

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION - AR  
Rules/Regulations/Responsibilities**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The primary objectives that foster a successful pupil transportation program are safety, equity, economy, and efficiency. A great deal of effort is required to maintain a pupil transportation program that achieves the aforementioned objectives. Bus driver training programs, formal school bus inspections, routing and scheduling activities are all important aspects of successfully transporting Talbot County public and non-public school students.

Equally important to the success of any pupil transportation program is the cooperation of the parents, students, school administrators, faculty, bus drivers, and central office staff.

The "Student Transportation Rules/Regulations/Responsibilities" are provided to give direction to students, parents and personnel involved in the pupil transportation program. Staff persons are urged to adhere to these regulations and to disseminate any parts of the material to other intended persons, including students, parents, bus drivers, and bus contractors.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions shall be utilized in implementing the student transportation policy:

A. Parent - any one of the following:

1. Natural parent - biological begetter of the offspring - mother or father.
2. Custodial Parent - a person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the child.
3. Adoptive parent - a person(s) who has legally adopted a child.
4. Guardian - a person who has been legally placed in charge of the affairs of a minor and granted the rights and privileges of a natural parent.
5. Adult - a person who has reached Maryland's legal age (18).

B. Resident Students - all qualified school-age persons whose parents have an established bona fide residence in Talbot County shall be considered resident students and shall be admitted tuition free to the Talbot County public schools.

C. Bona fide Residence - Bona fide residence is the residence maintained in good faith and does not include a temporary residence or a superficial residence established for the purpose of free school attendance in the Talbot County public schools. Determination of a person's bona fide

residence is a factual one and must be made on an individual basis. Although an intent to reside indefinitely or permanently at the present place of residence is not necessarily required, the following factors may be pertinent in determining one's bona fide residence:

1. Ownership of property
2. Address at which one receives mail regularly
3. Address on driver's license and/or automobile registration
4. Payment of taxes and statements on tax returns
5. Statements as to residence contained on contracts and other documents
6. Address of voter registration
7. Location of furniture and other personal belongings
8. Any other factors that may be indicative of residence

D. Service Area is a geographical attendance area defined by the Board of Education for each school.

E. Babysitter's Home or Day-Care Facility is a location used by parent(s) or guardian(s), in their absence, to provide children with care and/or observation.

F. Bus Route is the set of planned and scheduled roadways traveled by a school bus as developed by the Pupil Transportation Office.

G. Pre-Kindergarten Transportation is special school bus transportation for pre-kindergarten students at the termination of the morning pre-kindergarten session or the transportation of students to the afternoon pre-kindergarten class.

H. Distance Eligibility is defined in Section III (A)(1)

I. Transportation Eligibility Map/Chart is a map or list that identifies geographic locations within a school service area for the purpose of determining student eligibility for school bus transportation.

J. Average Daily Traffic (ADT) - The average number of vehicles traveling on an identified street or roadway.

K. School Bus Stop - a designated place where students Board and are discharged from a school bus.

L. Principal Arterial Roadway - A heavily traveled road, typically dual lane and with high-speed traffic.

- M. Intermediate Arterial Roadways - A roadway characterized by heavy to moderate traffic volume typically used as a primary source of travel by highway users.
- N. Minor Arterial Roadway - A roadway characterized by moderate traffic volume typically used as a secondary source of travel by highway users.
- O. Major Collector Roadway - A roadway characterized by moderate traffic volume typically used as an access source to reach more heavily traveled roadways.
- P. Minor Collector Roadway - A roadway characterized by moderate to low traffic volume typically used as a secondary access source to reach more heavily traveled roadway.
- Q. Local Road Roadway - A roadway characterized by low traffic volume typically used by residents within the area.
- R. Business Districts (proliferation of) - Driveway entrances to business enterprises, more than five separate entrances on a single roadway (within a 500-foot distance).
- S. Sight Distance - Includes consideration for the following:

Where adequate sight distance exists to permit the use of residential streets or road shoulders as a walking route based on the following relationship of the posted speed limit:

