

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District

Transportation Handbook

Updated: June 2026

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Department/Contact	Phone Number
Central Office	(260) 824-2620
Assistant Superintendent (Mrs. Meitzler)	(260) 820-0433
Transportation Coordinator (Kassandra Osborn)	(260) 273-9571
Director of Maintenance (Bryon Mayer)	(260) 273-2412
Maintenance Mechanic (Cary Stewart)	(260) 820-0387
Maintenance Staff (Mark Owen)	(260) 403-5285
High School Office	(260) 824-3724
Middle School Office	(260) 824-3536
Elementary School Office	(260) 824-0333
Bluffton Police Department	(260) 824-3320
Wells County Sheriff Department	(260) 824-3426
Emergency	911

GENERAL GUIDELINES

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

The primary responsibility of a school bus driver is to safely transport students to and from school while maintaining the safe operation and appearance of the assigned vehicle.

School bus drivers serve an important role as representatives of Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District and are expected to model professionalism, sound judgment, and positive interactions with students, families, and staff.

To qualify as a school bus driver, employees must:

- Be at least **21 years of age**
- Hold a valid **Indiana Class B CDL or higher** with required endorsements
- Maintain a valid Indiana school bus driver certificate
- Maintain all required physical qualifications, certifications, and medical clearances
- Present documentation of good health as required for licensure and certification
- Maintain a satisfactory driving record
- Demonstrate sufficient physical ability to safely operate a school bus
- Be free from conditions that may impair safe vehicle operation
- Be familiar with all applicable laws, regulations, and district procedures related to student transportation

In addition, drivers must:

- Maintain professional conduct and good moral character
- Refrain from the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances that impair driving ability
- Not use tobacco products on district property or in district vehicles
- Meet all district, state, and federal employment requirements

Drivers may not begin driving for Bluffton-Harrison MSD until approved by the School Board.

Staffing and Bus Assignment

- Each route will have one regularly assigned driver.

- During regular routes, only the assigned driver and authorized student riders are permitted on the bus unless otherwise approved by the Transportation Coordinator.
- All buses have assigned parking spaces. Drivers are expected to park buses in their designated locations.

Route Procedures

- If a driver is unable to complete a scheduled stop, the driver must contact the appropriate school building immediately, explain the reason, and request alternate arrangements as approved by the Transportation Coordinator.
- No buses may arrive at Bluffton High School before **7:25 a.m.** unless prior approval is given by the Transportation Coordinator.
- Children of Staff, childcare students, and student athletes may be dropped off at Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School in the afternoon.
- Each driver shall be present at their designated school building and ready for student loading prior to dismissal time.
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Safety and Emergency Procedures

- In the event of an accident or roadside emergency, the driver's first responsibility is student safety. Drivers must protect the bus from further accidents and follow emergency procedures.
- A school bus may only stop to assist another school bus in an emergency and only when safe to do so.
- Drivers must use headlights whenever the bus is in operation, day or night.
- Drivers must comply with all Indiana traffic laws and all regulations governing school bus operation.
- School buses may not exceed posted speed limits and shall not exceed:
 - **60 mph** on federal or state highways
 - **40 mph** on county roads
- Drivers must stop at all railroad crossings by:
 - Activating four-way flashers
 - Using the noise suppression switch
 - Placing the bus in neutral

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Accident Procedures

In the event of an accident:

1. Stop immediately and remain at the scene.
2. Secure the bus and assess student safety.
3. Determine whether evacuation is necessary.
4. Contact:
 - Transportation Coordinator
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Law enforcement
 - Emergency medical services, if needed
5. Render reasonable assistance to injured individuals.

Drivers must:

- Keep students in a safe, supervised location
- Not allow students to leave unless released by authorized personnel
- Use the student roster and seating chart for accountability

Do not move the bus unless directed by law enforcement. Do not allow students to move from their seats unless evacuating the bus or until authorized personnel have approved students to move about the bus.

Triangle reflectors should be placed:

- One near rear of bus
- One 100 feet in front
- One 100 feet behind

A School Bus Accident Report must be completed and submitted within **24 hours or the next working day**.

