

OPERATIONS

WRITING COMMITTEE EDITS IN RED INK BY SECTION LOCATION:

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OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The success of any school transportation operation depends largely on the performance and degree of dedication displayed by those involved. These recommendations are designed to assist state agencies, school districts, school and Head Start administrators and private operators in understanding their student transportation programs and developing applicable policies, including those for transporting students with special needs.

The school bus is an extension of the classroom and as such, the ride to school should be safe and efficient in an atmosphere conducive to learning readiness. Open and honest communication between all stakeholders is vital for the success of the transportation program. Transportation is critical to the education process, and the school bus is the safest form of transportation; therefore, transportation to and from school on a school bus shall be offered to all eligible students.

Districts or the governing body responsible for pupil transportation shall have a transportation eligibility policy, which takes safety into account and which addresses distances from school for different age groups. If transportation eligibility is maximized, the result will be more students on school buses, and therefore, safer access to students' educational opportunities. The sole criterion used to establish transportation eligibility should not only be the distance between a student's home address and the student's school of attendance; rather, travel to and from school must take into account various criteria. Safety must be the primary concern, and criteria should take into account the ages of students and potentially hazardous situations, such as roadway and walk pathway conditions, speed limits, railroad crossings, lighting conditions, etc. (See *Identification and Evaluation of School Bus Route and Hazard Marking Systems, Final Report*, Table 1, in Appendix D.) The criteria should also take into account students' levels of maturity, grade levels and cognitive and physical abilities. Similar criteria should be used in establishing maximum distances between a student's home and the assigned bus stop per district guidelines. (See Appendix D for Sample walk distances.)

SCHOOL TRAVEL CHOICES

Children in the United States travel to and from pre-school, school and related activities by a variety of modes. Administrators, parents and students often choose, or encourage the use of modes of, travel for reasons other than maximizing safety or minimizing risk (e.g., convenience, flexibility, and cost). **It is recommended that all school students be transported in a school bus.**

Each travel mode has its inherent risks, which vary from community to community, school to school and program to program, and any shifts from one mode to another can have a marked effect on the overall safety of travel for a particular community, school or program. Each state, school district, private school, Head Start agency and any other agencies or organizations that transport school-age children must assess their own situations and circumstances and apply the information presented in *The Relative Risks of School Travel—A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment* (published by the Transportation

Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering), in order to make sound, informed decisions. The goal is to improve safety for all children traveling to and from preschool, school and related activities and to provide communities with the information needed to make informed choices that balance their needs and resources.

SCHOOL BUS USE

On July 6, 1999, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) transmitted a Safety Recommendation letter to the Steering Committee of the 13th National Conference on School Transportation containing the findings and recommendation of the Special Investigative Report

Pupil Transportation in Vehicles Not Meeting Federal School Bus Standards (NTSB/SIR99/02). This special investigation report was based on the NTSB's finding in four crashes involving "nonconforming buses": that a number of children were ejected and fatally injured in three 15-passenger vans and a 25-passenger specialty bus that "... did not and were not required to meet federal school bus occupant crash protection standards." Recommendation H-99-25, issued in the letter to the National Conference on School Transportation and a number of other national associations and churches, urged recipients to "...inform their members about the circumstances of the accidents discussed in this special investigation report and urge that they use school buses or buses having equivalent occupant protection to school buses to transport children."

On January 18, 2001, the *Federal Register* (Vol. 66, No. 12) published 45 CFR 1310, *Head Start Transportation*, which included a requirement that on or before January 18, 2006, except as otherwise provided in §1310, Head Start and Early Head Start passengers shall be transported to and from their respective programs in school buses or allowable alternate vehicles (AAVs), which are like school buses in all respects except that they do not meet FMVSSs for crash avoidance. (In short, AAVs include all school bus design standards except that they may not be painted "school bus" yellow and they are not equipped with stop arms and alternately flashing signal lamps for passenger loading and unloading.) The directive (§1310.12) was based on the documented safety of school buses and the knowledge that alternatives to school buses per se would be required by specific states (thus the allowance for AAVs).

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, on July 31, 2003, issued the Final Rule for 49 CFR 571 (*Federal Register*, Vol. 68, No. 147) that established a new class of school buses called "multifunction school activity buses" (MFSABs) to fulfill the requirements for AAVs (as required by Early Head Start and Head Start) or for "...enabling schools and other institutions to choose the new buses instead of a 15-passenger van [which] will provide them with a safer transportation alternative" (p. 44892).

Therefore, to assure the highest level of safety for children, consistent with the NTSB's recommendation and 45 CFR 1310, all students transported to and from public and private preschool programs and schools and to related activities shall be transported in school buses as defined in Title 49, CFR Part 571 or in vehicles having passenger crash protection equivalent to school buses, such as multifunction school activity buses (MFSABs).

STATE ADMINISTRATION

- A. Services Provided
- B. The state agency(ies) responsible for student transportation should provide the following services:
 - 1. Leadership in the development of a comprehensive student transportation program for state-wide application;
 - 2. A state director of student transportation with the staff and other resources necessary for optimal job performance;
 - 3. Clear, concise student transportation policies;
 - 4. A cost accounting system for all expenditures in the area of student transportation;
 - 5. A state-wide management information system to accommodate student transportation data (e.g., costs, information gleaned from the uniform school bus crash reporting criteria, manpower availability, etc.);
 - 6. Promotion of a student transportation safety program utilizing community and school district resources, school bus contractors, school transportation associations, legislation, media, law enforcement and state agencies concerned with student transportation;
 - 7. A manual or handbook for local student transportation supervisors, school administrators and private contractors containing detailed instructions for implementing the state's student transportation laws, regulations and policies;
 - 8. Manuals or handbooks for each school bus driver and each bus attendant containing the state student transportation regulations and recommended safety practices;
 - 9. A comprehensive series of training programs that covers all aspects of student transportation, including, but not limited to, the following areas:
 - a. A school bus driver program for both pre-service and in-service instruction, including documentation of successful completion of classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction;
 - b. Workshops, seminars and/or conferences for all student transportation personnel;
 - c. Encouragement for state institutions of higher learning to provide undergraduate and graduate courses acceptable for certification purposes in

student transportation, operation and safety; and

- d. Safety and safe travel curricula for student passengers;
- 10. Manuals or handbooks for school bus maintenance personnel, containing technical issues and administrative issues to include appropriate school bus preventive maintenance procedures and ongoing maintenance programs;
- 11. Regular visits to local school systems to evaluate transportation systems and to provide necessary direction;
- 12. Bus and equipment standards that ensure safe and efficient student transportation;
- 13. Coordination with other agencies having responsibility for student transportation services and use of the uniform school bus crash reporting criteria; and
- 14. Adequate funding necessary to comply with mandates adopted and approved by state legislatures and the federal government.

C. State Student Transportation Director

- 1. The State Director of Student Transportation's specific duties may include, but are not limited to, the following administrative areas:
 - a. Assisting in the implementation, interpretation and understanding of student transportation laws, regulations and policies;
 - b. Managing the state's student transportation program, which includes planning, budgeting and forecasting requirements for the operation;
 - c. Supervising the preparation of manuals, handbooks and information for distribution to local transportation personnel and private operators;
 - d. Providing assistance and direction on request to local school administrators and Early Head Start and Head Start grantees or their transporters;
 - e. Assisting in evaluation of state and local operations, including bus routes, and providing recommendations for policies and procedures;
 - f. Planning, directing and participating in safety education for student transportation personnel;
 - g. Assisting local personnel in planning and conducting student safety education programs;

- h. Requiring and maintaining appropriate reports and records;
 - i. Assisting and/or consulting with groups involved in student transportation safety;
 - j. Representing the interests of the student transportation industry;
 - k. Working cooperatively with school transportation associations, school districts, Early Head Start and Head Start grantees or transporters, parents and private contractors to promote school bus safety and efficiency;
 - l. Developing and publishing easy-to-understand information on the hazards of using prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications when driving;
 - m. Developing and implementing appropriate curricula for training of transportation supervisors, drivers, technicians, attendants and other staff, as well as parents and students;
 - n. Developing and maintaining state-wide data collection and distribution systems regarding safety incident investigations, best practices and general industry information; and
 - o. Developing and maintaining a state-wide process for investigating and reporting safety incidents.
2. The State Director of Student Transportation should be an active member of regional and national organizations and should participate in activities that promote student transportation safety.