25 mph	-	250 feet
30 mph	-	300 feet
35 mph	-	350 feet

- T. Fog Site Distance - All standardized reflective markers shall be set at 750 feet from the spotter's viewpoint.
- U. Suitable Crossings
  1. Where adequate sight distance, line striping, and crosswalk signing exists when warranted.
  2. Where students are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels, or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
  3. Where adequate safety provisions can be made for crossing intermediate arterials.
  4. Where students are not required to cross a principal arterial or freeway (Maryland Motor Vehicle Laws 21-509).
  5. Where students are not required to cross a proliferation of business/commercial district entrances when utilizing the road shoulders or right-of-way as a walkway.
- V. Suitable Pathways and Walking Routes - Road shoulder, pathway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface on which students can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:

1. Residential street in a community with little or no transient traffic.
2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 25 miles per hour or less.

### III. TRANSPORTATION SERVICE ELIGIBILITY

School bus service will be provided consistent with distance eligibility criteria (III-A) or exceptions granted for walking conditions not meeting an acceptable level of safety. Free student transportation may be provided to those students meeting the distance related eligibility requirements.

Additionally, in order for a student to receive school bus services, a parent/guardian shall register annually through an electronic application. The application shall be emailed directly to families and shall be completed for each individual student. Families that do not have access to email, and subsequently the emailed application, shall contact their child's specific school to be registered for transportation services.

Eligibility for transportation, establishing bus stops, and determining walking routes:

- A. Walking to and from school - Students living within the following distance will be expected to walk to and from school:

- a. Grades 9-12: .75 miles
- b. Grades 6-8: .50 miles
- c. Grades 1-5: .50 miles
- d. Kindergarten: .50 miles
- e. Pre-Kindergarten: .50 miles

- B. Walking to and from a bus stop - Students may be expected to walk up to one mile to and from a bus stop. Students may be required to walk more than one mile where it is unsafe or not feasible to establish a bus stop within one mile of a student's bona fide residence.

- C. Residence

1. The bona fide residence of the parent/guardian will be used to determine eligibility for transportation. If the address of a babysitter's home or day-care facility is used to determine transportation eligibility, school bus transportation will be considered if all of the following criteria are met:
  - a. The babysitter or day-care facility is located on a scheduled school bus route and if a bus stop can be arranged.
  - b. The babysitter or day-care facility address meets distance eligibility requirements.
  - c. The bus transportation request does not involve different buses (except for grade P-3 transportation) unless there is a babysitter or day-care need involved. This will be based on "space available" on the bus without any route or stop modifications.
  - d. The student is not an out-of-district enrollee.

2. Pre-Kindergarten and elementary school students:
  - a. Detached homes - Measurement will be from the residence property line to the front door of the school (the front door is defined as where the school bus picks up and discharges students).
  - b. Apartment/housing complexes, condominiums and townhouses - Measurement will be from the property line of the townhouse unit or to the apartment or condominium building entrance to the front door of the school (the front door is defined as where the school bus picks up and discharges students).
3. Middle and high school students:
  - a. Detached homes - Measurements will be from the residence property line to the property line of the school.
  - b. Apartment/housing complexes, condominiums and townhouses Measurement will be from the property line of the townhouse unit or to the apartment or condominium building entrance to the nearest property line of the school.

D. General - When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff shall consider:

1. Acceptable levels of safety
2. Program efficiency
3. Economy of operations
4. Equity of service
5. Providing an acceptable level of safety shall be the major staff consideration.
6. Requests for re-evaluation of a walking route may be made to the Student Transportation Office.

E. Appeals – Appeals pursuant to all aspects of this administrative regulation, in relation to decisions made by the Transportation Department, shall adhere to the following process:

7. The Director of Operations will review the findings and recommendations, and make a determination that will be communicated to the appropriate persons.
8. If the person(s) is not satisfied with the Director of Operations decision, the person(s) shall request that further consideration be made by the Superintendent of Schools (or Designee).
9. If the person(s) is not satisfied with the Superintendent's (or Designee's) decision, a final written appeal may be made to the Board of Education.

## IV. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The safe and efficient transportation of students is dependent upon the consistent application of regulations directed toward safety. The following responsibilities identify those student-related responsibilities that must be adhered to in order for the safety-related objectives to be achieved.