Failure to complete required accident documentation may result in disciplinary action.

Emergency Communication

When reporting an accident or breakdown, provide:

- Whether students are on board
- Bus number
- Driver name
- Location
- Nature of incident
- Whether police/EMS are needed or have been contacted

Only schools or district administration will contact families.

Student Loading and Unloading

- Drivers are responsible for supervising student loading and unloading.
- Drivers must remain on the bus or positioned beside the front door whenever students are on board. Students must never be left unattended on a school bus.
- The stop arm must be activated whenever students are loading or unloading and remain extended until all students are safely seated or have safely crossed.
- No school bus may pass another school bus unless specifically signaled and authorized by the first driver.
- Students crossing the roadway after exiting the bus must:
 - Walk at least 10 feet in front of the bus
 - Remain to the right side of the bus
 - Cross only upon the driver's signal
 - Drivers may not move the bus until all students have safely crossed.

Bus Inspection and Maintenance

- Drivers are responsible for maintaining bus cleanliness inside and out.
- Drivers must report maintenance concerns promptly to the Associate Director of Maintenance or Maintenance Department.
- At the completion of each route, drivers must inspect the bus for:
 - Students remaining on the bus
 - Seat or bus damage
 - Lost or forgotten items

Procedures:

- Remaining students must be taken to the designated school building or approved location.
- Damage or vandalism must be reported to the Transportation Coordinator.
- Unclaimed items should be returned to the appropriate school office.
- Drivers are responsible for periodically checking bus first aid kits and body fluid kits to ensure supplies are stocked and unexpired. Replacement requests should be submitted to Maintenance Staff.

Fueling Procedures

- Drivers must remain with the bus during fueling.
- The BHMSD fuel pump must be used whenever possible unless otherwise approved by the Transportation Coordinator.
- Buses may not be fueled while students are on board.

REQUEST FOR ROUTE CHANGE

Drivers wishing to be considered for a route change must submit a written request to the Transportation Coordinator by **April 1** of the current school year.

Route change requests will be considered based on factors including, but not limited to:

- Qualifications
- Seniority
- Performance evaluations
- District needs
- Other factors determined relevant by the Transportation Coordinator in consultation with the Assistant Superintendent

Submission of a request does not guarantee reassignment.

Driver Information

Drivers must maintain current documentation on file with the Transportation Coordinator, including:

- CDL
- CDL physical
- Physical fitness certificate
- Physical performance test
- Yellow card
- Drivers will be notified that their driving record will be checked annually through the BMV by the Transportation Coordinator.
- Any motor vehicle infraction received while operating a personal vehicle must be reported to the Transportation Coordinator within 24 hours.

- Each route must complete a minimum of **two evacuation drills per school year**. Documentation must be submitted to the Transportation Coordinator. Drill dates will be assigned by the Transportation Coordinator.
- Drivers must submit an updated student rider roster within two weeks of the beginning of school and notify the Transportation Coordinator of changes throughout the year.

CDL PHYSICAL PAYMENT AND REIMBURSEMENT

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District will cover the full cost of CDL physicals completed at **Everside Health in Berne** for regular route drivers.

Drivers choosing to complete their CDL physical with another provider may request reimbursement for:

- The actual cost of the physical, or
- **\$100**, whichever amount is less

Proof of payment may be required for reimbursement.

Professional Expectations

- Drivers are representatives of Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District and are expected to maintain professional conduct and appearance.
- Drivers should dress appropriately for working with students. Sandals, flip-flops, and other open-toed shoes are prohibited.
- Drivers are expected to follow the same rules and expectations required of students when on district property and vehicles.
- Drivers may not use cell phones while the bus is moving or while supervising students except in emergencies.
- Drivers may not consume alcohol during the school day or within **8 hours prior to service**.
- Smoking or tobacco use is prohibited on school buses and school property.
- Drivers must comply with all Board policies.
- Drivers must maintain current contact information, including home address, home phone, and mobile phone number, with the Transportation Coordinator.
- All drivers are required to regularly monitor and utilize their assigned BHMSD email account for district communication.

