

GISD Special Needs Transportation Handbook



Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide parents and staff with a source of information and support which addresses issues, responsibilities, and concerns with special needs transportation.

The full scope of the special needs transportation operation is much broader than can be contained in this booklet. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather an attempt to share important information with all parties associated with transporting students with disabilities. Should you have questions about the handbook, feel free to contact us (972) 665-1431.

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Responsibilities

The safe and efficient transportation of your child relies on the cooperation and efforts of the school staff, WISD Transportation Office, the Office of Special Populations, the bus driver and monitor, and the parent. The following sections outline some of the various responsibilities of all parties involved.

Parent Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the parent to:

- Assist the school by submitting accurate and timely information to be included in the Transportation Request Form and Student Emergency Information Incorrect and untimely information delays the onset of transportation services.
- Inform the school administrator, bus driver, and monitor of any medical condition or behavior which might affect the student's safety or health on the bus.
- Provide up-to-date emergency information to the school and GISD Transportation Office.
- Provide up-to-date contact information including, address, phone number and e-mail. • **Assure that an authorized person will be at the bus stop, on time, when the child is delivered.**
- Assure that the student meets the bus at the scheduled time. Buses are scheduled to arrive within a few minutes of the designated time each day. The bus driver is required to wait for **three (3) minutes** and cannot wait for a tardy student as this creates late pick-up times for other students.

- **Suspended Bus Service** – If the parent fails to make the student available for the district’s transportation service for three days without prior notice given to GISD Transportation Office, Transportation staff will attempt to contact the parent to obtain additional information. The district is ready, willing, and able to provide the support to the student based on their individual needs, however, transportation will be suspended until additional information is provided to the transportation department and the student is made available for the district to transport.
- **Re-Start** – If transportation services are suspended due to the student not being made available at the time of transport, the parent must contact the transportation office to provide the information needed to re-start the service if the attempts to contact the parent are not successful. A parent must call the Special Education Office at (972) 612-0730 and ask that their child be “re-started.” If the parent knows in advance that the child will not be using transportation services for three or more consecutive days, the parent should report that information to the GISD Transportation Office at (972) 665-1431 along with the date the service is to be re-started. The service will be continued based on each individual student’s needs and circumstances.

Student Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the student to:

- Follow the rules for bus riders to the best of their abilities.
- Respect the rights of the other student passengers.
- Be ready at the designated pick-up time.

Driver & Monitors Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the bus driver, and monitor to:

- Notify the parent/guardian of the bus number and approximate time of pick-up and delivery.
- A notice will be left on the front door of the residence or given to the daycare with information on the pick/delivery time.
- Be on time for the pick-up and delivery. The driver is not required to wait for a student for more than three (3) minutes. This procedure must be adhered to because of the number of students to be transported in a fixed period of time. If the driver arrives earlier than the designated time of pick-up, he/she must wait.
- Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- Be prepared to provide appropriate first aid.
- Display appropriate care and patience.
- Be located in a position inside the bus that best meets the needs of all students (monitors).
- Maintain an emergency evacuation plan, listing each passenger, for use by medical personnel in the event of a vehicle accident.
- Be prepared to effectively and efficiently evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
- Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality of the families whose children they transport.
- Complete and submit a notice of unsatisfactory conduct to the Transportation Supervisor if a behavior concern occurs on the bus.
- Transportation Supervisor of any significant changes in a child's behavior.
- Assist students on and off the bus as required by their handicapping condition. At the school, it is the administrator's responsibility to make appropriate arrangements to assist the driver and monitors in loading and unloading students.
- Request clarification or training about specific disabilities or behaviors to support transporting students safely

School Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the school to:

- Work in collaboration with Special Services's support staff to develop an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP). • Revise the information contained on the IEP transportation supplement when necessary.
- Assure that the students are ready for dismissal at the time established by the principal and the GISD Transportation Office.
- Notify parents of schedule changes that may affect pupil transportation (i.e., early dismissals, inclement weather, etc.)
- Provide appropriate arrangements for those students needing assistance in boarding and discharging from the bus at the school.
- Refer requests by the parent or guardian involving alternate transportation arrangements to the GISD Transportation Office. GISD Transportation Office must be notified by the school principal or designee when approval is given for the student to go home by another method. Notify the GISD Transportation Office if the student arrives at school by means other than the bus and the student requires bus transportation home.
- Accept and act on discipline forms submitted to the campus by the GISD Transportation Office. The principal or designee is responsible for disciplinary action, including the suspension of the student's transportation service, when appropriate. Refer to SCHOOL BUS SAFETY REFERRAL.
- Administration or Teacher must be available at the campus to accept an undeliverable student.

