

# Section O: TRANSPORTATION



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## ***Purpose of the Standard***

*To provide details of the board's transportation policies to the ministry and to the public*

## Transportation of Students with Special Education Needs

The Toronto District School Board is committed to providing safe and reliable transportation for resident students in accordance with the Education Act, Section 21 and the [Operational Procedures \(PR 504\)](#) of the TDSB [Transportation Policy \(PO20\)](#).

Transportation is provided for students who are placed by the [Identification, Placement, and Review Committee \(IPRC\)](#) into a special education program that is not located in their home school and who meet eligibility criteria.

The Special Education and Inclusion Department does not oversee transportation. These guidelines have been developed to provide general information about the transportation service for students who are eligible for transportation, and to outline the responsibilities of all parties involved in the safe transportation of students. Further information can be obtained through the school principal.

Additional information and all forms can be found on the [Student Transportation site](#).

## Transportation and IPRCs

When a special education placement is offered at a school other than the home school, transportation needs are discussed with the parents/legal guardians to determine if transportation arrangements are required. If so, the sending school arranges for the parents/legal guardians to complete a Student Transportation Application form and forwards it to the Transportation Department once the school section is also completed.

In order to minimize safety or other related concerns due to unnecessary time in transit, Special Education and Inclusion staff, in consultation with the Transportation Department, chooses an appropriate placement closest to the student's home address with available space.

Parents/legal guardians are asked to ensure that all relevant information as it pertains to the student's ability to access transportation is documented, any limitations clearly identified, and a Safety Plan, if needed, is noted on Page 2 of the application or forwarded as an attachment.

The Transportation Department forwards a copy of the application form to the receiving and sending schools for applications not approved only, indicating on the form the reason for the application being denied. Approved applications will be processed and schools will receive an update notice through [BusPlanner Web](#) regarding changes and route information. In late August, the administrator of the receiving school will ensure that school bus information (bell times, pick-up and drop-off locations, documented student disabilities/accessibility issues, etc.) is correct for the students at their school.

Parents/legal guardians are provided with a copy of the [Transportation Brochure for Students with Special Needs](#). The brochure highlights roles and responsibilities of the various parties, including the boarding, securement, and de-boarding of students from transportation vehicles.

## **Method of Transportation Service**

For eligible students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5, transportation is provided by contracted carrier services (70 and 18 passenger buses, wheelchair buses, mini-vans or taxis). Each student is entitled to a total of two trips per day. Mid-day routes are intended for students attending half-day programs. Methods include:

- School to school transportation
- Designated site-to-school transportation as a result of an IPRC or for a qualifying medical condition, approved accommodation or exceptional circumstances that require transportation support
- Home-to-school transportation for students with special education needs in district-wide programs
- Mini-van or taxi service for eligible students in warranted circumstances

For students in Gifted programs up to and including Grade 5, the method of service is school to school or school to designated stop (stop determined by Student Transportation Services). Students meet the bus at a school or designated stop. Parents/legal guardians are responsible for the supervision of students before they board and after they disembark from the school bus. Transportation service is not provided from the home or daycare addresses (unless the address is located at a TDSB designated stop).

For all eligible students in Grades 6 to 8, TTC tickets are provided at the request of parents/legal guardians. Grade 6 students may be provided with bus transportation if the most direct TTC route requires more than one transfer. A recent policy change allows students aged 13 and under to ride the TTC for free. Students in Grades 9 to 12 may receive TTC tickets, provided the distance and financial criteria are met.

Whether a student with special education needs and disabilities rides with other students and/or is transported via a ride-alone is determined by factors such as social/emotional, medical and safety needs. The back of the student transportation form provides parents/legal guardians and the school the opportunity to provide detailed information that needs to be taken into consideration (i.e., Independent Student Transportation Plan - ISTP). This information assists in determining the individual needs of a student along with the program, such as vehicle type and any necessary accommodation to ensure the student is transported safely in the appropriate type of vehicle. If there is nothing outstanding, the student would usually be placed on a small 18 passenger bus, minivan or taxi with other students depending on need and routing in the area.

If there are concerns that come about after the student is transported via usual transportation accommodations that indicate another type of vehicle or ride-alone is required, another form would need to be completed such as a Ride Alone Recommendation Form. This form would provide transportation staff with further information as to the reasons for the request and what actions have been taken to address the concerns. Further consultation with the school and parents/legal guardians would assist in determining the final outcome/solution to ensure the students are transported safely.