### A. Bus Boarding Responsibilities

1. Students should be at their assigned bus stop at least five minutes before the regularly scheduled bus arrival time in the morning.
2. Students should wait for the school bus in an orderly fashion, out of the way of traffic.
3. Students should wait at their designated bus stop until the bus has completely stopped before moving toward or boarding the bus.
4. Students who must cross the roadway to board the bus should check to see if the bus red warning lights are activated and that the roadway is clear of traffic before crossing the street.
5. The bus should be boarded in a quiet and orderly fashion. Students should always use the bus handrail and steps in a safe manner.

### B. On-Board Responsibilities

1. To ensure a safe and efficient bus loading process, students are to walk to their seat (assigned or unassigned) and be seated as quickly as possible.
2. Books and other materials should be held by the student or placed on the floor directly beneath the seat. No books or any other objects are to be placed in the bus aisle. Additional information concerning musical instruments and large objects is found in Section XI.
3. Students are to sit in their bus seats, facing forward with feet out of the aisle and hands, arms, and head inside the bus.
4. Eating, drinking, smoking, lighting matches, lighters, etc., and littering on the bus are prohibited.
5. Students shall not throw paper or any other matter out of the bus window.
6. Loud conversations, profanity, obscene gestures, rough play, and fighting are not permitted on the bus.
7. Any damage to the interior or exterior of the school bus is prohibited and will be cause for suspension of bus riding privileges. In addition, the parent(s) and student are responsible for any financial restitution necessary as a result of such damage. Continuation of privileges will only be considered after financial restitution is made.
8. THE EMERGENCY DOOR or EMERGENCY WINDOW handles should never be touched or tampered with unless directed to do so by the bus driver.

9. Students are not to sit in the driver's seat or tamper with any controls or bus equipment.
10. Students must obey all directions from the driver. The bus driver is in charge of and responsible for students on the bus unless a teacher is on the bus. When a teacher is on the school bus for functions such as field trips, the teacher is the responsible person.

#### C. Bus Loading Responsibilities at School

1. Students must walk to the bus loading area in a quiet and orderly manner.
2. Students are not permitted to smoke. Smoking or lighting any combustible material in or near a school bus is in violation of State Motor Vehicle Law.
3. Students must stand away from any moving buses until the bus comes to a complete stop. It is extremely dangerous for students to attempt to retrieve papers, books, etc., that may be close to a moving bus or a bus about to move. Students are NOT to attempt to retrieve dropped items near the bus and should ask the driver for assistance.
4. Students are to board the bus in an orderly manner following the same applicable procedures addressed in a previous section (A. Bus Boarding Responsibilities).

#### D. Bus Unloading Responsibilities at Bus Stop

1. All students must wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before getting out of the seat.
2. Students must get off the bus only at their regularly assigned bus stop, unless permission has been previously granted.
3. To avoid mishaps and accidental tripping when leaving the bus, the handrail near the steps should be used.
4. Any students who must cross the road after leaving the bus must do so approximately ten (10) feet in front of the bus without undue delay. Traffic should be checked carefully before crossing the street. Students are NOT to attempt to retrieve dropped books, papers, etc., until the bus is gone.
5. Throwing objects, (stones, snowballs, etc.) at school bus or any other vehicle is prohibited.

## V. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Parents are urged to assist their children in developing a respect for and a sense of safety concerning all of the related operations of the school bus. All of the "Student Responsibilities" should be reviewed with the students as to meaning and rationale.

