

# Transportation Protocol to be Discussed During IEP with the IEP Team (Including Parents)<sup>1</sup>

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## OVERVIEW

When there is a student with exceptional needs that rides the bus, the student as an individual must be considered. What does that mean in your school district? It means that during all aspects of the process, the student's needs must be considered when choosing a bus driver and monitor. Once all of the questions have been answered, they should be documented under the student's Individual Transportation Plan (ITP). The ITP is included as a subset of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Transportation is a related service as defined by 34 CFR §§300.34(a) and (c)(16) of the IDEA regulations and can include travel to and from school and between schools; travel in and around school buildings; and specialized equipment such as special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps. It also provides for redirecting transportation routes and monitors for safety concerns. The safe transportation of a student with exceptional needs requires a plan that considers and adapts the transportation services to the individual needs of the student, to be documented in the Individual Transportation Plan and should be discussed during the Individualized Education Plan and included as part of the IEP as a related service. The parents should be involved in order to provide critical information and guidance about their student.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

Once it has been determined that transportation is required, there are questions to ask:

1. Does the student need a monitor?
2. What are the student's medical needs?
3. What are the student's behavioral/emotional needs?
4. Bus ride logistics?
5. What training do the bus driver and monitor need, both generally and specifically for that student?
6. What monitoring and safeguards are in place?

These questions must be asked and answered during the student's IEP meeting to determine how the transportation services should be implemented and included as part of the student's ITP.

## DOES THE STUDENT NEED A MONITOR?

The IEP Team, including a representative from transportation, will determine if transportation is required to assist a student with exceptional needs to benefit from special education and related

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services. The IEP Team will also be tasked with determining how transportation services will be implemented.

What is a bus monitor and what are their job requirements? Ask for clarification on what the bus monitor's job requirements include. For example, according to Seminole County Public Schools, a bus monitor's [position goal](#) is to assist the bus driver with maintaining safe and comfortable transportation for assigned students to and from designated stops. There should also be a description of responsibilities that includes training in respect to students with exceptional needs. A monitor should be able to understand and relate to students with exceptional needs.

Students with exceptional needs may require a bus monitor for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

- a. Medical needs
- b. Behavioral needs
- c. Emotional needs
- d. Other needs

Once the determination for a monitor is made and it is determined that the student needs a monitor, the team should discuss pairing the right monitor to the student. This is critically important as the bus monitor will be the person in charge of making sure the student's needs are met. Some questions to ask:

- a. Does the monitor have any experience with students with exceptional needs?
- b. Is the monitor interested in working with a student with exceptional needs?
- c. Has the monitor been through training to work with a student with exceptional needs?
  - a. If so, what is that training?
  - b. When was the training?
- d. Is the monitor comfortable with the medical/physical/behavioral/emotional needs of the student?
- e. Request the monitor (and bus driver) meet the student. The student's teacher(s) and/or parents should provide input as to the fit of the monitor and bus driver with the student.
- f. If the student has needs that require specialized attention, determine what the bus protocol will be and determine if the bus monitor has the capacity to fulfill the needs (attaching a harness, working the wheelchair lift, assisting the student on and off the bus, emergency or non-emergency medication requirements, etc...).

Using a monitor on a bus provides the student with additional support, as needed. It is also vitally important to ensure that the bus driver is comfortable driving a student with exceptional needs; therefore, the questions above are also relevant to the bus driver. Both the bus driver and monitor should be trained.

#### PEER BUDDY

In addition to a monitor, the student's needs may require that a peer buddy is included as part of the student's transportation services. A peer buddy is another student or students that also ride the same bus. If the student with the exceptional needs is nonverbal or cannot communicate to an adult, a peer buddy may be necessary. A peer buddy is that third set of eyes, to ensure that there are safeguards in place for the student. There are groups on school

campuses that can be targeted in securing peer buddies, for example-leadership, Best Buddies, peer counselors, safety patrol students, student government, etc.... The individual school's management team member should be responsible for determining the best matches.

Not all students need peer buddies, but it should be a consideration.