## **Requirements and Responsibilities**

### **Changes to Transportation Arrangements**

#### **1. Temporary Cancellation of Service**

If a child will be absent from school due to illness or for other reasons, parents/guardians/caregivers are required to inform the transportation company.

Parents/legal guardians must notify the transportation company before 7:00 a.m. or the evening beforehand, when transportation is to be resumed following their child's absence (a directory of companies is listed at the end of the Provision of Transportation section).

#### **2. Permanent Cancellation/Changes of Pick-up and Drop-off Locations.**

The transportation company and its drivers are not authorized to accept changes to pick-up and drop-off locations (either permanent or temporary). Changes to transportation must be communicated by completing an updated Student Transportation Application and re-submitting it to the attending school office, which may require up to 10 working days to process.

If there is a permanent cancellation of service or change in pick-up and drop-off location, parents/legal guardians are required to advise the principal of the school where the child attends. The principal must then ensure that a Student Transportation Application is completed and forwarded to Student Transportation to cancel or change information.

### **3. Requiring Return from School Only**

When a student is on two-way transportation and comes to school by other means of transportation on any occasion, the parents/legal guardians are required to call the transportation company to ensure that the transportation company returns their child from school to the designated drop-off location (e.g., If a child is brought to school in the morning, the bus company needs to be informed that the child will need a ride back in the afternoon).

### **Pick-up and Drop-off**

It is essential that a responsible adult be present for a child at both pick-up and drop-off.

It is not possible for daily transportation services to be reorganized to accommodate parents/legal guardians work or daycare schedules. Parents/legal guardians may designate an alternate adult (i.e., caregiver) to be present for a child's pick-up and drop-off. However, parents/legal guardians must inform the school and the bus company if someone unexpectedly will be meeting their child at the end of the school day (the alternate person must have a picture ID available to show the driver).

### **Parents/Legal Guardians Responsibilities:**

The success of transportation services depends on parents/legal guardians assuming the following responsibilities:

- Parents/legal guardians are expected to have the child ready for transportation at least 5 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time, and to be prompt in meeting the vehicle at the usual drop-off time.
- If the child misses the bus, it is the responsibility of the parents/legal guardians to transport the child to school. A student who is regularly late for pick-up may lose the privilege of being transported.
- Parents/legal guardians are encouraged to maintain open communication with the driver about the unique characteristics of their child (e.g., social/emotional concerns, seizure information, anxiety, vision or hearing impairment). This is in the best interests of the child, especially if an emergency situation were to occur.
- Parents/legal guardians should initially discuss transportation concerns with the school principal. If the concern cannot be resolved at the school level, the school principal should contact the Student Transportation office.

## **Parents/legal guardians are asked to keep the following in mind:**

- In September, routes may not settle for up to 4 weeks.
- Drivers do their best to pick up and drop off children on time and strive to ensure that schedules are kept. However, bus schedules are affected by traffic, weather, student conduct, and promptness of caregivers in meeting the vehicle.
- It is not always possible to maintain consistent drivers or pick-up and drop-off times. Transportation schedules may vary throughout the year when new students begin school in an area or when students transfer to another school.
- No consumption of food or drinks is allowed on buses due to the hazard of choking or the possibility of food allergies.

Drivers are expected to report to the principal in writing when a student's behaviour is causing difficulties or an unsafe condition on the bus. The principal will contact the parents/legal guardians to seek cooperation in resolving the concern.

If the concern cannot be resolved, parents/legal guardians may be requested to provide alternate transportation for their child.

## **Driver Responsibilities**

The transportation company shall transport students from the nearest curbside in front of their pick-up location to their respective schools and return to the nearest curbside in front of their drop-off location. Parents/legal guardians are responsible for their child to and from the curbside.

No student shall be left by a driver at the student's designated location for drop-off unless the student is met by a responsible adult, designated by parents/legal guardians. A driver will not leave a student unattended or with a person unknown to them. If a responsible person is not available to meet the student upon arrival from school, the driver may be instructed to exercise the following options after notifying dispatch:

- Continue to drop off the remaining students on the run and return to the drop-off location.
- Deliver the student to the emergency contact person, if available and within reasonable distance.
- Return the student to the school if staff is available to receive the student.
- Deliver the student to the nearest Police Division or Children's Aid Society.

The driver must call the parents/legal guardians of new students on SPED (small buses) to advise them of the pick-up and drop-off times the evening before transportation service is to start. The school is responsible for notifying parents/legal guardians of pick-up and drop-off times for students traveling on 72 Passenger (big bus).