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

Regular attendance is an essential job responsibility for all transportation employees.

Employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to report to work as scheduled.

In the event of illness, emergency, or other absence:

- **Drivers should first attempt to secure a substitute driver when possible.**
- **If no substitute is available, the Transportation Coordinator must be notified immediately.**

Excessive absences may be documented and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Leave Requests

- **Loss of Pay Days will only be approved in unusual circumstances.**
- **Requests must be submitted at least five (5) days in advance and approved by the Assistant Superintendent or Superintendent.**

Reporting Absences

- **All planned absences must be communicated to the Transportation Coordinator in advance.**
- **Failure to properly report an absence may affect eligibility for attendance incentives, if applicable.**
- **In emergency situations, employees must communicate absences within 24 hours.**

The Central Office will maintain attendance records for all transportation employees.

Required Training and Documentation

Driver Days for 2026-2027

Days Worked	Date	Activity
176		Driving AM/PM routes
Additional Hours to get to 182 days (6 additional days which equals up to 24 hours- Contracts states: work not to exceed an average of 4 hours/day)		
4 hours	Monday, August 3, 2026 from 2:00-6:00 PM at BHES	Registration at BHES (Attending registration will reduce the prep time for the route as most of it will happen at registration.)
4 hours	Opening and Closing meetings for the school year	Opening and Closing meetings for the school year
3 hours	Prior to the first student day	Vector Training - BHMSD Annual (bullying, child welfare)
3 hours	9/30/2026 due date	ASM Videos Videos will be determined by the IDOE
10 hours for various activities including but not limited to:		*contacting parents prior to first day of school (those not in attendance at registration) *creating seating charts *adjusting maps and turning into transportation *cleaning bus *attending dept meetings as scheduled (minimum of 24 hour notice unless an emergency) *random drug testing time *physical performance test

*NOTE: Drivers are compensated for virtual days due to weather related cancellations.

Student Discipline and Conduct

- Drivers are responsible for student discipline while students are on the bus.
- Drivers should address minor concerns directly with students and families whenever possible prior to involving administration.
- Significant or unusual discipline concerns should be reported to school administration the same day.

- Drivers must follow all directions provided by school administrators and the Transportation Coordinator.
- Safety or conduct violations must be documented using a **School Bus Conduct Report**.

Conduct reports should:

- Be completed thoroughly
- Exclude names of uninvolved students
- Be submitted privately to administration or Transportation

Student discipline matters are confidential and should not be discussed with unauthorized individuals.

Reporting and Communication

- Drivers must report stop arm violations to the Transportation Coordinator and submit a witness statement including:
 - Vehicle make
 - Vehicle color
 - License plate number
 - Driver description
- Written complaints or reports of driver infractions may result in investigation and possible disciplinary action.
- Parent or patron concerns received by the district will be communicated to the driver by phone or in person by the Transportation Coordinator. The district will support drivers publicly while addressing concerns privately and professionally.
- Drivers should report incidents of verbal or sexual harassment by another employee to the Assistant Superintendent.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Transportation employees are an essential part of Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District's support staff. School bus drivers are often the first and last school employees students interact with each day and play an important role in representing the district.

Transportation employees are expected to support positive school-community relationships by:

- Communicating respectfully and professionally with students, families, staff, and community members.
- Contacting parents/guardians regarding minor student concerns, when appropriate, prior to submitting a conduct report.
- Listening to parent concerns respectfully and professionally before responding or offering

clarification.

- Enforcing student expectations consistently and calmly without the use of threats, intimidation, or inappropriate language.

RELATIVES OR GUESTS ON SCHOOL BUS

Family members, guests, or other unauthorized individuals are not permitted to ride with a driver unless they are regularly assigned student riders on that route.

Exceptions must receive prior approval from the Transportation Coordinator.

SEAT ASSIGNMENTS

Drivers are required to assign student seating prior to the start of each school year.