Office of Special Population's Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the Office of Special Populations

- Upon completion of the IEP. The Special Services Secretary will e-mail a copy of the transportation supplement to the GISD Transportation Office.
- Assist the WISD Transportation Office in getting appropriate updates from the schools at the end of each school year.
- Submit timely and accurate updates to the GISD Transportation Office at the end of each year to assist in routing and scheduling for the following year.
- Provide training upon request to support the safety of all students on the bus.

GISD Transportation Office Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the GISD Transportation Office to:

- Submit timely and accurate updates to the GISD Office of Special Populations at the end of each year to assist in routing and scheduling for the following year.
- Assign each eligible student to a bus.
- Determine bus stop locations according to the individual needs of the student and the accessibility of the residence.
- Route, schedule, and tier special needs buses. The routing and scheduling plan will ensure the safest and most effective use of the vehicle.
- Address concerns from parents, school administrators, drivers and monitors, and the motoring public regarding special needs transportation.
- Provide the appropriate training and screening for bus drivers and monitors.
- Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules, and regulations.
- Inspect all buses in accordance with all state and local statutes and regulations.
- Provide assistive devices as needed, including, but not limited to vests, harnesses, car

seats, and booster seats etc.

- Complete any medicaid billing.

Procedures

The following procedures were established by the GISD Transportation Office to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for special needs students.

Pick-Up/Drop-Off

- If transportation services are suspended due to the student not being made available at the time of transport, the parent must contact the transportation office to provide the information needed to re-start the service if the attempts to contact the parent are not successful. A parent must call the Special Education Office at (972) 612-0730 and ask that their child be “re-started.” If the parent knows in advance that the child will not be using transportation services for three or more consecutive days, the parent should report that information to the GISD Transportation Office at (972) 665-1431 along with the date the service is to be re-started. The service will be continued based on each individual student's needs and circumstances.

Curb to Curb Service

Under most conditions, special needs transportation provides curb to curb service. This means that the bus will pick-up and deliver at the curb in front of the student's home or daycare. The following are some of the exceptions to this procedure:

- Due to road conditions (dead-end roadways, dirt or gravel roadways, or narrow roadways) it may be necessary to place the pick-up/delivery site at a safe location away from the home or daycare. Every effort will be made to locate the stop as close as possible to the home or daycare. When an escort is appropriate it will be the responsibility of the parent or their designee to escort the student to and from the pick up/delivery location. The bus driver or monitors are not responsible to escort the student to or from the home.
- **Suspended Bus Service** – If the parent fails to make the student available for the district's transportation service for three days without prior notice given to GISD Transportation Office, transportation staff will attempt to contact the parent to obtain additional information. The district is ready, willing, and able to provide the support to the student based on their individual needs, however, transportation will be suspended until additional information is provided to the transportation department and the student is made available for the district to transport.

Multi-Family Residence

- Condominium and apartment management on occasion deny school buses access to their parking lots. In these cases, the pick-up/delivery will be placed at a safe location close to the student's home or daycare.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to provide remote controls to operate a gate at a residence. Student Delivery Drivers are permitted to discharge students only at the school or designated delivery address. When there is no authorized person to accept the student at the drop-off, the following steps will be taken:
 - **Unsupervised Child** – In the event, your child is “unsupervised” (no authorized adult at the delivery address to receive the child when the bus attempts to deliver the child), the child will be returned to the school campus. The parent will then be

responsible for transporting the child home. A letter will be sent to the parent if this situation arises. If the child is “unsupervised” a second time, other alternatives for the transporting of your child must be considered, i.e., the parent taking responsibility for transporting the child to and from school.

- If this should frequently occur, transportation services may be suspended pending a conference with the parent or guardian.

