

New York State Education Department

Pupil Transportation Services



EAST RAMAPO ACTION

FINAL REPORT



Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (PTSI)

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NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
EAST RAMAPO ACTION – PTSI FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (PTSI) is the New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) vendor contracted for school bus accidents and fatality investigations. NYSED contacted PTSI and requested a specific audit action in the East Ramapo Central School District to determine the level of compliance with the NYSED transportation regulations and requirements. This audit action was born out of concern over the recent student fatalities and serious injuries each involving a school bus. PTSI performed the requested action between June 17, 2024, and June 21, 2024.

Methodology

PTSI assembled a team of 8 NYSED Certified Master Instructors to perform the following tasks onsite in East Ramapo CSD:

- ***School Administrators:*** Interview school district administration regarding policies, practices, and staffing as it relates to transportation safety and compliance oversight of the school bus contractors transporting their students.
- ***School Bus Contractor Managers:*** Interview the managers and/or supervisors of the East Ramapo School Bus Contractors, approximately 39 contractors, transporting students home to school, athletic trips and field trips regarding their relationship with the East Ramapo Central School District and their efforts to comply with NYSED regulations and expectations for documentation.
- ***Certified School Bus Driver Instructors:*** Interview the NYSED Certified School Bus Driver Instructors (SBDI) performing regulatory required trainings and testings to determine the level of compliance with NYSED regulations.
- ***School Bus Drivers:*** Interview school bus drivers – two from each school bus contractor, to determine their level of understanding and compliance with NYSED regulations and industry best practice.
- ***Driver File Review:*** Each school bus contractor was requested to bring copies of their driver files to the East Ramapo CSD location on June 20th, or 21st for the PTSI team of Master Instructors to perform a comprehensive driver’s file review to determine the level of compliance with NYSED transportation regulations. The PTSI team leaders randomly chose 32% of the files presented for review.

Specific interview questions were formulated for each group interviewed. The interview questions for each and their summarized responses are in the Appendix of this report.

Once all data was collected, it was recorded on Excel spreadsheets for ease in reference. These spreadsheets have been attached to this electronically delivered report. The data then underwent side by side comparisons to identify discrepancies between the responses for each group interviewed and what was documented in the driver files. The Certified Master Instructors were specifically looking for the following:

- Differences and disconnects in what the school district and the school bus contractors understood as the expectations for service.
- Demonstrated efforts of oversight on the part of the school district regarding NYSED regulatory requirements and evidence of satisfying those obligations on the part of the school bus contractors.
- Demonstrated efforts of oversight on the part of the school bus contractor regarding NYSED regulatory requirements and obligations on the part of the SBDI serving their district or company.
- Discrepancies between what the SBDIs identified as their normal regulatory practices and what the drivers actually experienced in the process of NYSED required training and testing performed by SBDIs.
- File review assessments of documented regulatory required training and testings.
- Potential malfeasance, misfeasance or nonfeasance or other non-ethical evidence on the part of any of the SBDIs within the course of their NYSED regulatory duties and obligations.

It must be noted that PTSI did not get full cooperation from all school bus contractors listed as serving East Ramapo CSD. PTSI interviewed 7 of the identified 9 SBDIs serving East Ramapo CSD. Over all 13 SBDIs were interviewed, however Chestnut Ridge Transportation chose to bring all their SBDIs (7) for interview. PTSI requested that each bus contractor send 2 drivers to be interviewed, a potential 78 drivers. PTSI interviewed 67 of the potential 78 drivers. Out of approximately 350 drivers files overall PTSI reviewed 114, driver files for a 32% compliance review, although not all contractors submitted their files.

Findings

Differences and Disconnects

In all our interviews it is clear that there is a disconnect between the District and the Yeshiva Private Contractors (YPC). We cannot say with any confidence that the district knows who rides what bus and at which time. While they may know in a “general” sense who is on the bus, they do not know on any type of regular basis, especially when school schedules change, particularly Friday early dismissals for the Jewish religious observance

of Shabbat. This was demonstrated during our investigation into the most recent fatal school bus accident.

This disconnect is further exacerbated by the YPCs being responsible for all their own routing. While many of the contractors have good systems in place for routing and tracking, the district has no access to those databases or live GPS tracking. Additionally, it's clear there are slight changes to the student manifest on some Friday early dismissals routes. These changes are not reflected or communicated to the district. There is no requirement for the contractor to provide the district with any information regarding their routes unless specifically requested, which the district rarely does. In essence the district gives the contractor the list of students and holds no further responsibilities regarding their transportation.

When the district was asked, "How do you know that the contractor is reporting students who are actually riding the bus for billing purposes?" The response was, "If there were additional students we would be billed for them." The question really is what if there are fewer students riding than being billed for, how would the district know if they were being over billed? We were told that they probably wouldn't know that until the following year when a new contract was started. If the district can't definitively identify who they are getting billed for, then it is reasonable to conclude they do not know who is actually riding the bus.

While everyone was helpful and answered all of our questions openly, the district's disconnect isn't just with the contractors. There is a lack of "rank" structure and cohesiveness in the district transportation office. Since there is no Transportation Director, the Assistant Coordinator is the "titled" person in charge, however she does not believe she is anyone's actual supervisor. When asked if she sends the Route Inspector out to locations or follows up on situations, we were told by her that she doesn't have that authority. Yet in our interview with the Assistant Superintendent for Business, she stated that the Assistant Coordinator most certainly does have that authority.

When we spoke to the Route Inspector, he told us that he is often told by the Assistant Coordinator to stay back and help in the office instead of conducting road supervision. The office being understaffed, the rapid expansion of contracted operations and lack of a Transportation Director has put a tremendous amount of stress on the Route Inspector, the Transportation Department and the District. Because the Route Inspector is a NYSED certified SBDI and NYDMV 19A Examiner, he knows what should be done, but is overwhelmed by the amount of work and the non-safety related work delegated to him.

School District Demonstrated Oversight of School Bus Contractors

It became evident that the district provides no oversight of the contractors. Even though required, the district has no idea as to “who” is driving the school buses serving East Ramapo CSD students. While the District does conduct random audits of the contractor’s paperwork for 19A compliance, little to no attention is given to NYSED regulatory compliance. There is no oversight of training at any of the locations designated by the contracted operators. At no time did any of the contractors report that they received Superintendent’s approval for any of their drivers, with the exception of Chestnut Ridge Transportation who stated they recently reinstated this approval process. We were told by two of the fleet contractors that at one time the district required an annual driver’s roster for Superintendent’s approval but that hasn’t happened in the last several years.

After interviewing all of the contractors it is clear that there is no consistency in regard to how transportation is delivered. The greatest amount of consistency is seen with the Fleet contractors who are provided with the routes from the district. However, even though they are being given the routes, consistency goes away with the regular early dismissals time changes on Fridays. Considering it to be the same route, with time adjustments is not always accurate. In addition, any changes are magnified when there is a spare driver on the route, especially on Fridays. The response overall was the same; the bus contractors rely on the expectation that the driver knows the children. There was no indication that spare drivers receive any additional training for driving under those conditions.

All of the YPCs develop and manage all of their own routing. None of those routes are known to the district. Every aspect of daily operation is handled in-house including families moving, bus changes, stop changes and scheduling changes. While all of this is easier for the district, it provides for little to no oversight or timely communication of changes. The contractor performs their daily responsibility of running their routes without advising the district. The only time the district would know of a change is when they ask for a copy of the route, which rarely happens. This lack of oversight also extended to the contract billing. The contractor provides a monthly listing of students they are invoicing the district for, however there is no verification required to see if those students are riding the bus or even if they still live within the district. That notification only comes once a year when the new contract is issued, and the names and total number of students are identified.