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

A. Activities

The local agency responsible for student transportation should supervise the overall transportation operation within the respective agency. Recommended activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1. Assign **staff, who are adequately trained and certified in accordance with state and federal requirements**, the responsibility for implementing and/or supervising a comprehensive student transportation program;
- 2. Participate in student transportation operations within its jurisdiction, including training programs for all transportation personnel. **Training should include provisions of the Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) requirements contained in 49 CFR 380,**

reviews of school bus routes, investigation and reporting of crashes and other transportation problems and evaluation of the student transportation system;

3. Ensure compliance with federal and state student transportation laws, regulations and policies, including drug/alcohol testing programs as required in the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991, in compliance with 49 CFR, Parts 40 and 382 and with 45 CFR 1310 and other Head Start regulations **and with requirements of the federal Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse (49 CFR 383.75 and 354.235)**, as may be applicable;
4. Ensure that instruction in passenger safety, including student participation in emergency evacuation drills, is an integral part of the school and/or Head Start curriculum.

Note: *Instruction should comply with state requirements and/or Federal Highway Safety Guideline 17 (copy in APPENDIX D) and with 45 CFR 1310, as may be applicable.*

Instruction should include, but not be limited to, the following items:

- a. At least once each school semester, provide all students transported to and from schools or Head Start Centers in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus with instruction on the location and operation of all emergency exits, provide supervised emergency exit drills to each student transported to or from schools or Head Start Centers in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus and provide all students with an age-appropriate safe travel curriculum consistent with the modes of travel available for each age group/grade level;
- b. Before departure of each activity trip, provide all passengers transported in a school bus, school-chartered bus or multifunction school activity bus instruction* on the location of all emergency exits and demonstrations of their operation, including a general review of safe riding practices, rules and procedures; and

***Note:** *A sample form is available in Appendix G.*

- c. Limit the amount of carry-on items, especially large items (e.g., luggage, coolers, sports/band equipment, etc.) in school buses, school-chartered buses or multifunction school activity buses; keep aisles and emergency exits in school buses, school-chartered buses and multifunction school activity buses clear at all times; safely stow and secure away from any aisle or emergency exit any item that is brought on board.
5. Provide supervision of loading and unloading areas at or near the school or Head Start

Center and provide ongoing evaluation of route pick-up and drop-off locations for safety;

6. Provide adequate supervision for students whose bus schedules necessitate their early arrival or late departure from school or Head Start;
7. Promote public understanding of, and support for, the school transportation program;
8. Develop and implement local student transportation policies and regulations, including those for students with special needs;
9. Provide transportation personnel with opportunities for growth in job-related activities;
10. Provide a library of resources to ensure that transportation personnel have the proper tools to operate a safe and efficient program, including but not limited to, the following resources:
 - a. Applicable federal, state and local laws, codes and regulations;
 - b. Applicable manuals and guidelines;
 - c. On-line connectivity for access to all internet and other resources;
 - d. Applicable trade journals and organizations' publications; and
11. Provide contract management (if applicable).

Note: *If a private carrier is utilized in a school transportation operation, it is imperative that a clear partnership is established with all parties. Clear expectations and contract review, along with on-going training, communication and practice/procedures should be developed with a working partnership in mind.*

B. Staffing

The tasks associated with the successful operation of the local transportation department are many and varied. Depending on the size of the school district, many duties may be consolidated in a single position, or each position may have very specific duties. The leadership of a truly effective transportation department promotes career paths and succession plans that will ensure continuity and consistency of the operation.

The following duties are classified by the type of position that would have standalone responsibility, recognizing that an individual may have the responsibilities of several of the designated positions.

Note: Recommended job descriptions for this section may be located in APPENDIX D.

1. Administrative

a. Director, manager, supervisor and/or private operator

This position is in charge of daily transportation functions. Duties are to plan, direct, coordinate and oversee all functions pertaining to the operation and maintenance of the district transportation department, including personnel, equipment and facilities. Prime concern is safe, efficient and economical transportation of students between home and school on a regular schedule and to other destinations, as required by the students' programs or school activities.

b. Area supervisor/assistant supervisor

This position oversees a wide variety of operational functions in a specified area or for specific schools.

c. Transportation specialist

This position is often a combination of several job functions. Duties may include dispatching, routing (computer or pin maps) and driver training.

2. Support

a. Dispatcher/Scheduler

This position is responsible for scheduling and coordinating the transportation of students to and from school and related school district-sponsored activities and for covering all bus routes by drivers daily. This position may also schedule other district vehicles for district employees and maintain required records. This position may also assure that radio and other communication transmissions are monitored and maintained while ensuring proper radio protocols per Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations.

b. Instructor/Trainer

Duties of this position include conducting training for potential new bus drivers and attendants, conducting training for veteran bus drivers and attendants and ensuring that training is completed according to federal, state and district requirements.

c. Routing specialist

Duties of this position include developing and maintaining safe, efficient and cost-effective bus stops and routes and assigning routes to bus drivers.

d. Administrative assistant, clerical

This position provides support to the transportation supervisor. Duties may include preparing department correspondence, answering phones, fielding questions and complaints, referring calls to appropriate staff, maintaining credentials, establishing and using filing systems, use of office equipment to include software, preparing payroll and providing support to the dispatcher/scheduler, instructor/trainer, routing specialist and to shop personnel.

e. Bookkeeper

This position provides accounting support for management and issues invoices for services, extracurricular bus trips and maintenance of other department vehicles. Duties may also include preparing purchase orders, authorizing and/or issuing related payment documents and budget reports and ensuring that all financial transactions are properly recorded, totaled, balanced and reconciled with budgeted amounts.

3. Operations

a. Bus driver

The bus driver operates school buses safely under all types of weather, traffic and road conditions, and transports students and other authorized persons on regular and special program routes to and from school and on field, extracurricular and other special activity trips, as authorized by school district officials.

b. Bus attendant (monitor or aide, driver assistant, assistant, para or paraprofessional)

The attendant teams with the driver to meet students' needs while en route, thus providing students a safe environment in the bus and allowing the driver to focus on operating the bus. Attendants assist students with special needs, or children enrolled in Head Start or other programs to provide passengers the safe ride to and from school, school activities or Head Start centers. Attendants complete specialized training in the duties and responsibilities of the position. Attendants may be placed at the discretion of the district where

behaviors are severe or otherwise where it is deemed necessary to help maintain a safe environment.