A current seating chart and student roster must be submitted to the Transportation Coordinator before the first student attendance day.

Seat assignments are critical for student management, emergency response, and accident reporting. In the event of a school bus accident, law enforcement may request an updated seating chart and rider roster.

Drivers are responsible for:

- Enforcing assigned seating arrangements
- Maintaining accurate and updated seating charts throughout the school year
- Communicating seating changes to the Transportation Coordinator as needed

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

All school employees are mandatory reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

**Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline
1-800-800-5556**

Reports may be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Reports may be submitted anonymously.

Any transportation employee who suspects a child may be experiencing abuse or neglect should make a report immediately and notify the appropriate school administrator as required by district procedures.

SEVERE WEATHER / TORNADO PROCEDURES

Tornadoes can occur at any time of day or year. In Indiana, peak tornado activity typically occurs from April through June.

Driver Preparedness

Drivers are expected to:

- **Be familiar with all roads adjoining their assigned route.**
- **Identify potential shelter locations along routes, including schools, businesses, or other buildings.**
- **Maintain awareness of alternate routes during field trips, extracurricular trips, and athletic transportation.**
- **Understand weather alert terminology:**
 - **Tornado Watch: Conditions are favorable for tornado development. Remain alert.**
 - **Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar. Take immediate protective action.**

Drivers and school administrators should routinely monitor weather conditions and advisories.

During a Tornado Watch

When a tornado watch is issued, drivers should:

- **Remain alert for rapidly changing weather conditions.**
- **Watch for high winds, hail, heavy rain, or funnel clouds.**
- **Be prepared to implement emergency procedures if conditions worsen.**

During a Tornado Warning

When a tornado warning is issued:

- **Drivers should seek the nearest safe shelter immediately.**
- **Students should be moved into a designated building or shelter location as quickly as possible.**

If a warning is issued near dismissal time, students may remain in the school building until conditions are safe.

If No Shelter Is Available

If a tornado is imminent and no shelter is accessible:

- **Stop the bus immediately.**
- **Evacuate students from the bus. Do not attempt to outrun a tornado.**
- **If possible, notify the district of your location and bus number.**
- **Move students to a low-lying area such as a ditch, ravine, or depression away from:**
 - **The bus**
 - **Power lines**
 - **Utility poles**
 - **Trees or other hazards**

Students should:

- **Lie flat, face down**
- **Cover their head and neck with arms, hands, or available clothing**

Do not seek shelter under bridges or overpasses.

After the Emergency

Drivers should:

- **Account for all students**

- **Check for injuries and provide first aid as needed**
 - **Request medical assistance if necessary**
 - **Watch for additional severe weather or hazards including:**
 - **Downed power lines**
 - **Gas leaks**
 - **Structural damage**
 - **Unsafe roads or bridges**
-

STUDENT SUPERVISION

Drivers are responsible for actively supervising students at all times while students are under their care.

Drivers are expected to:

- **Be present and attentive during student loading and unloading**
- **Monitor student behavior while students are boarding, riding, and exiting the bus**
- **Maintain a safe and orderly environment throughout transportation services**

Whenever practical, drivers are encouraged to greet students as they board the bus.

SUBSTITUTE DRIVERS

Drivers are responsible for securing a substitute driver when they are unable to work.

Drivers must:

- **Contact available substitute drivers from the current substitute list before requesting additional assistance.**
- **Notify the Transportation Coordinator of the substitute assigned to their route.**

The Transportation Coordinator will maintain and distribute an updated substitute driver list as needed.

If no substitute driver is available after contacting the approved substitute list, drivers should notify the Transportation Coordinator for further assistance.

Drivers anticipating an extended absence of **one week or longer** must contact the Transportation Coordinator prior to arranging substitute coverage.

VEHICLE KEYS

Drivers are responsible for maintaining possession of their assigned bus keys.

Spare keys are available in the key box located at the Transportation Facility.

When using a spare key, drivers must:

- Complete the key sign-out form
- Record the date the key is checked out
- Record the date the key is returned

All spare keys must be returned promptly to the key box after use.