School Bus Contractor Demonstrated Oversight of SBDIs

In discussions with the contractors many of them expressed they were not aware of or just didn’t know what the requirements were for NYSED certified SBDIs. Many of them used an outside source to help them with their NYS agencies compliance. We identified numerous instances in which that service was not done. We also identified that many of the

contractors are being served by A1 Driving Services, owned and managed by a former SBDI, Martin Lax, whose certification has been revoked. This is addressed in the SBDI interview portion of the overall audit.

In reviewing the district's contract document, we observed that the contract is substantial and thorough. However, it is obvious that the district does not use or enforce several of the requirements provided in the bid document and subsequent contract.

Of the 39 identified school bus contractors transporting East Ramapo CSD's students for the 2023-2024 school year, Martin Lax also known as A1 Driving Services Inc., whose certification as an SBDI has been revoked, is responsible for 46% of the drivers NYSED regulation compliance. Aaron Appel, who is an independent SBDI, but also works for Martin Lax & A1 Driving Services, is responsible for 30% of the drivers compliance. This results in 76% of the compliance responsibilities being managed by these two SBDIs.

Special Note: Although the East Ramapo CSD sent the PTSI Team the name of SBDI Gregorio Csamillo, representing Omar Transportation, Mr. Csamillo did not present himself for an interview, assumably because he is not a certified SBDI in New York State.

Discrepancies Between SBDIs and Drivers

During the interview process with SBDIs and Drivers, there were notable discrepancies. In discussions during the interview process, SBDIs demonstrated a lack of understanding and general awareness of the NYSED regulatory requirements. There are areas of understanding that seem to be collectively understood, such as the requirement to perform a Physical Performance Test (PPT), however, in discussions with drivers, we found that while in some cases they were aware of the need for a Physical Performance Test, they had not ever been given one. Further, the driver's description of the PPT did not match any part of the actual test, such as "I dragged 'dummy' out the door" and "I checked all the emergency exits", parts of an evacuation exercise or a pre-trip. This may indicate that the driver had not actually been given the test, yet there was a completed PPT form in the file. A few more creative descriptions of PPTs were noted, such as "drag the rolled-up carpet", indicating the test was attempted but not given in accordance with NYSED regulatory requirements.

The PTSI team intentionally chose the term "meetings", used in the interviews instead of "training" to avoid prompting a positive answer, based on the fact they know they should have training. In general, the response was that at least once a year they had a meeting, and that sometimes it was an SBDI that led the meeting and sometimes it was the manager or someone in leadership in the company. Durations of the meetings varied from 30 minutes to "multiple days". Documentation of training was for the most part virtually nonexistent, as demonstrated by the red cells on the Driver File Review excel spreadsheets. *See attached Excel files.*

SBDIs seemed to understand the requirement for a driver to have a School Bus Driver Basic Course, while other training requirements, such as Dignity for All Students (DASA) and the Mandated Reporter are not understood at all and are being performed in only a few locations. In some cases, those who are performing the training may not be providing it in accordance with state guidelines.

The lack of knowledge and understanding of what is expected of them as SBDIs serves to inflate the levels of non-compliance.

Driver File Reviews

Approximately 28 contractors submitted their driver files for review. Of the files submitted, 32% were randomly pulled and checked for NYSED compliance. PTSI's team of Master Instructors found no files that were 100% compliant with NYSED regulations.

The file reviews demonstrate widespread non-compliance, compounded by a potential lack of communication, understanding and respect of the regulatory requirements and NYSED's expectations. It appeared to be a consensus on the part of the SBDIs that because there were no meaningful consequences for not complying with the NYSED regulations, they were given a very low priority.

Potential Malfeasance, Misfeasance, Nonfeasance or Other Non-Ethical Evidence

- ***Malfeasance:*** Malfeasance is an intentional act that is fraudulent, or harmful.
- ***Misfeasance:*** Misfeasance is an act that is unintentionally performed incorrectly.
- ***Nonfeasance:*** Nonfeasance is a lack of acting or responding, when called for.
- ***Unqualified:*** Does not meet the NYSED guidelines and requirements to transport in New York State.

The Following Documentations Were Found to Contain Potential Malfeasance:

- **Aaron Appel, SBDI # 13-055:**
 - Performed a completed PPT on Yissahar Karny on 11/10/2023, yet Mr. Karny described his PPT as “they tell you how to get off the bus in an emergency.” Mr. Karny added that during the PPT they” teach you driving skills”. This interview does not support the fact that Mr. Karny was actually given this PPT, and the documentation was potentially falsified.
 - During the 6/20/24 interview with Israel David Fried, he shared with us that they did not have another meeting this past spring, and that they only come together once a year. Yet in his driver's file there was documentation from Mr. Appel indicating that he had performed a Spring Refresher at his location

on 4/14/2024. This driver's statement does not support that this refresher actually happened and indicates potential falsification of the document.

- In the same interview with Israel David Fried, he also stated that he had been given a PPT, but could not describe any part of the test, and after being prompted that it was the test where you drag the bag, still had no recollection of the test. Yet in his driver's file, there was a completed PPT, signed by Mr. Appel on 12/26/2022. The driver's statement does not support the fact that he had been given the test and raises the question of potential falsification of the test.
- Aaron Appel is the SBDI of record for the school bus contractor, Cong Bnos Zion of Bobov Monsey, according to information sent to the PTSI team from East Ramapo CSD. In the interview with one of this school bus contractor's drivers, Boruch S. Rockove, stated that they have 30-minute meetings every two months, throughout the year. When asked if they had a meeting this spring, he replied "yes, over a couple of days", but he did not know who conducted the meeting. His driver file contained documentation of one training that was performed March 5, 2024, signed by Mr. Appel. This driver's statement does not support the potential that this training actually happened, calling into question the possible falsification of this training document. This driver also said that he had taken the Basic Course, yet there was no certificate in the file.
- During the interview with Yakov Kaufan, a driver for T.T. Lezensk, he stated that in the spring meeting, Mr. Appel taught emergency lifting and evacuation and did his PPT. The documentation for that Spring meeting was dated 4/14/2024, yet his PPT was dated 2/10/2023 and signed by Aaron Appel, indicating potential back dating resulting in fraudulent documentation.
- **Kendrick McPhoy, SBDI # 05-041:**
 - Cheese Bus, one of East Ramapo's contractors, driver Rosa Lopez, shared in her interview that during her PPT she tested the air brakes and emergency doors. And could not remember who performed the test. Yet in her driver file there was a PPT form completed, dated 11/10/23 and signed by Kendrick McPhoy. This driver's interview does not support that this test actually was given, a potential malfeasance.
- **Laser Lax, SBDI # 99-085:**
 - Note: Laser Lax works for A1 Driving Services, a company owned by his son, Martin Lax, whose SBDI certification has been revoked.
 - During the course of our file reviews, we found 23 PPTs that had evidence of having not been actually performed. Standard 5, which is performed while the bus is in motion, requires the SBDI to choose 2 hand controls for both the right hand and the left hand. The SBDI must write on the form, which controls were chosen for the test. Laser Lax identified "release emergency brake" on

all 23 of the forms we reviewed, that he had completed for various contractors under the umbrella services provided by A1 Driving Services. The bus could not be moving as the test requires, if the emergency brake is on and then released during the test. This evidence is an indication that the test, or at least part of the test, was not actually performed, thus making the forms falsified.