4. Vehicle maintenance

a. Vehicle maintenance supervisor, foreman, manager or lead technician

Duties of this position include oversight of preventive maintenance, supervision of technician staff, service and repair of school buses and other district vehicles and equipment, as may be assigned, compile reports, utilize vehicle maintenance programs, participate in sound environmental practices, schedule and prioritize work.

b. Journey technician

Under the direction of the vehicle maintenance supervisor, the journey technician has primary responsibility for maintaining and repairing all school buses and other vehicles, as assigned.

c. Assistant technician

Under the supervision and direction of the vehicle maintenance supervisor, the assistant technician assists with all mechanical repair and preventive maintenance activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Driver Responsibilities

- A. Drivers should be familiar with and abide by all rules, policies and procedures affecting student transportation. They should be trained and display proficiency in the appropriate use of all equipment, tools, technologies and adaptive equipment in the bus.
- B. Drivers should recognize the importance of establishing rapport with parents, their supervisors, and school or Center administrators when working to ensure proper student management.
- C. Drivers should establish proper rapport with students.
- D. Drivers should instruct and demonstrate safe and appropriate behavior, consequences of improper behavior, general procedures, seat belt use and proper adjustment (when equipped), evacuation drills and safe travel practices. (See APPENDIX D.)
- E. Drivers should maintain order and safety and protect the rights of others in the school bus.

They should exercise good judgment and prudence in this pursuit, using appropriate verbal interventions. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Minimizing interior noise;
 2. Requiring an orderly entrance and exit;
 3. Eliminating movement or potential movement of objects;
 4. Requiring silence at railroad crossings; and
 5. Prohibiting transportation of unauthorized materials.
- F. Drivers should handle minor infractions with on-board consequences and discussions approved by the school district or Head Start agency.
- G. Drivers, in instances of serious or recurring misconduct, should follow school district or Head Start policies pertaining to the misconduct and should submit written reports on appropriate forms to administrators or other persons designated to deal with discipline problems. (See APPENDIX D.)
- H. Drivers should be aware that they represent the school system, Head Start agency and/or the bus company and should present a positive image in dress, language and manner while on duty.
- I. Drivers, including substitute or spare bus drivers, should be provided with and should be familiar with written instructions of the assigned route that would include any existing railroad crossings and any fixed route hazard(s).
- J. The school bus driver is the key to an effective daily inspection program. It is the driver's responsibility to make a planned and systematic inspection of the bus before each route and/or trip, or to assure that the inspection has been completed properly in a timely manner. A recommended procedure requires both stationary and operating inspections. The following inspection outline is not suggested as a model for use, but rather is included as a guide for transportation personnel to use in developing a systematic inspection procedure.
- Although this section identifies most items to be inspected, state commercial driver's licensing (CDL) requirements may include additional items. All items should be inspected in the method prescribed by CDL requirements and any other applicable regulations.
- K. Drivers shall be trained in, and shall abide by, confidentiality rules and regulations (FERPA, IDEA, HIPAA, etc.)

Note from the NCST Editing Committee: Please see Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) To Student Health Records document available at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2019-hipaa-ferpa-joint-guidance.pdf>.

1. Stationary inspection:

- a. Observe the bus for evidence of oil, fuel, coolant, grease or water leaks, vandalism or damage to the vehicle.
- b. Observe areas around the vehicle for hazards detrimental to vehicle movement.
- c. Be familiar with the under-hood inspection and conduct the under-hood inspection, if required to do so.

2. Walk-around inspection:

Before starting the inspection, place the transmission in neutral and set the parking brake (or fully depress the clutch pedal in manual transmission-equipped vehicles), start the engine and inspect the bus from top to bottom and end to end. Check these items:

- a. Tires (under inflated, flat, excessively worn or damaged, valve stems and caps);
- b. Wheels (loose or missing nuts, excessive corrosion, cracks or other damage and any sign of misalignment);
- c. Fluid leaks (evidence of wetness on inner wheels and tires);
- d. Windows (for dirt, stickers or other obstructions to vision and clean, if necessary);
- e. Mirrors (clean, properly **set in accordance with FMVSS 111** and tightly adjusted);
- f. Warning systems (clean, properly working running lamps, backup lamps, signals and signs, reflectors, turn signals, stop lamps and warning flashers);
- g. Exhaust system (sagging exhaust pipes, short and leaky tailpipes and defective mufflers);
- h. Emergency exit seals (to prevent possible entrance of dangerous carbon monoxide fumes), hinges and warning buzzer; and

- i. Body for sharp edges, missing or damaged panels, loose rub rails and bumper securement.
3. Inside safety check
- a. Passenger compartment, seats, frames, emergency exits and windows must be carefully checked.
 - b. Inspect instruments and controls. With the engine operating, check the following:
 - I Vacuum or air pressure gauge or hydraulic indicator lamps, which should indicate adequate capacity to operate brakes. Loss of air or hydraulic pressure or vacuum indicates a braking deficiency that must be corrected immediately. For buses equipped with electric hydraulic brakes, the driver shall depress the brake pedal with the engine off to check the operation of the backup system.
 - II The oil pressure gauge, indicating adequate pressure. The engine should be turned off in the event of inadequate pressure and reported immediately.
 - III Warning lamps:
 - i. Prolonged oil pressure warning lamp, display is a signal of oil pressure problems, and the defect should be reported immediately.
 - ii. Service brake warning lamp displayed during brake application indicates that the brake system is not operating properly.
 - iii. Alternator/generator warning lamp displaying a continuous light "on" after the engine is running indicates a malfunction in the charging system.
 - iv. Ammeter and/or voltmeter indicating any continuous discharge should be reported immediately.
 - v. Water temperature gauge should always indicate "cool" or "warm." If it indicates "hot," the engine should be stopped immediately. The same action should be taken if the temperature warning lamp goes on.

- vi. Anti-lock brake system warning lamp being “on” indicates that the brakes are still functional but the anti-lock system is not.

- 4. Check each of the following items for proper operation, adjustments or condition:
 - a. Lamps and signals: turn signals, stop lamps, special warning lamps, emergency flashers, clearance (marker) lamps, headlamps, interior lamps and stop arm lamps;
 - b. Stop arm control;
 - c. Windshield fan, defrosters and heaters;
 - d. Horns;
 - e. Entrance (service) door and control;
 - f. Mirrors: rear view, side view, convex and elliptical;
 - g. Three emergency triangles;
 - h. Seat(s) and passenger restraint system (if equipped);
 - i. Fire extinguisher*;
 - j. First aid kit*;
 - k. Body fluid cleanup kit;
 - l. Webbing cutter*;
 - m. Wipers/washers;
 - n. Sanders (when equipped);
 - o. Power lift (when equipped);
 - p. Spare electrical fuses (if required);
 - q. Adaptive equipment devices;
 - r. Crossing control arm (if equipped); and
 - s. Post-trip inspections (student check alarm if equipped).

*(with required signage for Head Start vehicles)

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents, guardians and persons acting in *loco parentis* should:

- A. Understand and support district or Head Start Center rules and policies, regulations and principles of school bus safety;
- B. Assist children in understanding safety rules and encourage them to comply;
- C. Recognize their own responsibilities for the actions of their children. Understanding this, parents or guardians shall be responsible and accountable for the conduct and safety of their children at all times prior to the arrival and after the departure of the school bus at the assigned school bus stop;
- D. Support safe riding practices and reasonable discipline efforts;
- E. Teach children proper procedures for safely crossing the roadway before boarding and after leaving the bus, as described in APPENDIX D;
- F. Support procedures for emergency evacuation as prescribed by states and school districts and Head Start Centers;
- G. Respect the rights and privileges of others;
- H. Understand the dangers of loose clothing, drawstrings, clothing accessories, backpacks and other loose personal items and take appropriate action;
- I. Monitor bus stops, if possible;
- J. Support all efforts to improve school bus safety;
- K. Be aware of illegal or undesirable activities and other dangers involved in and around the loading and unloading zone; and
- L. Communicate observed safety concerns to appropriate school district representative.

