

**ACTIVITY BUS
OPERATIONS:
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER THAN
TO AND FROM
SCHOOL OR
HEAD START**

WRITING COMMITTEE EDITS IN RED INK BY SECTION LOCATION:

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Each school system or Head Start agency providing activity bus operations should have comprehensive policies and guidelines which delegate responsibility for this function to the supervisor of student transportation. To provide safe and efficient activity transportation, lines of responsibility and authority need to be defined, and personnel involved must have an understanding of their respective responsibilities.

In the interest of providing the safest means of transportation available, students should be transported to school- or Head Start-sponsored activities in school buses or allowable alternate vehicles that meet state and federal standards, unless circumstances require an alternate mode of transportation.

Note: Operational Guidelines for the use of buses other than school buses are outlined in APPENDIX G.

A. Transportation Other Than To and From School or Head Start

1. School- or Head Start- Related Activity Operations

Each school system or Head Start agency providing activity bus operations should have comprehensive policies and guidelines that delegate responsibility for this function to the supervisor of student transportation. To provide safe and efficient activity transportation, lines of responsibility and authority need to be defined and personnel involved must have an understanding of their respective responsibilities.

In the interest of providing the safest means of transportation available, students should be transported to school- and or Head Start-sponsored activities in school buses or allowable alternate vehicles that meet state and federal standards, unless circumstances require an alternate mode of transportation.

These school- or Head Start-related activity trips may include field trips that are extensions of the instructional program, athletic trips, vocational and trade training, volunteer activities and recreational outings, such as dances, picnics and overnight camping trips. These trips range from a few miles to those extending over several days and covering large distances.

The following items need to be considered when developing criteria for activity trip transportation:

- a. Policies and guidelines, including:
 - I Purpose of trip (instructional, athletic, students/spectators, recreation, etc.);
 - II Funding source (district or individual school funds, individual charge,

parent group, etc.); and

- III Administrative approval (the persons having authority to approve the trip).
- b. A priority guideline should be developed for trip scheduling when all requests cannot be accommodated.

- I Advance notification should allow adequate time for the approval process and for making driver and vehicle arrangements.
- II Methods of travel may include district- or agency-owned or contracted bus, commercial carrier or local transit equipment, air, boat, rail or combination of the above, private or school passenger automobile, when required by special or unique needs.

***Note:** Operational Guidelines for the use of buses other than school buses are outlined in APPENDIX G.*

- III A trip request form should include all necessary information for trip arrangements, special equipment, payroll, reimbursement and other local needs. (See sample form in APPENDIX G.)
 - IV Adult chaperones should be required on all activity trips. Responsibilities include passenger control, with the driver having final authority.
 - V Discipline and emergency medical procedures should require a trip release to be signed by parents and should include procedures concerning difficult or severe behavioral and medical problems and emergency policies and contacts.
- c. Communication is essential. Drivers, students, chaperones and parents should be made aware of applicable rules and regulations. A signed authorization for student participation from the parent or guardian is important. A detailed itinerary for all persons involved may be advisable. Identification of special medical problems in the event of an emergency en route is necessary.
- I Luggage accommodations, if applicable, must be included. A procedure for transporting luggage or equipment prohibited in the passenger compartment by state law and/or local regulations is necessary. Loose luggage or equipment which could cause injury or block passageways should never be transported in the passenger

compartment.

- II Policies should detail whether or not out-of-state trips are permitted and, if so, any applicable restrictions. Regulations for states to be visited should be reviewed prior to the trip.
- III Insurance policies should be reviewed or agents contacted to determine adequacy of coverage. This is an absolute necessity for trips scheduled to another state or country. If vehicles other than district-owned vehicles are used, the Board of Education or Head Start agency should determine the minimum insurance coverage to be carried. A current copy of the contract or commercial carrier's insurance should be on file with the school district or Head Start agency.
- IV Road and weather checks should be made by the designated person. School transportation personnel from other districts, state patrols, highway divisions and auto clubs are generally cooperative in supplying road information. If warranted, the weather bureau should also be contacted. A planned route and any contingent route for trips should be determined prior to initiation of the trip.
- V Contingency plans require policies and procedures that detail persons who have authority to make decisions if the unexpected happens during a trip. Impassable roads, crashes or mechanical breakdowns are examples. Drivers and chaperones should have access to that authority's phone number. It is also advisable to obtain phone numbers of transportation personnel in various communities and school districts where activity vehicles regularly travel. Provisions should include plans for staying overnight if conditions do not permit a safe trip home. It is advisable to develop a mutual aid directory for contact within athletic league boundaries which could provide assistance in the event of mechanical emergencies. Drivers should be trained in procedures and regulations relating to trip crashes.
- VI Driving hours shall be regulated. School districts and Head Start agencies shall have regulations based on the application of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulation 49 CFR 395.5, which states that drivers may drive a maximum of 10 hours after 8 consecutive hours off duty; or may not drive after having been on duty for 15 hours, following 8 consecutive hours off duty. Off-duty time is not included in the 15-hour period. No motor carrier shall permit or require a driver of a passenger-carrying commercial motor vehicle to

drive, nor shall any driver drive a passenger-carrying commercial motor vehicle having been on duty 60/70 hours in any 7/8 consecutive days.