- On these same 23 PPT forms, and an additional 2 more, the time for all 4 tests in Standard #5, was 1 second. The possibility of all these drivers scoring 1 second on all these tests is low. One of the tests was to “set cruise control”, with a time of 1 second – which is an impossibility to do at 5 mph, as the test guidelines suggest. Again, further evidence that part or all of this test was not actually performed and the documentation of it falsified.
- **Alexander Gurwitz, SBDI #04-042**
 - Alexander Gurwitz is an SBDI that East Ramapo CSD identified as serving only one bus contractor, Yeshiva Viznitz. In his interview, Mr. Gurwitz stated that he provided training for the “Visions School” and did not identify Yeshiva Viznitz. Mr. Gurwitz is a very active SBDI according to the NYSED training database. He has submitted many NPOs and NPCs for Driver Basic Courses for the 2023-2024 school year and continues. Although Mr. Gurwitz is not identified by Martin Lax as one of the SBDIs working for A1 Driving Services, one has to question if A1 Driving Services, Martin Lax specifically, is using Alexander Gurwitz’s SBDI number and signature to submit A1 Driving Services course documentation, since his own certification has been revoked. Nowhere on the NPO/NPC does it require a name other than that of the SBDI, whose room approval code is linked to, making it impossible to identify courses being offered by A1 Driving Services. Mr. Gurwitz submitted the following:
 - June 12, 2023: NPC – 30 drivers for the Basic Course
 - June 29, 2023: NPC – 30 drivers for the Basic Course
 - September 13, 2023: NPC – 29 drivers for the Basic Course
 - January 29, 2024: NPC – 27 drivers for the Basic Course
 - May 5, 2024: NPC – 30 drivers for the Basic Course
 - May 7, 2024: NPC – 30 drivers for the Basic Course
 - June 2, 2024: NPC – 29 drivers for the Basic Course
 - June 2, 2024: NPC – 20 drivers for the Basic Course
 - June 4, 2024: NPC – 30 drivers for the Basic Course

Note that on June 2, 2024, Mr. Gurwitz was conducting simultaneous Basic Driver courses, one in Rockland County with 29 drivers and one in Kings County with 20 drivers. Christina Cespedes, SBDI #23-129, is noted on the NPO for Rockland County, but Alexander Gurwitz signed both NPCs.

This volume of Basic Course work indicates that Mr. Gurwitz is serving more than just Yeshiva Viznitz as noted on the list of contractors from the district or the “Visions School” as he indicated in his interview, and may be part of the A1 Driving Services staff, which curiously was not disclosed by either him or Martin Lax to the district or the PTSI team of Master Instructors.

Adding to this potential is Mr. Gurwitz’s signature that does not deviate even the slightest from document to document, indicating a potential signature stamp that someone other than Mr. Gurwitz could use.

Although there is no evidence of specific wrongdoing on Mr. Gurwitz’s part, it does raise questions about a potential relationship with Martin Lax and A1 Driving Services, and the lack of disclosure, increasing the unethical potential for both Martin Lax and Alexander Gurwitz.

Driver Files - Potential Misfeasance:

PTSI had several drivers share things that were variations of attempted compliance with regulation but performed incorrectly. Examples of attempts that fell short of meeting the regulation were:

- Dragging a rolled-up carpet, dragging a doll, dragging the weights in a plastic milk crate and carrying the weights on your shoulder instead of the drag bag for the PPT.
- Two drivers insisted that their PPT was performed by the company doctor who also did their physical. They both stated separately that the doctor had them lift a chair to test their strength.
- Trainings or meetings that lasted well short of the 4 hours annually and covered topics not identified in the NYSED mandated core trainings.
- The fourth hour of training was never referred to by any of the drivers or SBDIs.
- Some SBDIs claim to be teaching the Mandated Reporter training but have no certificate that authorizes them as NYS Mandated Reporter instructors, and their documentation does not indicate that the training is being reported to NY State as required.
- Very few training courses are accompanied by the proper documentation such as sign-in sheets, location, date, sample handouts, and guest speaker credentials. Without these, the training cannot be verified.
- Specifically, A1 Driving Services has several SBDIs who work for them. These independent SBDIs also work directly for bus contractors. However, when they work for A1 Driving Services, they rely on Martin Lax to do the documentation for the course. This sets the stage for A1 Driving Services to be able to add names to the NPC or sign-in sheet after the fact without the SBDI’s knowledge. At no time does the SBDI ever see the driver’s file. Martin Lax hires them to perform training or a test,

which they complete and then invoice A1 Driving Services. Martin Lax handles all the paperwork and files. This provides more than ample opportunities to add names after the training has occurred and falsify certificates and other documentation without the SBDI being aware of it.

- Some SBDIs expressed that they believed the Notice of Program Offering (NPO) was just a document you sent in with a schedule, but then you could hold the course however you needed to. They felt that changes to the schedule were allowed without getting any further approval or changing the NPO. For the Notice of Completion, they simply mirrored what they had put on the NPO, no matter what they had done in terms of changing dates and times.
- Dates of hire were not provided in almost all of the driver files, making it impossible for file reviewers to determine whether or not some of the training requirement timelines had been met. Similarly, no one provided the documentation for the previous school year, 2022-2023, which also prevented the ability to determine potential lapses in physical exams and physical performance tests.

There are bus contractors making efforts to comply with training requirements, however the documentation offered was unsupported by sign-in sheets which would have allowed reviewers to verify the driver's attendance. The lack of any way to verify the validity of the training calls them under scrutiny for falsification. These efforts are identified in the Excel spreadsheets by yellow data cells – indicating documents that were provided but could not be verified.

Driver Files - Potential Nonfeasance

PTSI discovered wide-spread nonfeasance during the driver file reviews, ranging from a file with only a copy of a license to files lacking two school year cycles of documents. In many cases when it was mentioned that the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 school years are to be maintained in the NYSED driver file, the SBDI reacted with surprise, they claimed to have not ever heard that requirement. While in some cases, the team felt that the lack of knowledge was legitimate, others were simply using it to justify a lack of responsibility toward the regulatory compliance.

Driver Files – Unqualified

Omar Transportation is a company based out of New Jersey. During the file reviews, as well as the interviews, it became clear that this company had not qualified in any way to be able to transport school children under the regulatory requirements of the New York State Education Department. All documents contained in the Omar Transportation driver's files were New Jersey based and do not meet the criteria for New York State. This bus contractor is represented by SBDI Gregorio Csamillo, yet Mr. Csamillo is not a certified

SBDI with NYSED, and any tasks he may have undertaken within that certification would not be allowed.

In total, the data collected during driver file reviews is represented by the sea of red on the file review spreadsheets and speaks for itself.

Recommendations

District Oversight Recommendations

1. Require each contractor to provide a list of the drivers who will be driving during the school year for the Superintendent's approval for the school year. They must also require notification each time a driver is added to the driving roster while driving in the district. Contractors should request a copy of their approved drivers from the district annually.
2. Review training conducted by each contractor. They must ensure refresher training is actually conducted and verify who was in attendance. Contractors must provide the district with documentation of all completed training courses, including all sign in sheets, location, date, guest speaker credentials and agendas indicating the mandated content covered and the names of the instructors delivering the instruction.
3. Perform random announced and unannounced observations of training in all of the contracted operations. This observation should include the name of the instructor, the topic and content of instruction, verification of attendees.
4. Conduct unannounced curbside verifications throughout the school year. They must verify the driver's identity and if the driver is approved to drive for the district. In addition, verify all of the required equipment is on the bus and operational.
5. Conduct daily random road supervision in the morning and afternoon to ensure buses are being operated in a safe manner.
6. Require attendance checks of all the contracted routes. These checks should be on announced pre-determined days and on unscheduled unannounced days to determine if student assignments and counts are accurate.
7. Make unannounced visits to contractor locations to audit driver files for NYSED compliance. In addition, verify all the vehicles assigned to cover district routes are in compliance with all governing agency regulations.
8. Conduct an annual (and then as necessary) mandatory meeting with all of the contractors describing, in detail, exactly what is required of the contractors and the ways in which the district will be verifying and enforcing compliance.
9. Recruit, hire and retain a qualified Transportation Director. This is a critical position for any operation, but in a district of this size and complexity it is a must. This person must be an experienced supervisor in addition must be SBDI and a 19A

Examiner. If the district is unable to find a suitable person to fill the position, the district needs to hire a consultant in the interim.

