beginning of each week. Sufficient time must be allotted to notify parents of route changes and for drivers to learn new routes. 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 during the school year.

ROUTE CHANGES

The Transportation Routing Department processes hundreds of route changes as a result of students' being added, withdrawn or changes of address. Parents should be prepared for changes in equipment, routes, and pickup or delivery times throughout the school year. The first six to eight weeks of school will have the most fluctuations. Parents will be notified by the Routing department if a student's pickup or delivery time is adjusted more than 5 minutes. Notification is done with automated calls to the parents' main phone number on record at school.

ILLNESS

Please notify the proper transportation provider (telephone numbers are listed on page 12) and the school when you do not intend to send your child to school. Children who are obviously ill will not be transported. In fairness to the child and other children, keep a sick child at home. 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 five (5) days, please notify the appropriate transportation provider listed in the back of this booklet. Three days notice may be required to reinstate transportation for periods exceeding ten (10) school days.

MEDICATION & SUPPORT SUPPLIES

Medication and supplies (diapers, food etc,) will not be carried by students on the bus, as it could be left on the bus, lost, or taken by another child. All medication and supplies must be delivered to the school by the parents.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

If you are in the process of toilet training your child, please remember the bus ride can be long. Give your child the opportunity to use the bathroom before leaving home.

Personal Belongings

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.

IDENTIFICATION

It is highly recommended during the first few weeks of school, each child wear a name tag with his name, telephone number, address and school (the back cover of this booklet may be used for this purpose).

Special Requirements

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school nurse of a particular special requirement, such as safety vests, oxygen, etc. A Transportation Special Equipment Form will be completed by the nurse and forwarded to the Transportation Department prior to initiation of school bus service.

WHEELCHAIRS

Students accepted for transportation must be in wheelchairs designed and capable of being transported on standard school buses wheelchairs must meet WC 19 standards. Information on transportable wheelchairs can be obtained from the Transportation Department or the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) web site at wc-transportation-safety. umtri.umich.edu/. Wheelchairs must be easily secured within the bus without any modifications 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. For further information, contact the Transportation Safety Officer, 742-1200. Each wheelchair must be equipped with functioning and properly maintained brakes. Motorized wheelchairs must utilize spill-proof batteries and must be operated manually during loading and unloading. Head and trunk support may be required to provide for safe transportation. Non-operating chairs will not be transported. Wheelchairs will not be transported when the student does not ride the school bus.

CHILD SAFETY RESTRAINT SYSTEMS

Testing of seat belts and studies of school bus accidents have indicated that students can sustain head and neck injuries when belted in large school buses with lap type seat belts. For this reason, the District uses a four-point restraint system (safety vest) for those students who require additional support. All preschool students will be required to wear a safety vest. Information about and requests for safety vests can be obtained by contacting your child's teacher or the Transportation Department, 742-1200. Safety vests are sized by the child's waist size, when measuring for a safety vest the measurement should be taken when the child is in their winter coat.

OXYGEN

Oxygen bottles, if not properly secured, present a safety hazard on the school bus. If your child requires oxygen during transportation, please contact the Transportation Department, 742-1200. Arrangements for securing the oxygen bottle and any special training for the driver and attendant will be arranged by the Transportation Department. If your child is semi-dependent on oxygen, please notify the service provider (see page 12) on the days oxygen will be transported so that the driver and attendant will have the proper securement devices on board the bus. Extra oxygen containers will not be transported.

SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENTS

Although school buses are the safest form of ground transportation in the US, accidents do happen. In the event that a special education bus is involved in an accident, parents will be notified as soon as possible following the accident. When an accident is reported to dispatch, notification will be made to all necessary contacts in the following order: police, paramedics (if required), school principal and ASD Transportation office. Parents will be notified by their school and transportation as soon as information is available on the nature of the accident.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Other special needs should be communicated to the ASD Transportation Department in writing at the following address:

Anchorage School District
Transportation Department
3580 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507-1218

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 organization responsible for providing the service and the school principal be contacted first. Telephone numbers are listed on page 12. All routing inquiries such as arrival time of a bus or reporting an illness should be directed to the dispatch office of the transportation provider. Routing problems should be referred to the District routing office, 742-1200.

In the event that problems persist or you are not satisfied with the service provided, contact the Anchorage School District Transportation Department, 742-1200. It is important that you provide as much information as possible regarding a complaint. Information such as dates and times of incidents as well as the names of the persons who have been contacted will assist district personnel in solving problems. If you think transportation staff has not solved your concerns properly please contact The Executive Director of Transportation 742-1200. After you have followed the above procedure and still feel that a solution has not been reached, you can obtain an Anchorage School District Citizen Complaint Form from any District facility. Submission of a completed form will initiate a formal investigation.

REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO TRANSPORTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

14.30.347 Transportation Of Exceptional Children

When transportation is required to be provided as related services, exceptional children shall be carried with other children, except when the nature of their physical or mental disabilities is such that it is in the best interest of the exceptional children, as determined by the school district, that they be transported separately. State reimbursement for transportation of exceptional children shall be as provided for transportation of all other pupils except that eligibility for reimbursement is not subject to restriction based on the minimum distance between the school and the residence of the exceptional child.

AUDIO & VIDEO MONITORING

All ASD school buses including special needs buses are equipped with Audio & Video Monitoring devices. This equipment has been installed to increase the safety of all individuals on the buses. Reviews of video are done by School and Transportation staff. Parents and Guardians are not permitted to view these videos due to confidentiality Procedures.

Route numbers 61-99

Dispatch 742-1207
Safety/Training 742-1200
Supervisor of Transportation 742-1200

Reliant (Anchorage) Route numbers 501-699

Dispatch 278-4287
Safety/Training 278-4287
Terminal Manager 278-4287

Reliant (Eagle River) Route numbers 751-799

Dispatch 696-4287
Safety/Training 696-4287
Terminal Manager 696-4287

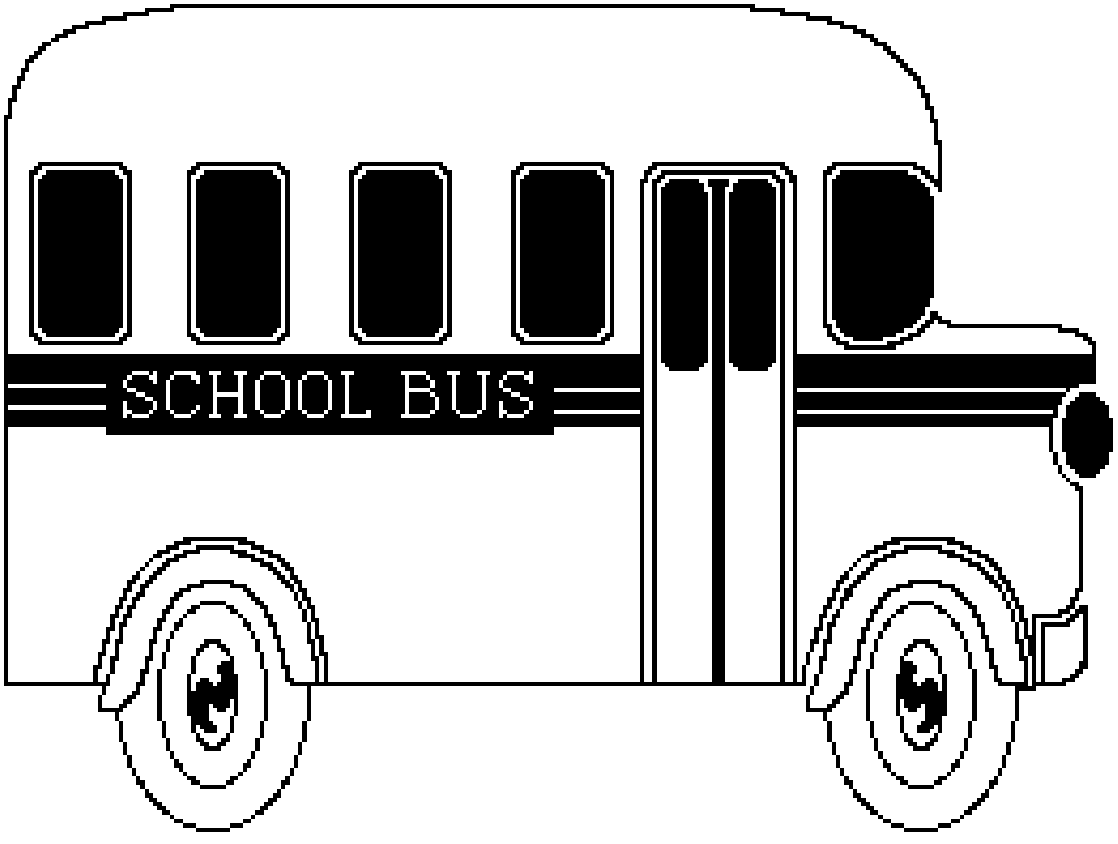
Other Contacts

Anchorage School District

Routing Office 742-1200
ASD Reliant Liaison 742-1200
Executive Director of Transportation 742-1200
Special Education Parent Resource Center 742-3872
Mt. Iliamna Pre-School Special Education 742-0100
Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. 742-4243
Whaley School. 742-2350
Elementary Special Education 742-6065
Middle School Special Education 742-3895
High School Special Education 742-3895

Street Maintenance

Anchorage 343-8277
Chugiak/Eagle River/Peters Creek. 343-1510


SCHOOL BUS