Student Responsibilities

Proper student behavior is important because the distraction of the driver can contribute to crashes. Students and parents should be made aware of, and should abide by, reasonable regulations to enhance safety. The consequences of unacceptable behavior should be clearly understood. The following actions will help to protect the student's rights and to maintain order in the bus:

- A. Students should be aware that they are responsible for their actions and behavior.

- B. Students should receive a copy of the rules and procedures and should be required to comply.
- C. Students should display respect for the rights and comfort of others.
- D. Students should be taught to realize that school bus transportation can be denied if they do not conduct themselves properly.
- E. Students should be made aware that any time the bus driver is distracted, it is potentially hazardous to the safety of all passengers, the bus driver, other pedestrians and motorists.
- F. Students should be informed of the dangers of loose clothing, drawstrings, clothing accessories, backpacks and other loose personal items.
- G. Students should be made aware of the dangers involved walking to and from, in and around the loading and unloading zone. Students should be trained to cross the road safely at the bus stop and should be taught to avoid retrieving articles dropped in the danger zone of the bus during loading and unloading activities, or otherwise when they are in the area around the bus, without explicit directions from the driver. Students should also be taught to move away from the bus (out of the danger zones) after unloading. (Refer to APPENDIX D, "Here's How to Cross the Road SAFELY." These safety training diagrams show a 12-foot minimum walk distance in front of the bus.)
- H. To train students to understand, remember and practice the 12-foot minimum walk distance, one or more of the following instructional methods should be used:
 - 1. Mark the 12-foot walk distance on the ground and have each student, in normal or giant steps, walk off the distance and count the steps. The student's total steps shall be recorded and the student should be informed and repeatedly reminded of this total number of steps required for the walk distance.
 - 2. Have each student practice walking ahead of the bus on the right shoulder of the road until the student can clearly see the bus driver's eyes. (Refer to APPENDIX D, "Here's How to Cross the Road SAFELY.")

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

- A. Policies and Guidelines:

The responsible state agency and the local school district or Head Start agency should have clear and concise policies and guidelines for the operation of their student transportation programs. These are important for two reasons: (1) they have the effect of law when laws or regulations do not specifically address a situation; (2) they serve as the rule book for use by persons charged with the administration of transportation services within the district or qualified agency.

Once established, these policies and guidelines become the basis for development of operating procedures, thus allowing decisions about operational details to be made at the administrative level rather than by the school board. These policies and guidelines should be precise and in writing and should include the following topics:

1. A statement of philosophy;
2. A definition of the agency's goals and objectives;
3. Procedures for determining eligibility for transportation;
4. A description of all types of transportation provided;
5. The days on which service will be available;
6. School starting and closing times;
7. Administrative responsibilities related to program service;
8. Essential routing constraints, such as walking distances and age/grade of students for whom the appropriate agency will provide transportation;
9. The extent of special transportation services;
10. A compilation of student rules and regulations;
11. Provisions and guidelines for the use of contracted transportation and/or charter buses;
12. Provisions and guidelines for the emergency use of personal vehicles to transport students;
13. Acceptable purchasing procedures;
14. Required minimum limits of insurance coverage;
15. The essentials of a crash prevention program, including the uniform school bus crash reporting criteria;
16. A system to communicate procedures between administrators and parents, and between administrators and the bus company or drivers, including student discipline procedures and compliance;
17. A procedure for providing drivers and bus attendants with essential information about students they transport;

18. Emergency procedures and/or contingency plans to be followed in the event of a crash, unexpected school closing or unforeseen route change;
19. Use of special lighting and signaling equipment, as indicated below:
 - a. If the bus is so equipped, use of alternately flashing amber lamps to warn motorists that the bus is preparing to stop to take on or discharge passengers;
 - b. Use of alternately flashing red lamps to inform motorists that the bus is stopped on the roadway to take on or discharge passengers;
 - c. Operating the stop arm(s) in conjunction with the flashing red signal lamps;
 - d. Use of a white flashing strobe lamp (if equipped) to increase the visibility of the school bus on the roadway during adverse visibility conditions;
 - e. Use of a crossing control arm, when installed, to encourage children to cross properly in front of school buses; and
 - f. Use of an outside public address system for instructing children in crossing roadways and for informing them of potentially life-threatening situations.
20. Personnel information, such as the following items:
 - a. An organization chart identifying the flow of responsibility from the board of education or Head Start agency to the employees;
 - b. Job specifications and descriptions (provided at the time of employment); and
 - c. Identification of pre-employment and continued employment requirements and procedures.
21. Harassment policies and reporting procedures with specific requirements as listed below:
 - a. School districts shall develop written policies and procedures dealing with all forms of harassment in the school bus. (*Harassment* is “the use or tolerance of verbal or physical behavior, which serves to threaten, demean, annoy or torment another person.” Harassment includes unwanted activities or comments based on race, religion, gender, sexual preference, personal attributes and other acts, as may be determined in local policy.)
 - b. School districts shall develop training programs to assist all employees in recognizing harassment and in identifying appropriate interventions and reporting strategies.

- c. School district policies and procedures shall also address assisting and follow-up with the victims of harassment.
- d. The service provider shall ensure that school district policies and procedures are implemented.
- e. School districts shall develop and implement guidelines for administering appropriate disciplinary actions resulting from acts of harassment.

- 22. Weapons; and
- 23. Drugs and alcohol.

B. Driver's and Attendant's Manual/Handbook

Each employer should provide a manual or handbook to each school bus driver and attendant at the time of employment. This manual should include the following subjects:

- 1. Applicable federal and state transportation laws, regulations and policies;
- 2. Motor vehicle rules and regulations applicable to school bus operation;
- 3. Vehicle operation and maintenance, including inspections;
- 4. Pre-trip and post-trip inspection procedures (including equipment required for transporting passengers), securing the vehicle and checking for passengers and property at the end of each run, as well as any state or locally required documentation;

***Note:** Drivers are responsible for conducting a walk-through inspection of the school bus following drop-offs at each school and after the last delivery on each run segment. Prior to departing the bus for any length of time, a walkthrough inspection must be conducted. The purpose of the walk-through inspection is to check on and under the seats for sleeping or hiding students and to identify any items that may have been dropped or left aboard the bus. Warning flag systems and/or electronic means may be used. Written policies and procedures should be in place for post-trip and post-run segment checks.*

- 5. Procedures to follow when involved in a crash or safety-related incident, when witnessing a crash and when involved with post-crash reporting;
- 6. Elements of basic first aid procedures with knowledge of universal precautions, plus any local practices and policies that may vary from, but should not conflict with, state requirements;

7. Elements of student management, including techniques for dealing with students with specific disabilities;
8. Local school district, Head Start and employer policies; and
9. Instructions on usage and proper adjustment procedures for seat belts, built-in or add-on child restraints, and any other devices used for student protection (when equipped). (See APPENDIX D.)

C. Seating and occupant restraints

1. School buses provide the safest form of student transportation. An integral part of providing “safe” transportation in a school bus is that the passengers must be properly seated. A person who is either standing or improperly seated in a school bus is not afforded the benefits of the safety protection designed into the vehicle and is in increased jeopardy of injury in the event of a crash or sudden driving maneuver.

Additionally, there must be sufficient space on the school bus seat for each passenger’s body to be completely contained within the seat compartment. In the event of a crash or sudden driving maneuver, students who are not properly seated within the seat compartment may not benefit from the passenger crash protection systems built into the school bus under federal and state regulations.

