



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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TO: District Superintendents  
Superintendent of Schools  
Directors of Special Education  
Organizations, Parents and Individuals Concerned with Special Education  
Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education Services  
SETRC Project Directors and Professional Development Specialists

FROM: Rebecca H. Cort

SUBJECT: Special Transportation for Students with Disabilities

At a recent meeting with representatives of the New York Association for Pupil Transportation, Special Needs Committee, several concerns relating to the transportation of students with disabilities were brought to my attention. This memorandum is intended to provide information to Committees on Special Education (CSEs) and Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSEs) to assist in developing individualized education program (IEP) recommendations for students with disabilities with special transportation needs and communicating with transportation personnel to ensure IEP implementation.

While most students with disabilities receive the same transportation services as nondisabled children, it is the responsibility of the CSE or CPSE to determine whether the student's disability prevents the student from using the same transportation provided to nondisabled students, or getting to school in the same manner as nondisabled students. In developing recommendations for special transportation, the CSE/CPSE should consider and document the needs of the student relating to his/her disability. For example:

- **Mobility** – e.g., nonambulatory wheelchair bound.
- **Behavior** – e.g., fearful in noisy environments; self-abusive; runs away; cries frequently.
- **Communication** – e.g., hard of hearing; nonverbal; limited understanding of questions and directions; non-English speaking.
- **Physical** – e.g., needs assistive devices to maintain a sitting position; needs assistance walking and going up and down stairs.
- **Health needs** – e.g., has seizures; fatigue – may fall asleep on bus, requires oxygen equipment; use of an inhaler.

The IEP must include specific transportation recommendations to address each of the student's needs, as appropriate. It is not appropriate for the IEP to simply indicate, "special



transportation needed,” without including the nature of the special transportation. It is not necessary to include special transportation goals on the student’s IEP except when instruction will be provided to enable the student to increase his or her independence or improve his or her behavior or socialization during travel.

In determining and documenting a student’s special transportation needs, the CSE/CPSE should consider the following:

- Special seating.** Does the student require special seating on the bus such as seating away from the window, seating not adjacent to another student, seating in the front of the bus, etc.?
- Vehicle and/or equipment needs.** Does the student use or require special equipment such as braces, car seat, walker, lap belt, manual wheelchair, power wheelchair, safety vest, service animal, stroller, assistive technology device, medical equipment, adapted buses, or lifts and ramps, etc.?
- Adult Supervision.** Does the student require additional supervision during transportation that would require specialized training for the bus driver, a bus with a bus attendant, specialized training for the bus attendant, a one-on-one bus attendant for a designated purpose, nursing services, special monitoring, or interpreter, etc.?
- Type of transportation.** Does the student require accommodations such as door-to-door pick up and drop off, a small bus with few students, or individual transportation?
- Other Accommodations.** Does the student require other accommodations such as permission to carry personal items or to use personal electronic devices such as radios?

Transportation personnel with responsibility to provide a program, service, accommodation, modification or support must be directly informed of their specific responsibilities to implement a student’s IEP. In addition to the IEP recommendations, transportation personnel should be informed of any special information regarding the student that might impact on the health and safety of the student during transportation, including but not limited to:

- the reasons a student requires special transportation;
- health needs that might necessitate ongoing or emergency intervention;
- student behavioral issues or fears that might raise health or safety concerns; and
- specialized training required for bus drivers and/or attendants.

We ask Superintendents to share this memorandum with other school district staff, as appropriate, including Directors of Special Education, School Psychologists, Guidance Counselors and Directors of Pupil Personnel. The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (518-463-4937) and the State Education Department’s Office of Pupil Transportation Services (518-474-6541) have additional information and resources relating to bus transportation. Questions regarding this memorandum may be directed to Patricia Geary in the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), Special Education Policy and Partnerships Unit at (518) 473-2878.

c : New York Association for Pupil Transportation