DAILY PRE-TRIP INSPECTION

The safety of students depends on both driver performance and vehicle condition. Drivers are responsible for conducting a daily pre-trip inspection prior to operating a school bus.

Drivers should never attempt repairs but must report any mechanical concerns, safety issues, or damage to the Maintenance Department immediately.

Monthly pre-trip inspection forms must be submitted by the **5th of each month** for the previous month.

The order of inspection may vary, but all required areas must be checked before operating the bus.

Exterior Inspection

Before starting the bus, inspect the exterior for:

- General vehicle condition and body damage
 - Bus leaning or suspension concerns
 - Fluid leaks (oil, coolant, grease, fuel)
 - Tire condition and inflation
 - Lug nuts secure and present
 - Fuel tank cover secure
 - Battery box secure
 - Hood latches secured
 - Mirrors secure and properly adjusted
 - Reflectors and clearance lights intact
-

Passenger Entry and Safety Equipment

Inspect the following:

- Entry steps clean, secure, and in good condition
- Handrails secure and undamaged
- Entrance door functioning properly

Verify required emergency equipment is present and operational:

- First aid kit stocked and secured
 - Body fluid kit stocked
 - Fire extinguisher present, charged, and properly secured
-

Driver Preparation and Start-Up

Before moving the bus:

- Adjust driver seat
- Adjust mirrors
- Fasten seat belt
- Confirm parking brake is engaged

- Shift to neutral and start engine

After startup:

- Listen for unusual noises
 - Confirm gauges are within normal operating range:
 - Oil pressure
 - Temperature
 - Fuel
 - Battery/charging system
 - Air pressure (if applicable)
-

Interior Controls and Equipment

Check operation of:

- Horn
 - Steering (minimal play)
 - Interior lights
 - Heaters and defrosters
 - Windshield wipers
 - Headlights/high beams
 - Hazard lights
 - Amber warning lights
 - Turn signals
-

Brake Inspection

Hydraulic Brakes

- Pump brake pedal three times
- Apply firm pressure for five seconds

The pedal should remain firm and not move.

Air Brakes

Complete required CDL air brake inspection, including:

- Air pressure build-up
- Leak test
- Low air warning test
- Parking brake pop-out test

Air pressure must be within normal operating range before driving.

Parking and Service Brakes

- Test parking brake by placing the bus in gear with the brake engaged; the bus should not move.
- Test service brakes at low speed for proper stopping, response, and alignment.

Report any unusual noise, pulling, delayed braking, or brake concerns immediately.

Student Area and Emergency Exits

Inspect:

- Seats secure and free from damage
- Emergency exits open, close, and latch properly
- Emergency buzzers function properly
- Emergency door secure while bus is in motion

Check all windows, mirrors, and windshield glass for:

- Cleanliness
 - Visibility
 - Cracks or damage
 - Obstructions or unauthorized stickers
-

Exterior Light and Signal Check

Verify operation of:

- Headlights
- Brake lights
- Hazard flashers
- Amber warning lights
- Red warning lights
- Turn signals
- Stop arm
- Crossing control arm (if equipped)

Drivers should visually inspect lighting systems from both the front and rear of the vehicle.

Operational Awareness During Driving

While operating the bus, monitor for:

- Smooth transmission shifting
- Proper steering response
- Brake responsiveness
- Engine noises or unusual vibrations
- Suspension issues including excessive bouncing, swaying, or sagging

Report any concerns promptly.

Regular pre-trip inspections are a critical part of Bluffton-Harrison MSD's preventive maintenance program and help ensure the safety of students, staff, and community members.

RADIO USE

District radios are licensed for communication essential to transportation operations.

Radios may be used for matters involving:

- Student or staff safety
- Vehicle accidents
- Mechanical breakdowns
- Medical emergencies
- Fire
- Severe weather
- Serious discipline concerns
- Other urgent transportation matters

Radio communication should:

- Be brief and professional
- Use clear language
- Maintain an appropriate tone of voice

Drivers should avoid unnecessary radio traffic to keep communication lines available for emergencies and operational needs.