Loading/Unloading

At the Pick-Up/Delivery Location

It is the responsibility of the driver and monitors to load and unload students at the pick up/delivery location. Parents and childcare providers are strongly encouraged to communicate to the GISD Transportation Office any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading. Parents and childcare providers should be careful not to interfere with the driver or monitor while they are performing their duties.

- Parents/guardians should not send students to the bus with food or drink to be consumed on the bus.
- In an attempt to hold the student’s bus riding time to a minimum, the transportation department has adopted the following procedures:
 - The bus driver will **(1) honk the horn** in front of the child’s home; **(2) wait exactly three minutes** and **(3) then proceed** with the bus route. **Exception:** If the student is ill and will not need bus service for that day only the parent will need to call (972) 665-1431.

At the School

When it facilitates a smoother transition to and from the bus, school personnel are required to help load and unload ambulatory students from seats equipped with any of the following restraint devices: seat belts, car or booster seats, or a safety device. The bus driver and monitor have the ultimate responsibility to check these restraints before leaving school. Only the driver and monitor will load, unload, and secure students in wheelchairs.

Bus Evacuation Plan

Special needs students who can get on and off the bus unassisted or with little assistance may be expected to participate in bus evacuation drills. Drivers that transport non-ambulatory or orthopedically handicapped students are expected to maintain an up-to-date bus evacuation plan. The plan should contain the following:

- The exact roles of the driver and monitor during an evacuation.
- Identification of students who have special medical conditions, such as brittle bone syndrome or attachment to a respirator needs to be considered in planning for an evacuation.
- Determination of whether or not students should be removed from their wheelchairs during an evacuation.
- Seating location of all passengers on the route.
- Brief description of the physical disability of each student.
- Exact location of every emergency exit on the regular bus used on the route. • Exact location of emergency equipment on the bus - extinguisher, first aid kit, etc.

Student Behavior

The school system's responsibility is to provide safe transportation for students who ride school buses to and from school and on school-related trips. In the absence of a teacher or school

administrator, the school bus driver is responsible for ensuring that students behave in a safe and responsible manner. Any behavior which interferes with the safe transportation of students must be reported. This policy applies to all students for whom bus transportation is provided by the GISD School System. Exceptions are made for special needs students whose behavior could be a result of their disability condition. Behavior problems with special needs students are handled in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations in conjunction with their individual education plan. Notwithstanding the exceptions, the procedures outlined in the policy are applicable to all students including special needs students. Specifically, drivers and monitors are to use the School Bus Safety Referrals to report inappropriate behavior to the Special Needs Route Coordinator for students supported through a behavior intervention plan.

Unsafe Behavior on the Bus

The following are WISD Transportation Office guidelines for bus drivers responding to unsafe behavior on the bus:

- Any unsafe behavior should be reported to the Transportation Supervisor as soon as possible.
A School Bus Safety Referral report should be submitted as a follow-up.
- When the behavior of a student on a special needs bus poses a potential or imminent danger to others on the bus, the driver should immediately call the GISD Transportation Office.

Restraint Devices

Car Seats & Booster Seats

By law, the State of Texas requires the use of car seats and booster seats in cars, trucks, and multipurpose vehicles. They are not required on school buses. Therefore, there is a degree of flexibility in determining the appropriate type of seat and/or seat arrangement to be used by each student on the bus.

Most small students with disabilities can be safely and securely transported in conventional car seats and booster seats. Larger students with special needs that affect their ability to sit upright without support can use a safety device installed in school buses.

The following guidelines in the IEP are used to determine the appropriate seat to use for each student:

- Students who weigh under 20 pounds should be in a rear-facing infant car seat.
- Students who weigh from 20 to 40 pounds and are 26" - 40" in height should ride in a forward-facing car seat.
- Students who weigh 40 to 60 pounds may ride in a forward-facing booster seat.

Safety Device

These safety devices may only be used in the direction of the Individualized Education Program after consultation with the school staff and parents.

- A safety device is designed for students with behavioral or emotional disabilities who need to be secured while on the bus. The safety device is equipped with a zipper in the back that, when properly attached, is not accessible to the student. The safety device is attached with a strap mounted to the bus seat.

The GISD Transportation Office is committed to providing safe and efficient transportation services for special needs students. It is our sincere hope that this handbook will contribute to a clear understanding of special needs transportation services. The GISD Transportation Office hopes that each student has a safe and successful school year.