10. Consideration should be given to providing three assistants to the Transportation Director. One who's primary responsibility is in-district transportation, one who's responsible for private school transportation and the last one who's responsible for special education transportation, homeless and booking field and athletic trips. These assistants should be provided with staffing suitable for providing routing and operational assistance. (Ex: answering phones, making routing changes, validating the contracted billing, booking additional work as needed.)
11. Add an additional Route Inspector or Safety Supervisor. These two positions should be on the road during arrival and dismissal times. In addition, these positions should make random inspections of all contracted operations throughout the year. Including unannounced observation of training session conducted by the contractors.
12. Require all contractors, who develop their own routes, to provide accurate, up to date routes prior to the start of school and at ANY time there are changes to the route. The information must include the bus and driver information, stops, times and students assigned to the route. Then periodic checks need to take place to ensure the information is accurate.
13. Require access to the GPS bus information in real time.
14. Conduct an annual mandatory meeting, then as needed, with all the contractors informing them of all the district requirements and expectations.
15. Use Section II-Liquidated Damages clause and fine contractors for their noncompliance.
16. Write more robust language in its bid contract requiring all of the above-mentioned items for contractors to provide the district to meet all recommendations made in this report.

School Bus Driver Instructors (SBDIs) Recommendations

1. SBDIs should take control of the documentation for all tasks performed under their certification as an SBDI. Sign-in sheets, location, date, copies of all handouts, guest speaker credentials, and a copy of their SBDI card must be maintained for all training performed. If this documentation is to be provided to a client (bus company or district) then a copy should be made for the SBDI's records.
2. NYSED recommended class sizes must be followed and not surpass capacities listed on the room approval application/code.
3. SBDIs must never sign a document, without fully performing the training or test. Falsification may result in losing your SBDI certification.
4. SBDIs must review the NYSED guidelines for performing and documenting the Physical Performance Test (PPT).

- a. Including how to identify if the weights being used for the weight drag are certified and if not, how to obtain that certification.
5. SBDIs must research their responsibilities and obligations to perform or provide training for the mandated DASA and Mandatory Reporting regulations. This should include any required authorizations or certifications to teach and the process for documentation.
6. The SBDI who submits the NPO must be required to also instruct and play an active role in the delivery of the course and training.

NYSED Oversight Recommendations

1. NYSED should tighten up processes surrounding the mandated trainings, especially the preservice training, by requiring SBDIs to use the NPO/NPC process. This process will allow NYSED to conduct random unannounced observations of the training quality and instructor skills.
2. NYSED should require that the sign-in sheets be provided along with copies of driver's licenses (last 4 social security number for attendants/monitors courses) for all course NPCs.
3. NYSED should communicate a restatement/reminder of all expectations regarding regulatory compliance to all school district Superintendents, School Bus Contractors and SBDIs to allow for proper oversight at each of these levels.
4. Any SBDI falling under question regarding their ethics in this NYSED Action should be given the opportunity to further explain to NYSED regarding any special circumstances, and all involved re-interviewed, before any potential punitive action is considered regarding their certifications.

Conclusion

PTSI's team of Master Instructors agree that there may be a few issues of malfeasance, which this audit supports, however, the primary concern is the non-feasance that appears to be pervasive amongst most of the contractors serving East Ramapo Central School District. In addition, concerns surrounding a lack of regulatory and district oversight and meaningful consequence for non-compliance surfaced in our onsite work.

This action encountered several challenges, among them:

- Lack of supporting documentation and/or proof that the training requirement(s) had actually been fulfilled.
- Lack of procedural integrity for efforts that were made toward compliance.
- Lack of understanding/knowledge regarding the regulatory requirements on the part of all entities involved.

In spite of the challenges, PTSI's team feels that the data collected will allow the New York State Education Department the information they need to move forward, toward safer transportation for the East Ramapo CSD students on school buses.

Appendix

Excel Spreadsheets Files for SBDI And Driver Interviews and Driver File Reviews Are Attached to The Email Delivering This Final Report.

Included In This Appendix are Interview Instruments and Summarized Responses.

New York State Education Department - *East Ramapo CSD Audit*

PTSI Team Interviews

DISTRICT STAFF

Audit summary and recommendations from our meetings with East Ramapo School District Administrators and Staff:

- **Who is in attendance? Name and title: RESPONSE:**
 - Over the period of two days, we interviewed four District representatives.
 - Natalie Espinal – Assistant Superintendent for Business
 - Karla Araujo – Transportation Assistant Coordinator
 - Mark Putowski – School Bus Route Inspector
 - Karina Diaz – Secretary Principal Clerk

- **How many contractors do you have?**

RESPONSE: Approximately 40 Contractors. It was at this time we learned that the district classifies their contractors in two groups:

- Fleet Contractors: which means the contract is a per hour contract and the routes are provided by the district.
- Yeshiva Private Contract (YPC) which means it is a per pupil contract and the routes are done by the contractor.

- **What do you ask for from the contractors to be eligible to operate a contract for the district?**

RESPONSE: The district requires traditional bid requirements; bid bond, fleet list, financial statements, contractor history, certification form, corporate resolution, non-collusion certificate, bid proposal certification, Iranian Disclosure, hold harmless and statement of insurance.

Noticeably missing from the bid checklist is a driver roster, a current AFCO and a current BusNet report.

- **Are there requirements for contracted vehicles? (Videos, post trip alarms etc.)**

RESPONSE: This year the district is requiring cameras (Bus Patrol) and crossing arms.

- **How is this verified by the district?**

RESPONSE: This will be verified by the installation list provided by Bus Patrol, also verified by the contractors, and by the district representative who will go to contractor locations to verify. This should be verified by either a safety supervisor or the Route Inspector.

- **How do you approve the drivers?**

RESPONSE: We received different answers depending on who responded to the question. There is a belief that the Bus Route Inspector either goes to contractor locations, or that the contractors are supposed to provide the lists on their own. However, speaking with the Route Inspector he reports that the contractors need to be called to provide their information.

- **How do you ensure that only approved drivers are driving?**

RESPONSE: Again, we received varying answers: We were told that this is verified by having the Bus Stop Route Inspector go to locations to verify drivers. Or that the department is understaffed and not sure this is happening. The Route Inspector confirmed that he is often told to remain in the office to assist with the high volume of calls and his time conducting on road supervision is limited.

- **How do you ensure that all the mandated training is conducted?**

RESPONSE: Here again there is a belief that the Route Inspector is checking to see if contractors are in compliance. In speaking with the Route Inspector, he told us that prior to 2022 he would audit the contractor records, but in 2022 the number of contractors has more than doubled, there is less staff, and he doesn't have the time to conduct these checks. It should be noted that in our audit, the availability of sign-in sheets and other documentation for training was either minimal or nonexistent. Without that documentation it would be extremely difficult to ensure training was taking place and who was in attendance.

- **Does the District do random observations of training and safety meetings?**

RESPONSE: No

- **Who are the SBDIs conducting training for the district and/or contractors?**

RESPONSE: The only SBDIs that the district was aware of or identified were James Rogan, Barbara Gaston, Aaron Appel, Martin Lax who does 19A work.

- **How do you review the driver's and monitor files for accuracy and compliance?**

RESPONSE: The Route Inspector is the only one to conduct these types of reviews. When he does them, he uses the 19A and SED audit forms. We were unable to determine how often these reviews take place currently.

- **Who does this review?**

RESPONSE: The Route Inspector. He is the only SBDI and 19A Examiner on staff for the district. Karla and Mark were the only staff members that knew it's Mark's responsibility to review these files.

- **How many routes do each of the contractors have?**

RESPONSE: Please see contractor review.

- **How is that determined?**

RESPONSE: Through bid awards.

- **What are your BOE policies regarding transportation?**

RESPONSE: Staff were not well versed in BOE policies. We were referred to the bid spec for transportation requirements. The Route Inspector provided us with a book "Transportation Rules and Regulations dated May 31, 1989.

In our research we were able to find 4 BOE transportation policies:

- Policy 8410 Student Transportation
- Policy 8414.1 Bus Driver Qualifications and Training
- Policy 8414.2 School Bus Maintenance
- Policy 8420 School Bus Idling

All of which were adopted 5/16/2006. With the exception of the idling policy, NONE of the policies are descript or robust. It appears they were written at the time the district operated its own fleet. No updates or consideration has been given to the expansive contracted transportation that exists today.