The driver must notify the parents/legal guardians of any change in pick-up or drop-off times.

### **Seat Belts, Seat Belt Covers, Car Seats, Booster Seats, Safety Vests Car Seats**

- Car seats may be used on 18-passenger buses for daily home to school transportation
- Car seats must be used for students who require them because of their medical condition and/or if the student's weight is under 40 lbs.

### **Booster Seats**

The following is mandatory by law for a student riding in a minivan or taxi:

- If student is between 40 and 80 lbs, under 145 cm tall and up to 8 years of age, a booster seat is required
- All car and booster seats must be Transport Canada approved, have a current validation date, and be tethered into the school vehicle as required by the Ministry of Transportation before transportation can start
- Parents/legal guardians must provide the car or booster seat and must leave them on the vehicle for the school year
- Trained staff from the bus company will inspect and install the car seat or booster seat

### **Seat Belts, Seat Belt Covers, Safety Vests**

Students who remove their seat belts, seat belt covers, and/or anti-slide straps and fail to remain seated while in transit or students who are aggressive to other students create unsafe conditions for both students and drivers. A safety harness/vest may be required to provide safe transportation. If a student requires a safety harness/vest, a Safety Harness/Vest Request Form must be completed and authorized by a medical practitioner. Where appropriate and prior to a request for a safety harness vest, a seat-belt buckle guard/cover and/or anti-slide straps may be considered. Additional equipment may be required to further secure a safety harness/vest on a student.

### **Collective Responsibility**

Parents/legal guardians, school staff and drivers are collectively responsible for ensuring that each student is secured by a seat belt and/or in a car seat or safety vest, where applicable:

- Parents/legal guardians are responsible for securing their child when the bus arrives in the morning and when unloading in the afternoon
- School staff is responsible for unloading in the morning and securing students when they are dismissed from school

- The driver is responsible for ensuring that students are safe and secure while the vehicle is in motion

## **Transportation for Students in Wheelchairs or with Severe Mobility Limitations**

Transportation may be provided, regardless of distance, for students who have a medical condition or disability that severely limits walking. A medical certificate, along with a TDSB Medical Form to Determine Eligibility obtained from the school principal and signed by a physician are required. The Board reserves the right, with the signed consent of parents/legal guardians, to discuss transportation issues with the physician.

- Transportation is not provided to students due to the medical condition of the parents/legal guardians. The Board is currently reviewing parent/guardian/caregiver medical condition, in cases where it would prevent the student from attending school, if there are no other viable options
- Transportation is not provided for students attending any school or specialized program at their request, even when distance or medical condition is a factor
- Students utilizing walkers are not permitted to use wheelchair lifts in order to access a transportation vehicle

### **Parents/Legal Guardians and Staff**

- At school, staff must physically assist the child onto and off of the wheelchair-accessible bus, and at home parents/legal guardians must assist the child between the residence and onto and off of the vehicle
- Parents/legal guardians and staff are responsible for securing all personal chair restraints such as wheelchair seat belts, harnesses, and trays

### **The Driver**

- The driver is responsible for ensuring that all “Q Straint” belts are secured on the wheelchair vehicle
- Only the driver or authorized personnel shall operate the wheelchair lift. Parents/legal guardians and school staff may not assist with this task
- In a circumstance where the student rocks in the chair to the point where the chair is in danger of tipping over, the driver may need assistance holding the wheelchair on the ramp to ensure the child’s safety

## **Cancellation of Service Due to Inclement Weather**

Inclement weather may force the closure of schools and/or the cancellation of transportation service.

- Radio, television stations and the TDSB website will communicate a public-service announcement to inform parents/legal guardians about school closures and transportation cancellations
- If parents/legal guardians are concerned about inclement weather, they have the right to keep their child at home (especially in the case of students with significant medical needs), even if transportation is not canceled by the TDSB

## September Start-up

Transportation planning for the next school year begins in the spring of the current school year, when parents/legal guardians receive a Student Transportation Application from the school. Parents/legal guardians are required to complete the Student Transportation Application and return it to their child's school according to the due date. The applications should be forwarded to the Transportation Department by way of the child's school office as soon as possible, but no later than the end of June for both returning and new students; applications not received by the end of June may result in transportation not being ready by the first week of school.

Please note that transportation service will not start for a student unless the Transportation Department has a completed application on file.