In practice, school buses transport students of various sizes, typically from preschoolers to 12th graders. While a 39-inch seat may safely accommodate three preschoolers and/or primary school-age children, it may not safely accommodate the same number of older children. Since the size of growing children varies, the number of students that can safely occupy a school bus seat also changes. Consequently, the “in use” capacity of a school bus varies depending on the size of the students transported. The use of a child safety seat or other child safety restraint for an infant, a toddler or other pre-kindergarten passenger or the use of special equipment, including mobility devices needed for a child with disabilities, may further impact the “in-use” capacity of a school bus.

It is important to consider the size of the passengers on each school bus route when determining the “in-use” capacity of a school bus. It is recognized that at certain times (for example at the beginning of a school year), it may not be possible to know exactly how many students will arrive at school bus stops on a route. For that reason, there may be instances when overcrowding exists temporarily on some school buses. In such situations, efforts should be made to provide safe seating to all school bus passengers in a timely and efficient manner, so that during regular operations all passengers are safely seated.

Note: *Specific state laws or local regulations may prohibit overloading a bus, even in temporary situations.*

Highway Safety Program Guideline No.17, *Pupil Transportation Safety*, as issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and printed in APPENDIX D, includes the following statements with respect to passenger seating:

- a. "Standing while school buses and school-charter buses are in motion should not be permitted. Routing and seating plans should be coordinated so as to eliminate passengers standing when a school bus or school-charter bus is in motion" [IV.C.2.e.(1)].
 - b. "...Due to variations in sizes of children of different ages, states and school districts should exercise judgment in deciding how many students are actually transported in a school bus or school-charter bus" [IV.C.2.e.(2)].
 - c. "There should be no auxiliary seating accommodations, such as temporary or folding jump seats in school buses" [IV.C.2.e.(3)].
2. All children riding in school buses or other buses used to transport students to and from school, Head Start or related activities shall be properly and safely seated facing forward, unless otherwise required by a child safety restraint system (CSRS). There shall be adequate space on the seat for the child to be seated completely within the seating compartment.

The growing number of pre-school-age children who are transported in school buses has increasingly focused attention on the safety of these passengers. In response to questions and concerns raised by parents and by transporters, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducted crash tests involving pre-school child-size dummies on school bus seats.

According to NHTSA, "...the test results showed that pre-school age children in school buses are safest when transported in child safety restraint systems (CSRSs) that meets [sic] FMVSS 213, Child Restraint Systems, and are correctly attached to the seats." This quotation, contained in the "Introduction" of NHTSA's *Guideline for the Safe Transportation of Pre-School Age Children in School Buses* (February 1999), summarizes the basis for the document's recommendations, which have drawn industry-wide attention and have initiated intense discussions with respect to practicability. (See entire document in APPENDIX F.)

The publication defines a child safety restraint system (CSRS) as "...any device (except a passenger system lap seat belt or lap/shoulder seat belt), designed for use in a motor vehicle to restrain, seat or position a child who weighs less than fifty pounds."

CSRSs include infant seats, convertible seats, forward-facing-only seats, booster seats with built-in harness, integrated seats and safety vests.

NHTSA's "Guideline..." was a primary source for requirements for Head Start transportation services contained in 45 CFR 1310, disseminated in the *Federal Register* on January 18, 2001. Among many other requirements, §1310 specified, mandatory use of CSRSs in vehicles that transport children to and from Head Start programs and related activities, and the regulation set deadlines for compliance. [A subsequent interim rule, published in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 69, No. 11) on January 16, 2004, extended the deadline for compliance and included provisions for further justified and approved extensions.]

Due to the evolutionary nature of the entire issue of CSRSs—product design and construction, appropriate usage, varied state laws and regulations, applicability (recommendation versus regulation), implementation deadlines, etc.—the OPERATIONS section of the *NCST Specifications and Procedures* does not contain specific details regarding applicability, selection, use, maintenance and replacement of CSRSs. More detailed information may be found elsewhere in this publication: BUS BODY SPECIFICATIONS—Seat and Restraining Barriers; SPECIALLY EQUIPPED SCHOOL BUS SPECIFICATIONS— Restraining Devices; GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN—Equipment, Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS), Bus Seat Designated for a Child Safety Restraint System and Special Considerations; and APPENDIX F.

Additional information and guidance are available in *Proper Use of Child Safety Restraint Systems, Choosing the Correct School Bus for Transporting Pre-School Age Children* and other NHTSA publications (www.nhtsa.dot.gov), in *Safe Ride News* (www.saferidenews.com), from local NHTSA-trained Child Safety Seat Technicians and from local physical therapists.

Transporters of pre-school age and older children in vehicles that use CSRSs minimally should adhere to the following recommendations:

- a. Establish written policies and procedures for:
 - I Procurement, maintenance, cleaning and replacement of CSRSs;
 - II Registration and tracking equipment recall notices;
 - III Inspection;
 - IV Installation and usage training;
 - V Occupancy of non-restrained passengers on seats behind restrained

passengers;

VI Locations of restrained passengers with respect to emergency exits;

VII Retrofitting school buses with CSRSs; and

VIII Emergency procedures.

- b. Ensure adequate training of personnel in the installation, use, care and upkeep of CSRSs.
- c. Assure age-, height- and weight-appropriate applications of CSRSs.
- d. Require periodic passenger evacuation drills.
- e. Establish records files for all CSRSs, to include a complete history of each restraint device.
- f. Incorporate CSRS usage and proper seat spacing in school bus specifications.
- g. Monitor developments and changes at the state and federal levels with respect to CSRSs.
- h. Transporters of pre-school age and older children in vehicles that use seat belt systems minimally should adhere to the following recommendations:
 - I Establish written policies and procedures for:
 - i. Procurement, maintenance, cleaning and inspection of seat belt systems;
 - ii. Usage training (See APPENDIX D.);
 - iii. Retrofitting school buses with seat belt systems; and
 - iv. Emergency procedures.
 - II Develop training and procedures for personnel in the use, care and upkeep of seat belt systems, and the use of seat belt cutters.
 - III Require periodic passenger evacuation drills.

D. Student Management

An effective student management program is a collaborative effort involving many groups of

people in the school community or Head Start agency. Parents, students, school bus drivers, school or Head Start administrators, contract managers (where contract transportation is provided), law enforcement and social service agencies must be part of the ongoing process to motivate students to good behavior. It is the responsibility of the school district or Head Start agency to ensure that a comprehensive student management program is developed, so that all persons involved in the process are familiar with their responsibilities.

Seating Charts: The use of a seating chart that is enforced and continuously updated is an accepted practice and is recommended as a tool for student management and safety. The seating chart, in addition to maintaining accurate student lists/rosters or manifests, should be considered an operational “best practice.”

1. School, School District, Head Start and/or Carrier Responsibilities

No public or private school, school district, county board of education, county superintendent of schools or any officer or employee of the school or board of education or Head Start Center shall be responsible or in any way liable for the conduct or safety of any student of the school or Head Start Center at any time when the student is not on school or Head Start Center property, unless the school, school board, Head Start agency or person has undertaken to provide transportation for the student to and from the school or Head Start premises, has undertaken a school- or Head Start-sponsored activity off the premises of the school or Head Start Center, has otherwise specifically assumed the responsibility or liability or has failed to exercise reasonable care under the circumstances.

In the event of the specific undertaking, the school, school district, board of education, Head Start agency or person shall be liable or responsible for the conduct or safety of any student only while the student is, or should be, under the immediate and direct supervision of an employee of the school, school district, board of education or Head Start agency.

In addition, no entity that provides transportation services for students, pursuant to a contract with a school, school district, city or county board of education, county superintendent of schools or Head Start agency, shall be responsible or in any way liable for the conduct or safety of any student of the public or private school or Head Start agency at any time when the student is not under the immediate and direct supervision of an employee of the entity.

Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Establish policies and procedures by which the program functions. These should include, but not be limited to, the examples listed in APPENDIX D.

- b. Establish regulations governing the behavior and safety of students at the bus stop and while boarding, riding and disembarking from the school bus. The rules students are expected to follow should be limited in number, should be age-appropriate and should be posted in the bus and/or otherwise made available to all riders. (See APPENDIX D.)
- c. Institute and administer an instructional program that teaches students proper conduct and transportation safety procedures. (See APPENDIX D.)
- d. Conduct a training program for school bus drivers and attendants to ensure that all policies, procedures, regulations and their enforcement are understood.
- e. Ensure that parents receive written copies of the bus rules and regulations. Ensure that parents are informed about their responsibilities for the supervision and safety of students going to and from bus stops and while at the bus stops. (See APPENDIX D.) Clearly establish parents' roles and obligations with respect to student promptness, attitude and behavior.
- f. Initiate procedures to ensure open lines of communication and cooperation among school and Head Start administrators, bus company officials, state agencies, bus drivers and attendants.
- g. Train drivers and attendants in specific skills that will enable them to maintain order, safety and respect for the rights of others. These skills should include at least the following:
 - I Specific verbal intervention techniques used to maintain order and safety; and
 - II Communication skills that promote rapport and mutual respect and that encourage student compliance.
- h. Ensure that administrators support and enforce disciplinary procedures, policies and reasonable actions by the driver.

E. Use of video/audio monitoring systems

School systems and Head Start agencies should promulgate, communicate and enforce policies and procedures to be followed when using on-board video/audio monitoring systems. Video/audio monitoring in a school bus should be used only as an aid to monitor student and driver behavior and should not replace the discipline policy, the authority of the driver or the responsibility of school or Head Start officials. The basic safe riding rules must prevail, and the consequences of misconduct must be carried out.

1. All students and drivers shall be notified that they are subject to being video/ audio-recorded in the school bus at any time. Notification to parents of all students shall be made by the school district or Head Start agency. Prior to actual recording, parents and students shall be advised that student conduct prohibited by state and school district or Head Start student disciplinary code will result in appropriate consequences, as defined in policy.
2. Ongoing notification regarding video/audio recording must occur, addressing the continued need for personal awareness of safety issues. This communication is particularly important to warn against a false sense of security, especially when cameras are moved between buses. Newsletters, student handouts and notices posted in the bus should be considered.
3. If video/audio monitoring systems are to be used for monitoring drivers, the drivers must be notified as to the extent of their use and for what purposes they will be used.
4. When a camera rotational plan is used, cameras should be moved so as not to select only certain buses. However, the transportation supervisor and/or school or Head Start administrator may decide when video monitoring of a bus route should be done more frequently based on the number of incidents of misconduct or the seriousness of incident reports. Such additional monitoring is meant to supplement the written disciplinary reports by the bus driver, not to take the place of reports.
5. The transportation supervisor or designee may periodically review recordings as needed to ensure proper student conduct. If no incidents are reported within a period defined by local policy, the tapes will be recycled or the digital recordings deleted. If incidents are reported, or if incidents are viewed during random selection, the video tapes or digital recordings are to be kept until final resolution and time for any appeals.

Tapes or digital recordings must be dated and have the bus number and driver's name in order to ensure proper identification.

6. When action is taken as a result of information obtained from the videotape or digital recording, the driver, supervisor, school administrator, student, and parents or guardians will be contacted. A meeting of the aforementioned parties may be necessary to achieve a resolution of the problem. The videotape or digital recording may be used as evidence in that meeting if state law and school district or Head Start policy allows it. All requests for review shall be made in writing.
7. Each district or Head Start agency must designate by policy those persons who are allowed to review the tapes or digital recordings.

F. Records

1. Crash and safety incident investigation records function as the database for statistical analysis, which, in turn, provides material for crash prevention programs. In addition to the uniform school bus crash reporting criteria, additional crash safety incident investigation records may include the following information:
 - a. If injuries occurred, a list of all students injured, their home addresses phone numbers and dates of birth, the extent of their injuries and appropriate explanations;
 - b. A list of bus occupants and witnesses, including addresses, ages, phone numbers and statements;
 - c. Extent of damages and an estimate of repair costs;
 - d. Post-crash data [i.e., disposition of litigation and/or summonses, driver deposition, net effect of personal injuries, remediation (if any), assigned in-service, etc.];
 - e. A signed statement from the bus driver and bus attendant or monitor (if applicable) concerning the particulars of the crash;
 - f. Complaints, challenges and disposition of hearings, etc.; and
 - g. A clear description of the circumstances regarding what happened:
 - I What, where, when, who, and related roadway, area, weather and hazardous conditions information;
 - II Related vehicle operating and mechanical information; and
 - III Related procedural and operating information for all vehicles and operators involved.
2. Personnel records should contain the information required and allowed under federal and state laws.
3. U.S. Department of Justice, Employment Eligibility Verification and I-9 Forms should be maintained in a separate file or binder.
4. Driver qualification records should contain at least the following items:
 - a. An application for employment;

- b. Confirmed work history;
 - c. Driving record;
 - d. Criminal record;
 - e. Physical examination, as required for the type of license and/or special school bus certificate held;
 - f. Copy of drug and alcohol testing information in compliance with current federal, state and company testing requirements; and
 - g. All other items as required by federal and state laws and rules.
5. Training records should contain, at a minimum, accurate information certifying attendance and satisfactory completion of all state- and company-required training. Details about each training activity, including date of instruction and instructor signature, should be documented and included. The following is a list of minimum training to be documented:
- a. Classroom Training
 - I Pre-service;
 - II In-service; and
 - III Post-crash or evaluation follow-up.
 - b. Behind-the-Wheel Training
 - I Written documentation of each activity;
 - II A written assessment tool showing satisfactory completion, with rating;
 - III Documentation of the type of equipment used, both vehicle and safety; and
 - IV A log of the number of hours of instruction and practice driving.
6. Route records should contain:
- a. Types of routes (urban, suburban, rural);
 - b. Route descriptions, including accurate route maps;

- c. Route miles;
- d. Information about the needs of special education students;
- e. Information pertaining to road conditions and hazards utilizing “Identification and Evaluation of School Bus Route and Hazard Marking Systems” developed by NASDPTS (as presented in APPENDIX D); and
- f. Scheduled pick-up and drop-off times at each bus stop.

7. Maintenance records should contain the following items:

- a. Line setting tickets;
- b. Work orders and repair records;
- c. Preventive maintenance records;
- d. Vehicle depreciation;
- e. Equipment specifications; and
- f. Inspection reports.

8. Cost records should contain data in the following categories:

- a. Vehicles;
- b. Labor for vehicle maintenance and repairs;
- c. Parts;
- d. Inventory;
- e. Administration; and
- f. Fuel, lube, coolant, etc.

G. Communication

- 1. Each bus shall have a two-way communication system capable of providing communication with the operation’s base, or at least local 911 operators where technologically feasible. All school buses that transport individuals with disabilities should be equipped with a two-way electronic voice communication system that can be used at any point on the vehicle’s route.