- **What are the mileage requirements for eligibility?**

RESPONSE: The district provides universal busing, however that is not reflected in transportation policy.

- **Is that enforced?**

RESPONSE: N/A

- **Who develops the routes?**

RESPONSE: For the fleet contract the district does for the YPC contracts they do. Karla and a consultant, Karen Jimenez, develop routes for the district.

- **What software do you use?**

RESPONSE: VersaTrans

- **When there are changes to a route how is that given to the contractor?**

RESPONSE: It takes approximately three days and then they are emailed to the contractor.

- **Are the contractors allowed to make their own changes? If yes, how are you notified?**

RESPONSE: The fleet contractors no, only the district makes the changes. For the YPC contractors, we have no control, and we are not usually notified.

- **What happens when a family moves? How are you notified?**

RESPONSE: If it is a public-school family that happens at the school and then updated in the school system. For a private school family, they must come to the district office and make the change through the registrar. It should be noted that on several occasions the contractor management or school administrator stated that family changes are made at their school level, meaning in the private school's database. In these cases that means that the district does not know about a family's change of address.

- **For the Yeshivas, are routes designed M-Th and Fri?**

RESPONSE: They used to be but now for billing purposes Friday is considered just a regular weekday. The routes are the same but just run at an earlier time. Again, this is just for the fleet contractors.

- **How do you account for all of the students and their assigned routes?**

RESPONSE: For this question we received a couple of different answers. We were told it was done by sending rosters to the private schools, or there was no system in effect, or it's done per month for billing purposes. In essence our question really went to "in real time". It is our conclusion that other than the students on fleet buses, the district doesn't know who is on a YPC bus and on what day or what time.

- **How do you know if routes are being conducted, the way they were designed? Or reported to the district?**

RESPONSE: In general, all admitted they don't know. If the District received a complaint, they would request the GPS information, or the Route Inspector would follow the bus. However, not having the route information he would have to go to the school and follow it from there, resulting in the driver knowing that they were being followed. From the responses it is clear that the district does not have access to the "real time" GPS data.

- **If the district has a concern or complaint regarding a route or bus stop who conducts the inquiry, the district or the contractor?**

RESPONSE: Complaints regarding routing go to the Assistant Coordinator and complaints regarding unsafe driving or stop issues go to the Route Inspector.

- **Does the district do curbside verifications?**

RESPONSE: Not in the past two years. The staff is currently overwhelmed. Mark admitted to being overwhelmed with other duties. He stated he works a 9+ hour day which makes it difficult to perform this task.

- **If so, what is the district looking for during the verification? Who conducts the verifications?**

RESPONSE: N/A

- **Do companies transport on Sundays? If so, how is that done?**

RESPONSE: Yes, but the schools pay for that service. The district has nothing to do with that.

- **If the district has a concern or complaint regarding a driver or monitor who conducts the inquiry, the district or the contractor?**

RESPONSE: The Assistant Coordinator would usually follow up by asking for an incident report, video, GPS reports and if necessary, have the Route Inspector follow the bus. Mark would also be asked to follow the driver as well.

New York State Education Department - *East Ramapo CSD Audit*

PTSI Team Interviews

BUS CONTRACTOR MANGEMENT

Audit summary and recommendations from our meetings with East Ramapo School District Bus Contractor Management:

We were on site at the District Office, 105 South Madison Ave. Spring Valley, for interviews on June 17 and 18. Over the course of two days we conducted 24 interviews with 32 contractor managers, administrators and representatives for approximately 32 different transportation contract holders with the district.

It is important to note that the district classifies their contractors in two categories:

- 1) Fleet Contract: which means it is an hourly contract
- 2) YPC Contract: which means it is a per pupil contract.

Who is in attendance? Name and title: RESPONSE:

- Joseph Tauber-Manager-Bias Trany of Monsey
- Lazer Tabak-Manager-Bnos Esther Papa
- JoAnn Thompson-Supervisor of Transportation-Rockland BOCES
- George Villafare-SBDI/19A Examiner-Rockland BOCES
- Nachman Leifer-Manager-Central UTA of Monsey
- James Rogan-Director of Safety & Training-Chestnut Ridge
- Helen Swabacker-Chestnut Ridge
- Zev Neustadt-Manager- Congregation Beni Yakov Yosef of Monsey
- Tzui Dirnfield-Assistant-Congregation Beni Yakov Yosef of Monsey
- Martin Lax-A1 Transportation Services. He arrived with the representatives of Congregation Beni Yakov Yosef of Monsey.
- Chaim Wolkenfeld-School Director-Congregation Machzikei Hadas of Beltz
- Sholme Zehnwirth-Manager-Congregation Talmud Torah Imrei Binah
- Shimon Moses-School Administrator- Congregation Talmud Torah Imrei Binah
- Yosef Dushinsky-Administrator-Congregation Bais Chinuch Toras Ema
- Usher Herzog-Manager-Congregation Beth Rochel of Monsey and Yellow Bus Transportation
- Aaron Appel-SBDI/19A Examiner- Congregation Beth Rochel of Monsey and Yellow Bus Transportation
- David Mendelovitz-Manager-Congregation Bobover Yeshiva of Monsey
- Joel Feig-Manager-Congregation Toras Emachi inc. and Mosdos Sanz Klausenburg of Monsey
- Shrage Schiants-Manager-Congregation Yeshuos Moshe Viznitz

- Nachaum Baumgardner-Director of Transportation-Imrei Shufer and IMS Bussing (unsure of who IMS bussing is. Not listed as that on contractor list.)
- Michael Moskovtz-Owner Manager- Imrei Shufer and IMS Bussing (unsure of who IMS bussing is. Not listed as that on contractor list.)
- Michael Krauss-Administrator-Kesser Bais Yakov
- Yoel Weissman-Manager-Ohr Yochanan
- Jenny Agosto-Manager-Omar Transportation Services
- Matt Kuhl-Vice President-Student Bus Company
- Yakov Rottenberg-Manager-Talmud Torah Darkei Avos-Monsey
- Sholmo Kornhauser-Asst. Manager-United Talmudical Academy, Legadel, Congregation Bnos Zion of Bobov Monsey and Bnos Binah? (unable to identify last contractor)
- Elizer Spiera-Manager-Yeshiva Avir Yakov and Yeshiva Services
- Joel Stein-Administrator-Yeshiva Darkai Emaunah and Yeshiva Darkai Emaunah II
- Yechiel Rosenberg-Supervisor- Yeshiva Viznitz D’Khal Torath Chaim
- Moshe Rosenfield-Secretary- Yeshiva Viznitz D’Khal Torath Chaim
- Elkuneh Lax-Manager-Yeshiva of Monsey (unable to identify exactly what contractor they represent)
- Moshe Lax-Bookeeper- Yeshiva of Monsey (unable to identify exactly what contractor they represent)

- **How many contracts do you have?**

RESPONSE: Most contractors reported they had only one contract with the district. With the exception of Rockland BOCES who reported having three contracts with the district. Chestnut Ridge reported that they had field and athletic contracts as well as home to school. Omar Transportation reported having 8 contracts, however we believe she misunderstood the question and was counting their routes.

- **What is your hiring procedure for drivers, monitors or attendants?**

RESPONSE: The hiring process varies greatly by operator. Many do background checks through a network of interpersonal contacts in the community. Then they outsource the DMV and SED requirements to individuals or to a company that facilitates these agencies pre-employment requirements. Only three contractors have 19A Examiners and SBDIs on staff. The rest all delegate those responsibilities to individuals or a company outside their company.

Of particular concern is the use of a company owned and operated by Martin Lax. He and his company are providing these safety sensitive requirements to many operators.