- B. Parents are urged to play a major role in their child's behavior during the walk to the bus stop as well as the child's behavior at the bus stop.
- C. Parents should see to it that their child arrives at the bus stop at least five minutes before the regularly scheduled arrival time. Each student and parent should know their bus number. Bus drivers may not wait for tardy students since any wait will adversely affect the established time schedules for many other students.
- D. Parents of younger students should select a safe and expedient walking route to and from the bus stop. Deviation from the route should be avoided. After leaving the bus, students should walk directly home using a safe direct route. Students should not talk to strangers at the bus stop or along the way to and from the bus stop.
- E. Students should be instructed to respect private property when walking to and from the bus stop. Crossing through private property and yards should be discouraged. Destruction of property or "horseplay" should also be avoided. Student safety is of paramount importance.
- F. Parents of younger students are encouraged to accompany their child to and from the bus stop until the student is comfortable with the route and the stop location. This is an excellent opportunity to emphasize sound traffic safety practices. Older brothers, sisters, neighbors, etc., can be of assistance in this effort.
- G. Parents are encouraged to monitor radio and television stations carefully during inclement weather. Normally school closing announcements are made beginning at or before 6:30 A.M. and at various times thereafter.
- H. Parents are reminded that students must ride their assigned (numbered) bus. Any deviation must be approved in advance by the school principal, school manager or by the Transportation Manager. Vacations, temporary work assignment changes, social events, riding to a friend's home, or other foreseen events will not be permitted for a change in bus assignment; however, under short-term emergency situations the school principal may approve a different bus assignment. The principal or school manager is responsible for notifying the bus driver of the reassignment.
- I. Students must board and be discharged from their bus at the assigned stop. Permission to use a different bus stop may be granted on a temporary basis, if approved by the school principal or school manager provided the request does not involve a bus assignment/route change. Bus drivers must be notified by the Principal or School Manager.

## **VI. BUS CONTRACTORS AND THEIR CONTRACTS**

- A. Bus contractors, if any, will be appointed by the Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.
- B. All other requirements and conditions being satisfactorily met, the initial contract issued to the contractor will be for not more than five (5) years.
- C. The Superintendent can increase or decrease the amount payable to a contractor at any time during the school year when there is a change in route, mileage, or equipment.



- D. The contract cannot be sublet, sold, or reassigned by the contractor. Upon the termination of the contract, the Board of Education will appoint a contractor of its own choice or use an employed bus driver.
- E. The contractor will not use drivers other than those approved by the Transportation Manager.
- F. The contractor will be supplied with a copy of policies, rules and regulations for transportation of school children, which deals with public school transportation. The contractor will be expected to comply with these policies, rules and regulations in every instance.
- G. Insurance coverage is determined by the Board and may be altered only by the Board. This insurance will apply to regularly contracted school buses and approved spare buses. This insurance will apply while such buses are:
  - 1. On official Board business or transporting students to and from school or when transporting pupils on Board approved school-sponsored trips, including the operation of buses to and from the regular storage or garage location.
  - 2. Operated for maintenance or testing purposes.
  - 3. Stored or parked at the regular storage or garage location.
  - 4. Transporting Board employees and school approved volunteers when on school sponsored activities.
  - 5. Used for training of drivers
- H. When a school bus contract is available, because of the addition of a new bus route, the termination of a contract (by the contractor or by Board action), or other prevailing circumstances, the Board of Education shall advertise the existing available contract in the local newspapers.

## **VII. Bus Driver Responsibilities**

All school bus drivers transporting students in the Talbot County Public School System are responsible for obeying all traffic laws and regulations.

The following bus driver responsibilities are consistent with state law and regulations, and other administrative regulations.

Each school bus driver shall:

- A. Transport only those students assigned to the bus. Children who are not authorized are not allowed on the bus.

- B. Follow time schedules and routes as prescribed. Traffic and weather conditions may cause lateness, but a driver should not arrive at a stop early and risk leaving students at a stop.
- C. Attend all training sessions and meetings as directed by the Transportation Department.
- D. Pick up and discharge students only at designated stops. Exceptions will be allowed through written temporary permission from the school administrator or notification by the Transportation Department.
- E. Report all student behavior problems as prescribed in the "Student Behavior/Discipline" section. Provide as much documentation as possible to describe the incident.
- F. Assign students to seats and maintain a seating chart.
- G. Make sure that all students are aware of the procedures and rules regarding student discipline and safety.
- H. Suggest any changes in the student transportation program as it affects safety, economy, and efficiency. Suggestions can be forwarded to the Transportation Manager.
- I. Report bus breakdowns to persons and offices as prescribed.
- J. Report all school bus traffic accidents immediately as prescribed.
- K. Refrain from backing a school bus on school grounds unless reported to the Transportation Supervisor and appropriate assistance is provided and use extreme care when backing a bus.
- L. Conduct the prescribed daily pre-trip and post-trip inspections.
- M. Fuel buses only when passengers are not on the bus.
- N. Never permit students to operate any controls, devices, etc., and never leave the bus unattended while the engine is running or if the key is in the ignition.
- O. Use all lights and signals in the prescribed manner.
- P. Do not move the bus until all students are seated.
- Q. Provide assistance to students by encouraging them to cross only in front of the bus and to check traffic carefully before crossing the roadway.
- R. Handle students' discipline problems in a prompt, fair, and objective manner.
- S. Cooperate with the school administrator and the Transportation Department in dealing with parents and student problems.
- T. May not smoke on school property or on the bus.
- U. May not drink alcoholic beverages prior to or during a school bus trip. This is grounds for immediate dismissal.