BUS IDLING PROCEDURES

To reduce unnecessary fuel consumption and emissions, drivers should limit bus idling whenever possible.

Bus Warm-Up

Maximum warm-up times are as follows:

- **32°F and above:** Up to 5 minutes
- **20°F to 32°F:** Up to 15 minutes
- **Below 20°F:** Up to 30 minutes, or until front windows are defrosted and safety equipment is operational

Loading and Unloading at Schools

Buses remaining parked at a school or activity location longer than **3 minutes** should:

- Complete the appropriate cool-down period
- Shut off the engine until departure

This expectation also applies during field trips and extracurricular events.

Exceptions

Extended idling may be permitted when necessary for:

- Extreme temperatures affecting student safety or comfort
- Operation of auxiliary equipment, including wheelchair lifts or other disability-related equipment

Drivers should still minimize extended idling whenever practical.

BUS OPERATIONS

Drivers are expected to operate school buses safely and in accordance with all district and state requirements.

Drivers must:

- Wear seat belts at all times while operating the bus
- Keep headlights and taillights on whenever operating on a public roadway
- Continuously monitor mirrors and surrounding danger zones
- Use strobe lights only during inclement weather such as:
 - Heavy rain
 - Fog
 - Heavy snow

If a driver must address a student or issue while transporting students:

- Pull over safely
- Move as far to the right side of the roadway or shoulder as possible

- Activate four-way flashers
 - Secure the bus
 - Remove keys from the ignition before leaving the driver's seat
-

STUDENT MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE

Safe student transportation requires student cooperation and consistent behavior expectations.

Students are expected to:

1. Follow driver directions the first time given
2. Remain seated while the bus is in motion
3. Keep hands, feet, head, and belongings to themselves and inside the bus
4. Use appropriate language and voice levels
5. Be at the designated bus stop on time

The school bus is an extension of the school environment. Students are expected to demonstrate respectful and safe behavior while riding.

Additional expectations include:

- No eating or drinking on the bus
- No tobacco, vaping, or smoking products
- No weapons, fireworks, glass containers, or dangerous items
- No animals unless specifically authorized
- No objects that block aisles, exits, or driver visibility
- No throwing objects
- No tampering with emergency equipment or bus controls
- No standing, changing seats, or moving while the bus is in motion
- No body parts or objects extended from windows
- No disruptive electronic device use

Electronic devices, headphones, and cell phones may be permitted provided they do not create a distraction, disruption, or safety concern.

The driver may assign seats at any time.

Only authorized student riders may ride assigned buses unless prior approval is granted.

Students may not be released from the bus to adults after boarding without administrator approval.

Discipline Process

Transportation discipline concerns will generally follow this progression:

1st Incident: Verbal warning from driver

2nd Incident: Driver conference with student

3rd Incident: Seat reassignment and parent contact

4th Incident: Conduct referral submitted to school administration

5th Incident or Severe Misconduct: Administrative referral and possible loss of transportation privileges

Serious safety violations may result in immediate referral without prior steps.

School administrators will manage disciplinary consequences consistent with school discipline procedures and will communicate outcomes as appropriate.

BUS STOP RULES

To help ensure student safety and route efficiency, students are expected to follow all bus stop procedures.

Students must:

- **Board and exit only at their assigned bus stop unless prior approval has been granted by school administration or the Transportation Coordinator.**
- **Be present and ready at their designated stop before the scheduled pickup time.**
- **Cross the street only when necessary and only in front of the bus at the driver's signal.**
- **Respect the property and belongings of residents and businesses near bus stops.**
- **Follow all driver instructions while loading and unloading.**

Bus drivers will stop only at authorized bus stops.

Drivers may wait a reasonable amount of time for a late student; however:

- **Drivers are not required to wait longer than three (3) minutes past the scheduled stop time.**
- **If the bus is already behind schedule, the driver is not required to wait.**

Maintaining route schedules is important to ensure timely transportation for all students.