- **How do you get district approval for the drivers or monitors?**

RESPONSE: The majority of companies do not provide any information to the district regarding any of their drivers. It was reported that the district never asks for this information and many operators had no knowledge that they were to provide the District with this information. Additionally, some mentioned they would only send the driver roster at the beginning of the school year at the request of the school district. Three companies reported that they used to provide this information, but the district is unresponsive to receiving their information and since the pandemic they no longer are providing that information.

- **Who conducts the training for your drivers or monitors?**

RESPONSE: Only three companies identified on staff SBDIs. All the other companies identified using outside freelance instructors or through Martin Lax's company. Majority of those companies identified the following individuals as their providers for SED required training:

Aaron Appel, Injoy Islam, Judah Spitzer, Martin Lax, Lazer Lax, Alex Guriwitz.

An operator of concern was Omar Transportation. The Manager identified to us that Luis Yrizzari was providing training but was not an SBDI. Their manager told us that they don't have an SBDI on staff. However, in the district provided to us, Gregorio Csamillo is identified as their SBDI.

- **Where is that training conducted?**

RESPONSE: Training locations were identified at several locations: 9 Gibbs Ct. - 246 North Main Street, - 65 Parrott Rd, - Central UTA, - 56 West Church St. – Bais Rochelle School, - Congregation Talmud Torah Imrei Binah Auditorium, - Klausenburg School, - IMS New Hempstead Rd. – Congregation Bobover Yeshiva of Monsey, - 15 Elyon Ct. – Omar Transportation 3806 Broadway, Fairlawn. – 61 West Nyack Rd. – Widman Ct. – 89 S. Main St.

- **Is training conducted just for your employees or are the attendees from multiple operations?**

RESPONSE: With the exception of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland BOCES, Student Bus who train only their own staff, all other contractors share locations for training and often train together. It was reported that often times Martin Lax sets up the class and location and contractors would send their drivers to the location for training.

- **How do you ensure that all the mandated training is conducted?**

RESPONSE: With the exception of Chestnut Ridge, Rockland BOCES, Student Bus who train only their own staff and maintain all of their own records; most other companies rely on their outside vendor to provide document and track training. Some of the company representatives reported that they know that the training is happening because they are drivers too and attend the training.

- **Does the District do random observations of training and safety meetings?**

RESPONSE: A number of companies reported that they have no knowledge of the district conducting any random observations of training. The majority stated the district does not do random observations of their training.

- **Who are the SBDIs conducting training for your operation?**

RESPONSE: Aaron Appel, Injoy Islam, Judah Spitzer, Martin Lax, Lazer Lax, Alex Guriwitz for all of the YPC (Yeshiva Private Contract) contracted vendors as none of these contractors have an SBDI on staff. Student Bus, Chestnut Ridge, Rockland BOCES and allegedly Omar Transportation have their own SBDIs on staff to conduct their SED training.

- **Who handles safety related issues for the company?**

RESPONSE: Most of the company representatives reported they handle safety related issues.

- **What is the procedure for addressing safety related concerns with a driver or monitor?**

RESPONSE: Most of the companies reported that most of the safety related concerns are addressed verbally. Often times resulting in just verbal warnings. We did not get the impression that there was any rigorous follow-up by any of the YPC contractors. The fleet contractors for the most part did have more substantial follow-up procedures in addressing safety issues with their drivers or monitors.

- **How many routes does your operation have?**

RESPONSE: This information varied greatly based on the number and size of the school/s. The largest contractor, Chestnut Ridge Transportation, has the largest number of runs with the least being 3-4 runs for a YPC contract.

- **Are they all from East Ramapo?**

RESPONSE: This also varied. Some of the contractors, both Fleet and YPC contractors service other contracts in addition to East Ramapo. We focused on the contracts involving East Ramapo.

- **Are you familiar with the East Ramapo BOE policies regarding transportation?**

RESPONSE: None of the company representatives were familiar with any of the BOE policies regarding transportation. Some of the representatives indicated that any requirements would be in the bid spec.

- **What are the mileage requirements for eligibility?**

RESPONSE: Most contractors were aware that East Ramapo provides universal busing and mileage limits didn't apply.

- **Is that enforced?**

RESPONSE: N/A

- **How do you get the routes?**

RESPONSE: All of the Fleet Contractors receive their routes from the district. All of the YPC contractors develop their own routes.

- **What software do you use? (if they do any routing)**

RESPONSE: Several of the YPC Contractors use GeoTrack, and/or JL Solutions. Many of the contractors do the actual routing manually. Most if not all of the contractors use some type of tracking, so parents know where the bus is in relation to their assigned bus stop.

- **When there are changes to a route how is that handled?**

RESPONSE: For the fleet contractors, those changes come directly from the district and are emailed to the contractor.

For the YPC contractors, there are some variations as to how changes are handled. Some said that parents must notify the district first then the school will make changes in the student database, and then bus changes will be made. Some contractors reported that parents have to notify the school and then changes are made.

- **How is the driver notified?**

RESPONSE: Most reported that drivers are either notified by a dispatcher and given their changes, some reported emailing or texting drivers that there are changes to their runs. The contractors who use routing and tracking type systems were given a type of receipt noting the change. This receipt functions as a type of bus pass.

- **Are you allowed to make route changes? If yes, how is the district notified?**

RESPONSE: Companies receiving their routes from the district. The answer was a firm no. For the YPC contractors, they change routes on an as needed basis. The district is not notified of changes as the district never receives a copy of the runs. Most contractors reported that only when asked they will provide the routes to the district.

- **What happens when a family moves? How are you notified?**

RESPONSE: Fleet contractors are notified via the district and if necessary, route changes. For YPC contractors, some reported that families are supposed to go through the district for address changes. However, that does not always happen. Often times changes are made at the school level only. The district does not know of the change until contract renewal or possibly a discrepancy with the per-pupil billing.

- **Are routes designed M-Th and Fri?**

RESPONSE: This varies by contractor: The fleet contractors receive their routes from the district. The district does not establish a different Friday route but rather just changes the time of the dismissal for Friday. However, this method, we believe, does not address the actual early dismissal activity. Since several grades go home on one bus instead of several dismissal times as they do during the week, the route sheets do not reflect who is actually on the bus on Fridays. Not to mention that there are more than likely bus stop variations as well. All of these changes are being facilitated by the school.

The YPC contractors are for the most part, making changes to their routes to accommodate Friday dismissals. But since they don't share their routes with the District, the District has no way of know who is riding what bus. Not to mention on which day at which time.

- **How do you account for all of the students and their assigned routes?**

RESPONSE: The fleet contractors use the route sheet from the district which has the riding list on them. The drivers are expected to know the students.

The YPC contractors answered this question in a variety of ways such as: The drivers know the kids and the stops (this method was reported by several companies); no route changes are approved last minute; some buses are identified by color and students have a corresponding identifying color pin; for younger students attendance is taken; the school ensures all students are clear on the property; the driver does the same route regardless of the day of the week; there are cameras on the buses; any changes are highlighted; drivers receive a change slip when a new student is added; the district doesn't require the accounting; teachers ride the pre-k buses;

- **How do you know if routes are being conducted, the way they were designed? Or reported to the district?**

RESPONSE: Most of the contractors reported using GPS tracking of some sort. If a driver deviated from their route not only the operator would know but parents as well.

- **Does the district do curbside verifications?**

RESPONSE: No. Not a single contractor reported any type of curbside verification.

- **Who makes the notification to the district in the event of an emergency?**

RESPONSE: In all responses it would be a manager or administrator who would make the report to the district. However, what constitutes an emergency varied. Ex: All contractors agreed a serious accident would require notification not everyone agreed that a minor one would not.

- **Do companies transport on Sundays? If so, how is that done?**

RESPONSE: All YPC contractors confirmed that they do provide transportation on Sundays, but this is done as a private contract with the school.

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PTSI Team Interviews

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER INSTRUCTORS (SBDIs)

Introductions were made and the SBDI's identifications, employers and verification of this year's PDS requirement compliance were established.