### WHAT ARE THE STUDENT'S MEDICAL NEEDS?

There are many reasons a student may need a monitor on a bus, including medical needs, physical needs, behavioral and/or emotional needs. These needs should be addressed and modifications and/or supports should be in place prior to interviewing a bus monitor. For example, use of a harness, wheelchair lift, medication requirements, gross and/or fine motor impairments, overheating, seizure compliance, behavioral support, etc.... The student's health care plan and/or behavioral plan should be used in determining what their needs will be on the bus. Monitors may require additional training. This should be described in a student's health care plan and/or behavioral plan and should be shared with the monitor to ensure the monitor is well versed on what they are responsible for. For example, if a student suffers from a seizure disorder, the monitor should be trained on what seizures look like and what to do if the student is having a seizure, either emergency medication or calling 911 (may depend on location, how long it would take EMTs to arrive, severity of student's seizure disorder). If the student has diabetes, what does a diabetic emergency look like? If the student overheats, the monitor should ensure the bus has air conditioning and that it is on and working. If the student has gross and/or fine motor impairment and needs physical assistance, the monitor should be trained on how to assist the student on and off the bus. If the student has certain behaviors, the monitor should be trained on what the response(s) should be. There are many resources on seizure recognition, here is [one](#) from the Epilepsy Foundation. There are also many resources on diabetes. These are just two examples; this should be geared towards the individual student's medical needs.

The bus monitor should be trained on how to use power lifts, how to secure wheelchairs, safety vests, student restraint systems, address behavioral and/or emotional needs, etc....

### WHAT ARE THE STUDENT'S BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS?

Positive behavioral support should be provided to the bus monitor, as needed, by the school district's behavioral team. As the school day begins at the bus stop, behavioral support should be included. Both the monitor and bus driver should be aware of what behavioral supports the student needs, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. These guidelines should be very specific and the bus monitor and bus driver should be trained and held to the highest standards. If the decision is made that the bus driver is not to touch the student, that should be made clear. There should be a process for documenting inappropriate or unacceptable student behavior and intervention strategies and techniques to use with the student as outlined in their IEP/ITP.

The bus driver and monitor should know and respect the cognitive capacity of the student and should align their behavior to the student. For example, if they have a student that doesn't like to be touched, do not place another student next to that student. While some students may not have the ability to communicate verbally, behaviors and actions should be observed and used as a form

of communication. Do not assume that because a student cannot speak, that they do not understand.

### WHAT ARE THE BUS ROUTE LOGISTICS?

Due to medical, behavioral and/or emotional needs, does the student require less time on the bus? The length of the student's ride on the bus may have a negative impact. Should the student be the last pickup and first dropped off? Does the bus require air-conditioning? Some of the reasons for this: overheating; anxiety; needing medication; seizures or other medical complications. Timing of bus pick-up and drop-off, as well as other bus requirements should be discussed and determined.

### WHAT IS THE TRAINING FOR THE MONITOR AND BUS DRIVER?

Bus drivers and monitors have a responsibility to provide safe and appropriate transportation to students with disabilities. In addition to the basic training such as basic first aid and basic introduction to special education, bus monitors and bus drivers should receive training that includes specific special education training and specific training to the needs of the students that they will be transporting.

Included in training: basic first aid; cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); responsibilities that includes training in respect to students with exceptional needs, including operation of special equipment, management of student behavior, familiarity with the nature, needs and characteristics of exceptional students, procedures for documenting and reporting any inappropriate student behavior, intervention strategies and techniques, emergency response procedures. This can be accomplished through courses, as well as communicating with classroom aides, teachers, principals, and parents concerning student background, medical problems and behavior as appropriate.

What is the individualized training and what is the ongoing training requirement?

#### **BUS DRIVER INVOLVEMENT**

There should be clear guidance as to when the school bus driver can be involved with the management of a student, exceptional needs or otherwise.

### WHAT MONITORING AND SAFEGUARDS ARE IN PLACE?

What steps are taken to ensure the student is safe, both emotionally, mentally and physically? Some of the steps that can be taken include but are not limited to: having functioning cameras on the buses that have clear video and audio capabilities; watching the bus videos on a regular and scheduled basis; speaking with the student and/or parents; speaking to the bus driver and monitor, separately, continued training.

The amount of time that the supervisor will spend reviewing each week's video will be dependent on the student. If a student is non-verbal or does not have the capacity to communicate, the required review should be much more than 10%, it should be closer to 50%, if not more. This percentage should be discussed at the IEP as part of the ITP in order to have a measurable standard.

The exact modifications should be discussed and in place (passenger positioning, window pads, securing adaptive and assistive devices, child safety restraint systems, wheelchair lift, air

conditioning, emergency medication, written procedures if needed, etc...) in order to have a measurable standard.

The rate of communication with the student and/or parents should also be discussed in order to have a measurable standard.

The rate of communication with the bus driver and monitor should also be discussed in order to have a measurable standard.

## *SUMMARY*

Determine what is needed in the ITP and include all pertinent information. Prepare a shorter, must have, information sheet to be included on the bus.