SPECIAL PURPOSE BUS TRANSPORTATION

All district transportation policies, bus rules, discipline procedures, and emergency guidelines apply to students transported on special purpose buses.

For each student assigned to a special purpose bus, a current transportation information form must be completed and maintained as follows:

- **One copy kept on the bus**
- **One copy kept in the Transportation Office**

Transportation services cannot begin until all required forms and documentation have been completed and submitted.

Additional expectations:

- **No student may be added to a special purpose bus route without prior approval from the Transportation Coordinator.**
- **Special purpose bus routes may not be modified without approval from the Transportation Coordinator.**

SPECIAL PURPOSE BUS DROP-OFF GUIDELINES

Home Drop-Off Procedures

A parent, guardian, or other authorized responsible adult must be present to receive the student at the designated drop-off location unless written authorization is on file permitting the student to be released without adult supervision.

Drivers must visually confirm the presence of the authorized adult before releasing the student.

If a parent/guardian wishes for a student to be released without an adult present, written authorization must be submitted to and approved by Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District prior to transportation.

Parents/guardians are responsible for assisting students from the bus into the home when needed.

Students will only be dropped off at their approved home address unless an alternate permanent address request has been submitted and approved.

Alternate drop-off requests may be approved only when:

- The alternate address is located on the assigned route
- No additional route time is required
- The alternate arrangement is permanent in nature

Short-term alternate transportation requests will not be approved. Emergency requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

If No Authorized Adult Is Present

If no authorized adult is present at drop-off and no written authorization to release the student unattended is on file, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The driver will notify the school office.
2. School staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contacts.
3. The driver will continue the route, and the parent/guardian may be required to meet the bus along the route if arrangements can be made.

If the student remains on the bus at the conclusion of the route:

- The student will be transported to their school building or the BHMSD Childcare Program at Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School.
- The parent/guardian will be responsible for picking up the student.

Parents/guardians may be charged for childcare services if applicable.

Repeated failure to have an authorized adult available at drop-off may result in suspension of transportation services.

TRIPS AND SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION

Trip Definitions

Educational Field Trips

Educational field trips include transportation for students, staff, and approved chaperones to locations or events supporting classroom learning, including but not limited to:

- Museums
- Government facilities
- Industries/businesses
- Academic competitions or events

Athletic Trips

Athletic trips include transportation for student-athletes, coaches, managers, cheerleaders, and approved personnel to scheduled athletic contests or tournaments.

Athletic transportation is provided when trip scheduling does not interfere with regular daily transportation routes.

Extracurricular Trips

Extracurricular trips include transportation for students, staff, and approved chaperones for school-sponsored activities not classified as academic or athletic, including but not limited to:

- Award trips
 - Club activities
 - School-sponsored recreational events
-

Driver Assignment

Trip assignments will be coordinated by the Transportation Coordinator.

- Drivers may request athletic trip assignments by sport and season during the annual safety meeting.
- Other trips will be assigned on a rotation basis as available.
- The Transportation Coordinator reserves the right to assign drivers and buses for all trips.

If an assigned driver is unable to complete a trip, school personnel will coordinate reassignment.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring buses are cleaned and prepared following trips.

Trip Requests and Approval

All transportation requests outside of regular daily routes require prior approval.

Requirements:

- A completed transportation request form must be submitted
- Forms must be approved by the building principal or authorized designee
- Athletic trip requests may be approved by the Athletic Director under principal authorization

Requests should be submitted to the Transportation Coordinator at least **10 school days prior** to the trip date.

Exceptions may be made for emergencies or rescheduled events.

General Trip Rules

All regular transportation rules and student expectations apply during trips.

Additional expectations:

- Only approved destinations listed on the trip request may be traveled to unless otherwise authorized.
- Buses shall travel only on approved, improved roadways.
- Equipment may not block aisles, exits, doors, or driver visibility.
- All transported items must be secured while the bus is in motion.
- No additional pick-ups or drop-offs may be made between departure and final destination unless approved.
- Each trip must include at least one school employee, coach, sponsor, or approved chaperone on the bus.
- Students assigned to a bus for departure must return on the same bus unless otherwise approved.
- Multiple buses on the same trip are required to stay within proximity of each other.