For students routed on 72-passenger vehicles, route information is posted at the program school the week prior to school beginning in September. For students routed on smaller vehicles, parents/legal guardians are contacted prior to the first day of school by the bus driver to advise them of their pick-up and drop-off times. If contact is not made prior to the first day of school, parents/legal guardians are responsible for contacting the school to find out which transportation company is providing the service, in order to confirm the times.

Parents/legal guardians may also register for the Parent Portal located on the [TSTG \(Student Transportation Group\) website](#) to view their child's transportation information.

In an emergency, information on the application may be released to a medical practitioner. It is the responsibility of parents/legal guardians to keep the school and transportation company up to date on any changes to their child's medical health. **It is critical that phone numbers for parents/legal guardians and emergency contacts are accurate at all times throughout the year.**

## Finding Your Child's Transportation Information

### 1. Transportation Portal:

Access information specific to your child's transportation, including route number, stop location, times and bus company contact details. [Learn more and register](#).



## 2. Toronto Student Transportation Group:

Phone: 416-394-4287

Email:  
[transportation@torontoschoolbus.org](mailto:transportation@torontoschoolbus.org)

Website:  
[www.torontoschoolbus.org](http://www.torontoschoolbus.org)

## 3. Your School:

Schools have access to transportation information and may post the big bus routes on the main doors of the schools when they open in late August.

Route maps identifying all the stops for large capacity buses are also available on the [Toronto Student Transportation Group website](http://www.torontoschoolbus.org).

## Transportation Company Contact Information

Student transportation in the TDSB is provided by a number of transportation companies, which may change from year to year. Parents/guardians/caregivers should refer to the transportation notification they receive prior to the start of the school year to learn which company will be transporting their child, and record the contact telephone number in a convenient location.

(AR)	Attridge Transportation	416-255-5199
(FTCL)	First Student Toronto	416-444-7030
(DT)	Dignity Transportation	416-398-2109
(MC)	McCluskey Transportation	416-246-1422
(SH)	Sharp Bus Lines	416-477-4804
(ST)	Stock Transportation West	416-244-5341
(SC)	Stock Transportation East	416-754-4949
(SW)	Switzer Carty Transportation	905-361-1084
(WA)	Wheelchair Accessible Transit	416-884-9898
(FX)	First Student Ajax	905-683-2350
(V)	Voyago	647-952-3815
(FW)	First Student West	437-583-8400

## Transportation Safety

Transportation safety is critical at all times. A list of mandatory performance requirements can be found in [PR 504: Transportation of Students](#).

Additionally, all transportation suppliers must adhere to strict safety requirements. In the event of unsafe practices, transportation may be suspended.

### Safety Criteria Used by the TDSB

The safety criteria used by the Board in the tendering and in the selection of transportation providers for exceptional students include the following:

- Wheelchair vehicles must have a minimum rated capacity of three (3) electric wheelchairs and two (2) ambulatory passengers. All wheelchairs in the vehicle shall be secured facing forward
- Drivers shall ensure that all seat belts and harnesses are properly secured and fastened around the student at all times
- Parents/legal guardians and/or school staff and drivers are collectively responsible for ensuring that each wheelchair is properly fastened and that each student is secured by a seatbelt. The driver of each vehicle shall ensure that each student in the vehicle is secured by a seatbelt properly fastened while the vehicle is in motion. The transportation company shall be liable for any injury resulting from the failure of a driver to ensure that each student transported is secured properly and fastened at all times while a vehicle is in motion
- Students in this category must be transported and secured in vehicles specifically designed for this purpose
- The driver will assist students with physical disabilities when and where necessary. All wheelchair-locking devices shall be properly secured immediately after entering the vehicle
- For students designated as being medically at risk, the transportation company will transport safely and securely any necessary equipment or apparatus (e.g., a ventilator, oxygen supply, suctioning device, etc.) for such students, as required when directed by the Board
- As per the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Education and Ontario School Bus Association defined Driver Qualifications, it is the responsibility of the transportation company to ensure that full criminal background checks are performed for all drivers during the hiring process

- The criminal background check must be a full Vulnerable Sector Check(VSC). The VSC of any driver must be available for viewing upon request by the Board within 24 hours of the request. It is also a mandatory requirement of the Board that the carrier perform an annual offense declaration with each driver confirming that there have been no charges/convictions since their last disclosure. Proof of the annual declaration must also be maintained by the carrier and available for viewing upon request within 24 hours

## **Appeal Process**

Parents/legal guardians may appeal the decisions made regarding transportation. The appeal process is outlined in [PR 504, Section 3.2 \(Appeal Form 504D\)](#)