2. It is necessary to keep persons in charge of the system, bus companies, parents and students informed of all operational procedures. The school district or Head Start agency must ensure that the channels of communication are set up so that information can be disseminated quickly and effectively. The school district or Head Start agency must ensure that inquiries, requests, suggestions and recommendations are given prompt and appropriate attention and are handled efficiently. Some of the ways information can be disseminated and their purposes are listed below:
 - a. Bulletins: to explain the school district's or Head Start agency's transportation policy to school and Head Start administrators, teachers, bus companies, drivers, attendants, parents, students and others associated with the operation and to clarify new laws and safety policies so that all persons involved know what is expected of them;
 - b. Meetings: to provide an opportunity for those associated with the transportation program to share their views and to help build broad community support for safe transportation;
 - c. Public press: to inform parents of policy, route, stop and schedule changes, of the safety record of the operation and positive driver achievement records;
 - d. Conferences: to discuss solutions to disciplinary problems with drivers, attendants or monitors, disruptive students and their parents and to review policy decisions affecting drivers, contractors, students and school or Head Start administrators;
 - e. Letters: to inform parents of all school or Head Start and state regulations, new routes, etc. and to reply to more urgent inquiries regarding student transportation safety, policy and procedures;
 - f. Telephone calls: to provide quick contact between bus drivers and the school or Head Start Center or between parents and the school or Center in the event of urgent or emergency situations;
 - g. Radio, television or web page announcements: to inform the public of procedures the schools or Centers will follow in case of severe weather conditions or other natural phenomena, new policies, laws, etc.;
 - h. Formal hearings: to be used, as required, for student suspensions from transportation, route challenges, serious complaints against drivers, attendants or monitors, etc.; and
 - i. Wireless communication devices: to be used by drivers and attendants only for emergency or business-related communication. (Devices, and particularly

cell phones, should not be used for personal communication.)

H. Crash Reporting

Each state's generic traffic collision report for motor vehicle crashes should include at least the information contained in the "Sample Crash Reporting Form" in APPENDIX D.

I. Air Quality

The school transportation community is supportive of efforts to reduce emissions and improve air quality, particularly for the students served by school bus transportation. In fact, the school bus industry has been at the forefront of environmental improvements and is committed to a continuing involvement and leadership role in improving engine emissions.

An accelerated replacement of older buses with new school buses equipped with the latest emission controls and engine technologies would be ideal. Likewise, retrofitting newer school buses with the latest emission control technologies can help improve air quality, but at additional costs.

While the student transportation industry and other entities work to develop new and increased sources of funds, states and local districts can institute policies that will contribute to improvements in air quality, especially for children.

1. Idling control measures

a. States and local districts should develop programs to eliminate unnecessary engine idling...

I At school site loading and unloading zones; and

II At school bus stops, located out of traffic during extended wait times.

b. Consideration should be given to varying climatic conditions within the state or local district and to the individual needs of students with disabilities.

2. Driving in traffic

States and local districts should develop programs to inform school bus drivers of the effects of closely following other vehicles, particularly large commercial motor vehicles, including other school buses, since the exhaust emissions from those other large vehicles can contribute significantly to the air quality inside the school bus.

3. School bus utilization

4. School bus maintenance programs

States and local districts should continue to improve the inspection and maintenance programs that have been established, with a renewed attention to factors impacting emissions.

J. Using New Technologies and Products

1. Operators should explore the use of new technologies and products, whenever practicable, to improve the safety, effectiveness, accountability and efficiency of student transportation operations. While it may be considered a “best practice” to utilize the latest emerging technologies, a prudent administrator must recognize that there are core competencies inherent to school bus operations and bus driver responsibility. It is recommended that transporters acknowledge such technologies and find a balance between technology and operators’ knowledge.
2. Current technologies include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Computerized Functions
 - I Routing;
 - II Timekeeping;
 - III Activity trips;
 - IV Student tracking;
 - V Employee tracking;
 - VI Vehicle maintenance;
 - VII Training records;
 - VIII Pre-trip / post-trip inspection reports;
 - IX Reimbursements;
 - X Student management; and
 - XI Fleet maintenance, such as...
 - i. Automatic vehicle location;
 - ii. Global positioning systems (GPSs);
 - iii. Electronic pre-trip and post-trip inspections; and

- iv. Electronic fuel dispensers.

NOTE: Information regarding Mobile Data Device (MDD) mounting and operational specifications can be found in the SCHOOL BUS SPECIFICATIONS Section.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF BUS DRIVERS

- A. Procedures for selection of school bus drivers should include the following items:

Note: Driver applicants for Head Start positions **must** be informed in writing of all background checks and other requirements, as required in 45 CFR 1310. Items marked with an asterisk identify Head Start regulations.

1. An appropriate application form (See APPENDIX D.);
 2. Written criteria for accepting and rejecting applicants*;
 3. Written notification to all applicants that driving records checks, criminal records checks and drug/alcohol screening will be conducted*;
 4. A check of each applicant's driving record; (Checks of the National Driver Register and the CDL Information System of the appropriate state department of motor vehicles are considered essential* in the case of an individual who is applying for a position as a school bus driver.)
 5. A check through both state and national criminal identification agencies to determine if each applicant has a record of criminal convictions*;
 6. One or more personal interviews (which can be one of the most important of the selection procedures);
 7. Perform reference checks and background checks on all potential new bus drivers, to include interactions with children and/or any concerns working with children;
 8. Physical examinations and drug and alcohol testing administered in accordance with local, state and federal requirements; and
 9. A determination of educational attainment to demonstrate the applicant's ability to follow detailed, written instructions and to be able to record and report data accurately.
- B. Pre-service and In-service Training Programs

1. Prior to transporting students, bus drivers should be required to complete a state-approved pre-service training program that includes classroom and behind-the-wheel training to enable safe and efficient vehicle operation. While there are many possible and helpful topics for pre-employment and annual in-service training, the following are examples of essential topics:
 - a. The importance of Pre-trip and Post-trip Inspections;
 - b. School bus evacuations (for all eligible students);
 - c. School bus evacuations (for students with special needs);
 - d. Loading and unloading procedures;
 - e. Reduced-idling laws and policies (if applicable);
 - f. Cell Phone and Electronic Communication Device Restrictions in accordance with all regulations/laws and local policies;
 - g. Road rage;
 - h. Distracted driving;
 - i. Aggressive driving;
 - j. Blood borne pathogens/first aid;
 - k. Bullying on the school bus;
 - l. Sexual harassment prevention;
 - m. Drug and alcohol compliance/pre and post-accident testing, random testing and reasonable suspicion testing, in compliance with the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing act of 1991;
 - n. Emergency and disaster preparedness;
 - o. Confidential records;
 - p. Requirements for reporting inappropriate behavior of other adults including the bus attendant;
 - q. School bus held hostage;
 - r. Personal protective equipment (PPE);

- s. Child safety restraint systems (CSRSs);
- t. Student management; and
- u. Railroad crossings.

Note: *When occupant securement systems are used, follow manufacturer's guidelines for proper use and positioning. It is recommended that passengers receive instruction in proper usage. (See APPENDIX D.)*

- 2. Prior to transporting students with disabilities, the driver should receive appropriate training in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- 3. Drivers of Head Start passengers must fulfill pre-service and in-service training requirements, as specified in 45 CFR 1310.
- 4. Employers of school bus drivers are encouraged to provide ongoing education for bus drivers.

C. Behind-the-Wheel Instruction

Behind-the-wheel instruction should be given in the same type and size bus the driver will be operating. When a driver is expected to operate more than one size and type vehicle, instruction should be related to the specific handling characteristics of each. All instruction should include the following topics:

- 1. Familiarization with the bus and its equipment;
- 2. Procedures for performing pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections and procedures for properly reporting mechanical issues and concerns;

Note: *Post-trip inspections should include child-check procedures and proper bus securement following the route.*

- 3. Techniques for safe driving, including mirror use and adjustment, smooth starts and stops, shifting, turning, and backing;
- 4. Defensive driving skills;
- 5. Techniques for reference point driving;
- 6. Procedures for loading and unloading students at bus stops, including moving the bus only after all children are safely seated after loading and out of the danger zones, are at least 12 feet from the sides of the bus, are at least 12 feet from the rear of the bus and cross roadways at least 12 feet in front of the bus;

Note: When/if an escorted cross is used during the loading and unloading process, the “Escorted Cross” procedure as written in APPENDIX D may be used.