Trips may be canceled due to:

- Adverse weather
 - School cancellation
 - Emergency conditions
 - Administrative decision by the Superintendent
-

Driver Responsibilities for Trips

Drivers are expected to:

- Arrive at the designated pickup location on time
- Operate the bus safely and in accordance with all district rules
- Be courteous and professional
- Ensure the bus is fueled, clean, and ready for travel
- Keep accurate records of:
 - Hours
 - Mileage
 - Passenger counts
- Report incidents, accidents, or irregularities to the Transportation Coordinator

In the event of mechanical failure or accident, drivers must follow all district accident and emergency procedures.

Sponsor/Chaperone Responsibilities

Sponsors and chaperones are responsible for:

- Student supervision and discipline while off the bus
- Ensuring students are present at designated loading times
- Supporting driver instructions and safety procedures
- Ensuring the bus is left in clean condition

A joint bus inspection should occur before and after the trip.

Failure to properly clean the bus may result in a **\$25 cleaning fee** charged to the sponsoring organization.

Damage caused by passengers may result in repair or cleaning costs being charged to the responsible organization or individuals.

Emergency Communication

When reporting an accident or breakdown, provide:

- Whether students are on board
- Bus number
- Driver name
- Location
- Nature of incident
- Whether police/EMS are needed or have been contacted

Only schools or district administration will contact families.

STUDENT SAFETY INCIDENTS

Bullying and Harassment

Drivers should monitor for bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

Reasonable interventions may include:

- Redirecting students
- Seat changes
- Parent contact
- Administrative referral
- Conduct report submission

All bullying concerns must be reported to building administration immediately.

Weapons

If a weapon is observed:

- Remain calm
- Notify Transportation using district emergency communication procedures
- Request law enforcement assistance
- Document and report the incident to administration

Drivers should not attempt to confiscate weapons.

Student Fights

If a fight occurs:

- Use verbal commands to stop the behavior
- Pull over safely if necessary
- Request assistance if needed
- Avoid physical intervention unless safety permits

Report all fights to school administration.

Unauthorized Bus Entry

Unauthorized individuals are prohibited from entering or detaining a school bus.

If unauthorized entry occurs:

- Direct the individual to leave
- Inform them they are trespassing if they refuse
- Contact Transportation or administration for law enforcement assistance

Drivers should not physically remove individuals.

EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE

Employee discipline will follow district classified staff procedures and may include:

- Discussion
- Verbal reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Suspension
- Termination

Severe safety violations may result in immediate disciplinary action, including dismissal.

Example:

- Leaving a student unattended on a bus may result in immediate termination.

Employees may address concerns using the following grievance process:

Step 1: Immediate Supervisor

Step 2: Assistant Superintendent

Step 3: Superintendent

Step 4: Board of School Trustees

BHMSD TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

This handbook has been developed to support and strengthen our transportation system. With the safety and well-being of approximately 1,700 students entrusted to us each school day, it is essential that all transportation staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The success of any school transportation program depends greatly on the professionalism, performance, and dedication of each individual involved.

The information contained in this handbook is intended to serve as a valuable resource for all school bus drivers. Drivers are expected to read and become familiar with its contents. A copy of this handbook should be kept on each bus for reference at all times.

This handbook will be reviewed annually and updated as needed. Suggestions for additions, revisions, or deletions are always welcome as we strive for continuous improvement in our transportation services.

TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All Bluffton-Harrison transportation employees are responsible for understanding and following all laws, regulations, policies, and procedures related to student transportation. Failure to comply with the expectations outlined in this handbook may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination of employment. Employment decisions related to policy or procedure violations will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Employees are encouraged to contact the Transportation Coordinator with any questions, concerns, or requests for clarification regarding handbook content or transportation procedures.

Employee Name: _____

Position: _____