- V. May not use profane language on the bus.

## **VIII. School Administrator Responsibilities**

The school administrator (principal, assistant principal or school manager) has various supervisory and administrative responsibilities related to the student transportation program. Included among these responsibilities are various elements and aspects of student discipline (see Section VIII). In addition to the student discipline responsibilities, the school administrator shall be responsible for the following:

- A. Provide staff supervision at the school's loading and unloading zone (A.M., mid-day, and P.M.).
- B. Conduct two (2) bus evacuation/safety drills are conducted each school year. These shall be performed in cooperation with the Transportation Department.
- C. Maintain a list of students assigned to each bus (as provided by the Transportation Department).
- D. Assist bus drivers in the preparation of bus seating charts for students when appropriate and/or necessary.
- E. Report unsafe driver practices and inadequate contractor/driver performance (late buses, etc.) to the Transportation Department.
- F. Ensure, through the distribution of written materials or instructional programs, that students are aware of safety rules and transportation programs.
- G. Assist bus drivers, when necessary, in dealing with student behavior problems.
- H. Notify new students (and/or parents) of their bus number and stop assignment.

## **IX. Student Discipline**

Behavior of students on the school bus and at bus stops or school loading/ unloading zones is perhaps the most critical and important aspect of the entire student transportation program. The behavior and safety of the students have a direct relationship to one another. It is for this reason that bus drivers, school administrators, and the staff of the Transportation Department must work in a cooperative manner to properly ensure the safety of students, bus drivers, and the motoring public. Unacceptable student behavior is one of the major causes of driver distraction.

The following regulations address the role of the school administrator, school bus driver, and Transportation Manager related to student discipline.

### **A. Bus Driver**

1. The responsibility for discipline of students on the school bus is the responsibility of the bus driver unless a teacher or administrator is on the bus.

2. Drivers will submit written reports of student behavior problems on the "Discipline Referral Form." The form must be fully and accurately completed.
3. Bus drivers shall not deny any student bus riding privileges unless appropriately approved.
4. "Discipline Referral Form" should be submitted by the driver to the Transportation Supervisor upon completion of routes.
5. The driver shall be available to confer with school administrators if necessary to provide additional details regarding student violations.
6. If the student is denied bus-riding privileges, the driver shall not allow the students on the bus until the suspension is complete.

#### B. School Administrator

1. Upon receipt of any "Bus Referral Form," the school administrator shall promptly and thoroughly investigate the report.
2. Based upon the school administrator's investigation of the referral, the appropriate action shall be taken. The administrator shall complete the discipline form and enter it into the student information system. Any bus suspension that results in a student with an IEP being unable to attend school must also be counted as an out of school suspension.
3. The distribution section of the form should be expedited the same day for serious violations and within two (2) days for less serious violations. Parents must be kept informed of their child's behavior on the bus regardless of the seriousness of the violation.
4. The school administrator will adhere to the following in determining disciplinary action after having completed steps B.1-3 above.
  - a. A student's bus riding privileges may be immediately suspended by the school administrator or Transportation Supervisor for the following infractions:
    - 1) Damage to bus interior or exterior (plus financial restitution).
    - 2) Smoking on the bus or igniting matches, lighter, or any other combustible material or explosive device on or near the bus.
    - 3) Tampering with or opening the rear emergency door or exiting or entering through the emergency door.
    - 4) Throwing objects on the bus that may cause harm to the driver, passengers, or where such action could cause distractions to the driver.
    - 5) Possession or consumption of controlled dangerous substances or alcoholic beverages.
    - 6) Physical abuse directed to a bus driver, aide, or another student.
  - b. For violations listed below, the school administrator or Transportation Supervisor may suspend the student's bus riding privileges for 1-10 days:

- 1) Riding a school bus without authorization.
  - 2) Fighting on the bus.
  - 3) Verbal abuse directed at a bus driver, aide, or another student.
  - 4) Possessing a weapon on the bus.
- c. Any repeat offenses referenced above (IX)(B)(4)(a-b) shall result in suspension of bus riding privileges until a conference is completed with a school administrator, student and parent. The Transportation Supervisor (or designee), in collaboration with the school administrator, shall decide upon the punitive action (term of suspension of bus riding privileges)
- d. For the following student offenses, the school administrator may suspend the student's bus riding privileges for 1 or 2 days for the first offense:
- 1) Excessive loudness (including volume on electronic devices)
  - 2) Profanity/obscene gestures
  - 3) Failure to stay seated while the bus is in motion or failure to be seated as assigned.
  - 4) Failure to adhere to any safety procedures or any directive of the bus driver.
  - 5) Being on board the bus with unauthorized objects (for example, large objects, breakable glass or other similar materials)
  - 6) Profanity directed to the bus driver, aide, or another student.
- e. Repeat instances (2nd violation) for the above listed violations (IX)(4)(d)(1-6) shall result in a suspension of bus riding privileges (by the school administrator) for not less than 2 days, nor more than 5 days.
- f. For three (3) or more violations of the above offenses (IX)(4)(d)(1-6), the student's bus riding privileges shall be suspended until a conference is completed with the school administrator, in coordination with the Transportation Supervisor. The school administrator shall be responsible for administering suspension of bus riding privileges or other appropriate action.
- g. Any student safety violations or procedures not addressed in this section shall be directed to the school administrator, in coordination with the Transportation Supervisor for advice and clarification.

## **X. Transportation Department**

The Transportation Department Manager (or designee) is responsible for the overall coordination and direction of the pupil transportation program. In addition to those previously identified responsibilities, the Transportation Department is also responsible for the following:

- A. Ensuring that each school bus meets established inspection criteria through "spot" inspections and 3 formal/annual bus inspections.
- B. Routing and scheduling of buses in the most safe, efficient, and economical manner possible.

- C. Planning, budgeting, and forecasting related activities for the transportation program.
- D. Supervising and evaluating the daily operations of the transportation program.
- E. Ensuring the financial viability of the Transportation Department by managing in a prudent and effective manner.
- F. Making contractual-related recommendations concerning new and existing school bus contractors, if any.
- G. Providing training programs for all school bus drivers and aides and ensuring that all other driver-related requirements are met (physical examination, driver and criminal record check, etc.).
- H. Investigating bus-related traffic accidents and determining preventability (driver error).
- I. Investigating and taking appropriate action with regard to parental and citizen concerns and complaints.
- J. Assisting school-based administrators in dealing with student discipline.
- K. Working toward improving levels of performance for bus drivers and bus contractors when necessary.

## **XI. Transporting Items on School Buses**

In the interest of safety, it is necessary to establish regulations and procedures concerning the items that students may wish to transport with them on the school bus. Aisles must be kept clear and both doors must be completely clear.

- A. On the buses having high seat backs, items may be hauled if they:
  - 1. Fit on the student's lap, but do not interfere with other students in the same seat, or do not come above the student's chin.
  - 2. Fit directly under the student's seat, provided that placing any object under the seat does not interfere with the bus schedule, negatively affect any safety aspect of the transportation operation, or consume an inordinate amount of time.
- B. Other items that may not be generally transported on a school bus because of safety considerations:
  - 1. Glass containers or other such breakable containers.
  - 2. Pets or animals, regardless of whether or not they are related to school projects.
  - 3. Firearms, knives, or any other sharp instruments that could cause bodily injury or damage to the interior of the bus.
  - 4. Alcoholic beverages or any controlled dangerous substances.

5. Any combustible material or instrument capable of causing flames or fire.
6. Skateboards/Hoverboards (or any similar device).
7. Electronic devices or other large objects that cannot be transported within a student backpack.
8. Balloons or other items that would block or interfere with the driver's view of the bus.

**-END-**