SBDIs who provide SED services to East Ramapo CSD fall into several categories of employment:

- Employed exclusively for a district
- Employed exclusively for a transportation company
- Employed by an SBDI service private business (A1 Driving Service Inc.)
- Are self-employed as an independent SBDI contractor and work for districts, companies, or both, upon request/contract

The following questions were asked of each SBDI interviewed. There were 13 SBDIs interviewed. Their answers are summarized here.

- **When you took the course to become an SBDI:**
 - a. Where did you take the course?
 - b. Who were your instructor(s)?
 - c. How long have you been an SBDI?

RESPONSE: All SBDIs remembered where they had taken their SBDI Course and who taught it, with very little hesitation.

- **As an SBDI, are you employed by the school district or are you an independent contractor for SBDI services?**

RESPONSE: Out of the 13 SBDIs interviewed, 9 were employed exclusively for company or district. Of these 9, 6 of the SBDIs were employed by Chestnut Ridge who chose to bring all their SBDIs to be interviewed. The remaining 3 were employed by Long Beach/Cheeses Bus and Rockland BOCES. Two described themselves as independent (Aaron Appel and George Gurwitz, and Martin Lax is not certified, but owns an SBDI Service called Ai Driving Services Inc.

- **What school district(s) and/or bus company(s) are you working for?**

d. How long have you worked for this each?

RESPONSE: The majority of the SBDIs had been employed by their company or district for an average of 5 years. Independent SBDIs did not indicate answer in years but instead related answers such as “infrequently” or “sometimes”.

- **Are you also the DMV Certified Examiner for these same school districts and/or bus companies?**

RESPONSE: In all cases, the SBDI was also a NYSDMV Certified Examiner (CE), but less than half actually perform the duties of a CE for their employer.

- **Do you instruct Basic Courses for Drivers, Attendants and Monitors for the school district(s) and/or bus company(s)?**

e. **If yes:**

i. Who files the NPO and NPC?

1. **If not them:** Record the name given and ask if they are also an SBDI?

i. Where are the training courses held?

2. Do you have a room approval code for that location?

ii. Usually about how many participants are in the group?

iii. How do you document this training?

1. Where is the documentation kept?

iv. Which curriculum do you use for the Attendant/Monitor Basic Course?

RESPONSE: All SBDI with the exception of the one non-SBDI person interviewed from A1 Driving Services Inc. (Martin Lax) said yes, they teach Basic Courses. However, only about half of them process the NPO/NPC for the courses they teach*. During discussions, it became noted that any SBDI who performs work for A1 Driving Serves, does not manage the required paperwork or documentation related to the course. Some SBDIs keep copies of the sign-in sheets, but most do not.

Class size shared was an average of 10. Training is held in various locations in their area, and they all have a room approval code. They generally document using sign-in sheets, which is kept in the offices of districts and companies. However, the independent SBDIs who work for A1 Driving Services or other clients do not keep the documentation themselves, they leave it with the business or client.

*The SBDIs (7) from Chestnut Ridge Transportation bus contractor, instruct but James Rogan, the SBDI/MI manages the required paperwork and documentation for the company.

- **Do you instruct Advanced Courses for Drivers for the school district(s) and/or bus company(s)?**
 - f. **If yes:** Who files the NPO and NPC?
 - i. **If not them:** Record the name given and ask if they are also an SBDI?
 - ii. Where are the training courses held?
 - 1. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
 - iii. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
 - iv. How do you document this training?
 - 1. Where is the documentation kept?

RESPONSE: Only one SBDI stated they teach Advanced Courses for the insurance reduction benefit.

Class size shared was an average of 7. Training is held in various locations in their area, and they all have a room approval code. They generally document using sign-in sheets, which are kept in the offices of districts and companies.

- **Do you instruct Preservice Courses for the school district(s) and/or bus company(s)?**
 - g. **If yes:**
 - i. Which curriculum do you use for this course?
 - ii. Who files the NPO and NPC?
 - iii. If they respond that an NPO/NPC is not required, just move on.
 - h. Usually, when do you provide the Preservice Course?
 - i. Where are they held?
 - i. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
 - j. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
 - k. How do you document this training?
 - i. Where is the documentation kept?

RESPONSE: All SBDIs, with the exception of the one non-SBDI person interviewed from A1 Driving Services Inc. (Martin Lax) said yes, they teach Preservice Courses

Class sizes were vague and vary widely. Training is held in various locations in their area, and they all have a room approval code. They generally document using sign-in sheets, which are kept in the offices of districts and companies. However, the independent SBDI who work for A1 Driving Services or other clients, do not keep the documentation themselves, they leave it with the business or client.

2. Do you perform fall refresher training?

a. If yes:

- i. When do you usually do the fall refreshers?
- ii. Where are they held?
 1. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
- iii. How many participants are in each fall training?
- iv. Are any other SBDIs involved in providing this training?
- v. Do you or someone else submit the NPO and NPC for this training?
 1. If they respond that an NPO/NPC is not required, just move on.
- vi. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
- vii. How do you document this training?
 1. Where is the documentation kept?

RESPONSE: All SBDIs interviewed responded yes, they instruct Fall Refreshers, and with the exception of Chestnut Ridge and A1 Driving Services Inc. SBDIs, they all manage their own documentation using sign-in sheets.

The fall refresher dates varied, but all fell between the months of August and October.

• Do you perform spring refresher training?

a. If yes:

- i. When do you usually do spring refreshers?
- ii. Where are they held?
 1. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
- iii. How many participants are in each fall training?
- viii. Are any other SBDIs involved in providing this training?
- ix. Do you or someone else submit the NPO and NPC for this training?
 1. If they respond that an NPO/NPC is not required, just move on.
- x. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
- xi. How do you document this training?
 1. Where is the documentation kept?

RESPONSE: The answers to this question were the same as the fall refresher question answer, with the dates of the training falling between December and May.

• Do you perform the Dignity for All Students (DASA) trainings?

b. If yes:

- i. When do you usually do the DASA training?
 1. How often is this training provided?
- ii. Where are they held?
- iii. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
- iv. How many participants are in each DASA training?

- v. Are any other SBDIs involved in providing this training?
- vi. Do you or someone else submit the NPO and NPC for this training?
 - 1. If they respond that an NPO/NPC is not required, just move on.
- vii. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
- viii. How do you document this training?
 - 1. Where is the documentation kept?
 - 2. Do you keep copies for your records?
- c. **If no:** Do you know who does?
 - i. Record the name if one is given.

RESPONSE: The answers to this question varied greatly. The answers received were:

- No, we don't do this.
 - No we don't teach this, it is given online (some by the HR Department)
 - Yes we do.
 - Yes, we give this to all new hires.
 - This training requirement does not apply to us.
 - This is covered in our Preservice training.
 - We don't train it but we discuss it at the refresher.
- **Do you perform the Mandated Reporter training?**
 - a. **If yes:**
 - i. Where did you take the course to become certified to teach this course?
 - 1. Do you have a copy of your certificate?
 - 2. Approximately what date did you become certified?
 - ii. When do you usually do the Mandated Reporter training?
 - iii. How often do you provide this training?
 - iv. Where are they held?
 - 1. Do you have a room approval code for that location?
 - v. How many participants are in each Mandated Reporter training?
 - vi. Are any other SBDIs involved in providing this training?
 - 1. If so, record their names.
 - vii. Do you or someone else submit the NPO and NPC for this training?
 - 1. If they respond that an NPO/NPC is not required, just move on.
 - viii. Usually about how many participants are in the group?
 - ix. How do you document this training?
 - 1. Where is the documentation kept?
 - 2. Do you keep copies for your records?
 - b. **If no:** Do you know who does?
 - i. Record the name if one is given.

RESPONSE: Eight of the 13 SBDIs answered that yes, they instruct the Mandated Reporter training. However, in discussions, it became clear that they did not really understand the requirements of the NYS mandate and in many cases the training may not be valid.