- VII Driver selection and assignment criteria are necessary to avoid conflict and confusion. The criteria should include a driver's knowledge, skill, experience and familiarity with activity trip vehicles. The area to be traveled should also be a consideration. Drivers should be notified at least three days in advance of the trip date. Drivers who drive only activity trips should be tested periodically for driving ability and vehicle familiarity. They should hold the same license and certification as regular school bus drivers.
 - VIII Passenger manifests (a list of all passengers being transported) should be kept by the driver and left with proper authorities at the school or institution.
 - IX Evacuation instruction, including an emergency evacuation drill, or at least verbal instructions, should be given by the driver before each trip. (See APPENDIX G.)
 - X Instruction on seat belt use and proper adjustment (when equipped). (See APPENDIX D.)
- d. Vehicles and equipment:
- I The following items should be taken into consideration when selecting trip vehicles:
 - i. Miles to be traveled;
 - ii. Terrain and climate conditions;
 - iii. Number and age group of students;
 - iv. Luggage and equipment requirements;
 - v. Driver familiarity with the vehicle and route; and
 - vi. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations, if contract operated and crossing state lines.
 - II Consideration should be given for specialized equipment, or other items needed, such as these:

- i. Luggage storage;
- ii. Chains (pre-fitted prior to the trip) or sanders;
- iii. Extra heaters or air conditioning;
- iv. Public address system;
- v. Electronics (am/fm, two-way, music system) or cellular telephone;
- vi. Tires, including off-road tread or recaps on the rear axle (recaps on front axle are prohibited);
- vii. Spare tire;
- viii. A tool kit containing items such as a flashlight, pliers, screwdrivers, de-icer, extra chain tighteners, etc., and additional equipment for an extended trip, as may be recommended by transportation personal at the destination;
- ix. Cash for telephone, fuel, bridge tolls, parking fees and personal needs;
- x. Emergency telephone numbers and other information; and
- xi. Global Positioning Systems (GPS), as appropriate.

III Inspection requirements should be the same as for regular route buses, and a detailed check should be made prior to activity trips.

IV School buses shall be prohibited from towing a trailer or any vehicle when students are on board the bus.

e. Training

Specialized training should be provided for activity trip drivers. Training should include, but not be limited to, the following topics:

- i. State laws and applicable policies and rules;
- ii. Familiarity with the activity trip vehicle and its components;
- iii. Familiarity with specialized equipment and how to use it, including cellular telephone and onboard global positioning

system (GPS);

- iv. Familiarity with local and state trip requirements;
- v. Route familiarization, which might include a dry run prior to the trip date, especially if extreme conditions, terrain or road difficulties may be encountered;
- vi. Discipline procedures on trips;
- vii. Driving under adverse conditions (night driving, slippery roads or unfamiliar mountainous driving);
- viii. Maps, destination locations and parking areas;
- ix. Parking location, if other than the student destination; and
- x. Provisions for bus security at the destination.

2. Non-related activity operations

a. Introduction

This sub-section is intended to address the various uses of a school bus for operations other than to and from school and school-related activities.

b. Use, procedures and policies

- I The school bus operator, in accordance with state regulations and/or laws governing school bus use, should establish procedures whereby school buses can be scheduled for non-routine use. Such scheduling should not conflict with, or be given priority over, the regular class-related demands for school buses by the school system or Head Start agency.
- II The school system or Head Start agency, as part of local government or in cooperation with transportation contractors, may utilize buses during times of community emergency or crisis, when demand for other public vehicles, such as trains and transit buses, is so great as to exceed available supply.

c. Legal requirements

- I School buses operating on public roads and crossing state and national boundaries must adhere to the rules of the road in the

jurisdictions in which they are operating.

- II All applicable permits need to be procured in accordance with applicable state and local laws before the trip is undertaken.

d. Operational requirements

- I Vehicle equipment used for activities must be in good working order, well-maintained, and otherwise capable of withstanding the demands of the trip.
- II All activity buses and drivers should comply with all applicable state and federal requirements, including Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations applicable to inter- and intra-state passenger transportation.
- III Aisles and exits must be kept clear and free of blockages at all times.