- **How do you satisfy the NYSED Anti-idling requirements for drivers?**

- a. **Is this process performed by you?**

- i. **If yes:**

- 1. How is this documented?
 - 2. Where is the documentation kept?
 - 3. Do you keep copies for your records?

- ii. **If no:**

- 1. Who does this?
 - a. Record the name if one is given.

RESPONSE: Six SBDIs document the anti-idling notification annually in compliance with NYSED requirements. Four SBDIs address anti-idling each year, but do not comply with NYSED required documentation. The remainder of SBDI do not train or document anything in relation to anti-idling.

- **As the SBDI for your school(s) and/or bus company(s), what is your process for monitoring the files?**

- b. **Is the file monitoring done by you?**

- i. **If yes:**

- 1. Where is this done?
 - 2. How often is it done?
 - 3. How is this monitoring documented?
 - 4. Where is the documentation kept?
 - a. Do you keep a copy for your records?

- ii. **If no:** who does this?

- 1. Record the name if one is given.

RESPONSE: The intent of this NYSED requirement is that the SBDI will review driver file contents no less than twice a school year to identify potential unsafe trends in driving skills, lapses in required training attendance or overdue testing.

None of the SBDIs interviewed claimed to have never performed or documented this in the files.

- **Do you perform the new driver Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) for the schools or bus companies you are affiliated with?** (NOTE: Although this is not SED related, it speaks to the scope of what each SBDI is handling and whether or not it is reasonable that they could perform all the duties they are identifying. Potential fraud.)

c. If yes:

- i. Do you teach theory training?
 1. About how many times a year do you perform this training?
 2. Approximately how many participants are in each group?
 3. Where are these held?
- ii. Do you do the range and road, behind the wheel training?
 1. About how many times a year do you perform this training?
 2. Approximately how many participants are in each group?
 3. Where are these held?

RESPONSE: Approximately 40% of the SBDIs stated that they also instruct/train in the district/company/client Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) program in both the theory classroom and the range and road portions. Most only performed the ELDT once a year with no more than 2 trainees.

- **Do you administer the Physical performance Tests for the Drivers and Attendants/Monitors of the school(s) and/or bus company(s) you are employed by?**

d. If yes:

- i. Where do you perform the tests?
- ii. How often do you perform PPTs?
- iii. How do you schedule the PPTs?
 1. How do you track when a driver, attendant/monitor needs a PPT?
- iv. Do you perform the test alone or are there other SBDIs assisting you?
 1. If so: what are their names?
- v. How many drivers, attendants/monitors are tested each time the test is given?
- vi. What tools do you use for administering the PPT?
 1. Where do you get your weights from?
- vii. Where do you have participants drag the weights?
 1. What are the weights contained in?
- viii. Where do you get your weights certified?
- ix. How do you document the test?
 1. Where is the documentation kept?
 2. Do you keep a copy for your records?

RESPONSE: Ten of the thirteen SBDIs perform the PPT. The documentation (the PPT form) is kept in the office of the district, company or client. Some documentation is performed via computer or specific software, such as Bus Hive or the LENS program. The methods used for the PPT were varied. Some of the comments received were:

- The bag of weights is placed in a plastic crate and dragged on the bus plastic.
- The weights are lifted and carried on the shoulder.
- We drag the doll on the bus to the emergency door.
- The doctor during our physical has us lift a chair to make sure we are strong enough to evacuate a child.
- Connect the PPT to the Biennial Road Test.

None of the SBDIs knew about the requirement to use certified weights, how to your your weights are certified etc. Many had never heard of this requirement.

New York State Education Department - *East Ramapo CSD Audit*

PTSI Team Interviews

DRIVERS

Introductions were made and the driver's identifications, employers and length of employment were noted.

The following questions were asked of each driver interviewed. Their answers are summarized here.

- **Are the routes assigned or are they bid on?**
 - a. **If bid:** when does that bid take place?
 - b. Does the bus company require the route to be done once before the first day of school?
 - c. When there are changes to your route how are you notified?
 - d. Do route changes come from the school or the bus company?
 - e. Do you have an accurate list of students for each route who ride your bus?

RESPONSE: In almost every case, the driver stated that the routes were assigned, and changes were communicated to them via the school. All indicated that they had a current list of students riding their bus.

- **Does the bus company have a meeting before school starts?**
 - a. Is it required to attend these meetings?

RESPONSE: All drivers confirmed that they have a meeting prior to the beginning of school, and that it is required that they attend.

- **What happens at that meeting?**
 - a. Can you recall what topics were discussed last fall?
 - b. Is there anything that stood out to you that you felt was important to remember?

RESPONSE: While most driver's answers ranged from a lack of being able to recall specific topics, they all quickly referenced safety of children, almost to the degree that it felt they may have been coached to reference safety of children frequently.

- **How often does the bus company hold these meetings?**

- a. Is it required to attend all of them?

RESPONSE: While some answered that they only met once a year, the average answer was that there were two meetings scheduled each year, and they were required to attend.

- **Did you have another meeting this spring, recently?**

- a. Yes No

- i. **If yes:** Can you recall what the topics were this spring?
- ii. Is there anything that stood out to you that you felt was important to remember?
- iii. Who conducts these meetings?
- iv. Does this person conduct the whole meeting or just part of the meeting?
- v. How long are these meetings?
- vi. Where are these meetings held?

RESPONSE: While most drivers replied yes that they had attended another meeting this spring, many of them could not recall anything that was discussed at the meeting. Some responded with the quick “safety of children” answer.

The person who conducted the meeting most often was identified as the SBDI for the district or company. In approximately 15 cases, the person conducting the meetings were non-SBDI certified individuals, such as managers or supervisors.

- **Do you have any monthly or any other meetings during the year?**

- a. **If yes:** Can you recall what the topics were at the last meeting?

- vii. Is there anything that stood out to you that you felt was important to remember?
- viii. Who conducts these meetings?
- ix. Does this person conduct the whole meeting or just part of the meeting?
- x. How long are these meetings?
- xi. Where are these meetings held?

- b. **If no:** Just move on.

RESPONSE: On average the drivers answered yes, they did have other meetings throughout the year. Very few identified that their meetings were monthly. These meetings were conducted by the same individuals as identified in the previous question and held in various locations in their area.

The duration of the meetings ranged from “30 minutes” to “3 or 4 days”, with the most responding 2 hours.

- **Have you taken the basic school bus drivers course?**

- a. Do you remember when that was?
- b. Do you remember who taught the course?
- c. Where was the course held?

RESPONSE: In almost every case, the driver answered yes. The exceptions were new drivers who had yet to take the course but were not overdue or were currently enrolled in a course. Almost everyone remembered who taught their Basic Course.

- **Do you know what a physical performance test is? They sometimes call it a PPT.**

- a. **If yes:** Does the bus company or someone for the bus company give you a Physical Performance Test?
 - i. How often?
- b. **If no:** explain what the test is – It is the test where you have to drag a bag of weights...(dragging the bag is the most distinctive part of the test.)
 - i. **If they then recall:**
 1. Does the bus company or someone for the bus company give you a Physical Performance Test?
 2. How often?
 - ii. **If still no:** If they still do not recall, move on.

RESPONSE: The average response was that they had heard of the Physical Performance Test and indicated that they had been given one but could not indicate how often they received the test. In one case, the driver indicated that PPTs were given by the district or company, but that they had not ever been given one. Although this driver’s file was not randomly chosen for review, the file was handed to the PTSI team member, in spite of this driver’s statement – contained a completed PPT form in the file.

- **Have you ever heard of the Dignity for All Students Act? It is sometimes called DASA.**

- a. **If yes:**
 - i. Where or from whom have you heard about it?
 - ii. How often?

RESPONSE: Most drivers replied that they had heard of it and had received training, usually indicating that the training was given with refresher training. Excel files provided as an attachment to this electronically delivered report.