7. Procedures for railroad crossings, as recommended in APPENDIX D, and other specialized driving requirements for school bus operations;
8. Techniques to identify and avoid practices that result in driver-related vehicle abuse;
9. Procedures for en route emergencies, including driving emergencies, emergency evacuations, and use of emergency equipment, as described in APPENDIX D;
10. Guidelines for safely running a route, including entrance to and departure from the bus garage and yard, following a route sheet or map, use of global positioning systems (GPSs), entrance to and departure from school zones, appropriate use of wireless communication systems, mechanical difficulties and breakdown;
11. Procedures for fueling buses and handling/preventing fuel spills; and
12. Laws, policies and procedures specific to activity trips, including interstate transportation regulations.

D. Physical/Mental Preparedness

All school bus drivers should be prepared both physically and mentally each day to perform adequately the following duties:

1. Operating the vehicle in a safe and efficient manner;
2. Conducting thorough pre-trip and post-trip inspections of the vehicle and special equipment, including required documentation;
3. Ensuring the safety, welfare and orderly conduct of passengers while in the bus;
4. Handling emergency situations in accordance with generally accepted operating procedures;
5. Communicating effectively with school staff, students, parents, law enforcement officials and the motoring public;
6. Completing required reports;
7. Completing required training programs successfully;
8. Providing maximum safety for passengers during loading and unloading;

9. Wearing the driver's seat belt whenever the bus is in motion;
10. Checking at the end of the route and at the bus storage location to ensure that all students have disembarked from the bus; and
11. Maintain a clean and uncluttered bus with unobstructed views.

E. Evaluation

School bus drivers should be evaluated at regular intervals. These evaluations may include the following items:

1. Continuous on-the-road monitoring, otherwise known as field observation/ride-along evaluation, and road supervision (required for Head Start in 45 CFR 1310);
2. Written test;
3. Road performance checks;
4. Evaluation interviews;
5. Student management;
6. Adherence to procedures;
7. Teamwork; and
8. Local policies.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF BUS ATTENDANTS

- A. Procedures for selection of bus attendants should include the following items:
1. An appropriate application form (sample provided in APPENDIX D);
 2. Written criteria for accepting and rejecting applicants*;
 3. Written notification to all applicants that driving records checks, criminal records checks and drug/alcohol screening will be conducted*;
 4. A check of each applicant's driving record; (Checks of the National Driver Register and the CDL Information System of the appropriate state department of motor vehicles are considered essential* in the case of an individual who is applying for a position as a school bus driver.)
 5. A check through both state and national criminal identification agencies, to

determine if the applicant has a record of criminal convictions*;

6. Reference checks and background checks performed on all attendants to include interactions with children, and/or any concerns working with children;
7. Physical examinations and drug and alcohol testing administered in accordance with local, state and federal requirements;
8. One or more personal interviews (which can be one of the most important of the selection procedures); and
9. A determination of educational attainment to demonstrate the applicant's ability to follow detailed, written instructions and be able to record and report data accurately.

****Note:** Head Start attendant or monitor applicants **must** be informed in writing of all background checks and other requirements, as specified in 45 CFR 1310.*

B. Pre-service and In-service Training Program

1. Prior to transporting students, bus attendants should be required to complete a state-approved or Head Start-approved pre-service training program that includes classroom and in-the-bus training in order to enable safe, efficient and effective student transportation. Attendant training, with the exception of the driving components, should be the same as for the driver in every respect. Each attendant should be equally conversant in every other aspect of operations and student management. Training should include, but not be limited to, the following topics:
 - a. The bus and its equipment;
 - b. Use of emergency exits;
 - c. First aid;
 - d. Safe loading and unloading of students at their stops and securement of passengers, as may be required whether or not school buses are equipped with seat belts or other occupant restraints (See APPENDIX D.);
 - e. Student management training and policy training, including state and federal regulations related to the transportation of students with disabilities, consistent with those required for school bus drivers;
 - f. Safety, welfare and orderly conduct of passengers while in the bus;
 - g. Handling emergency situations in accordance with generally accepted operating procedures;

- h. Effective communications with school or Head Start staff, students, bus drivers, parents, law enforcement officials and the motoring public;
 - i. Completion of required written reports;
 - j. Requirements for reporting inappropriate behavior of other adults, including the bus driver;
 - k. Checking at the end of the route and at the bus storage location to ensure that all students have disembarked from the bus;
 - l. Confidentiality; and
 - m. Other topics included in the bus attendant's manual/handbook and local policies.
- 2. Employers of school bus drivers should provide ongoing education for bus attendants.
 - 3. Prior to transporting students with disabilities, the bus attendant should receive appropriate training in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
 - 4. Bus attendants (monitors) who assist with the transportation of Head Start passengers must fulfill pre-service and in-service training requirements as specified in 45 CFR 1310.
- C. In-the-Bus Training
 - 1. Familiarization with the bus and its equipment;
 - 2. Procedures for performing pre-trip and post-trip inspections; and
 - 3. Procedures for loading and unloading passengers, passenger securement and emergency evacuation, as may be required.
 - D. Physical/Mental Preparedness
 - E. Evaluation
 - F. Bus attendant, Special Education (See TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS section: driver/attendant.)

STAFFING AND TRAINING OF MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE PERSONNEL

- A. Staffing

Adequate staff should be employed to perform maintenance functions on a timely basis consistent with safe transportation practices.

B. In-service Training Program

1. The transportation system should make available to maintenance and service personnel the necessary maintenance and service publications for the equipment serviced.
2. The transportation system should arrange at regular intervals for pre-service and in-service training for maintenance and service personnel, and maintenance personnel should be required or encouraged to attend state-sponsored or other approved workshops or training institutes.
3. Training should include instruction in the following areas:
 - a. Preventive maintenance procedures;
 - b. Repair and/or installation procedures for each type of fleet vehicle and its varied equipment;
 - c. Procedures for specialized equipment and certifications, if applicable;
 - d. Inspection of the vehicle and its equipment;
 - e. Recovery procedures for vehicles involved in a crash or breakdown;
 - f. Preparation and retention of maintenance records;
 - g. Maintaining parts and equipment inventory;
 - h. Establishment of parts inventory control procedures;
 - i. Repair and installation of adaptive equipment;
 - j. Safety and environmental compliance; and
 - k. Proper usage and maintenance of shop equipment/shop cleanliness.
4. Vehicle maintenance and service personnel should be encouraged and given opportunities to receive certifications in all areas in which they perform work.

ROUTING AND SCHEDULING

It is necessary to procure a map of the area served by a particular school, school system or Head Start program in order to establish bus routes that will adequately meet the needs of student in a particular area.

Information on road conditions railroad crossings and other factors that might affect the particular operation should be recorded, along with the location of homes and the number of school-age children in each household. (See also *"Identification and Evaluation of School Bus Route and Hazard Marking Systems"* in APPENDIX D.) Satisfactory school bus stops must be identified along streets and highways where buses can travel with the least amount of risk to include right turns as much as possible. The number of students to be transported, individual needs and the distance to be traveled are primary factors in allocating equipment for a particular area. Students should be assigned to specific stops according to age and ability, appropriate walking distances, grade level, safe travel paths and the school or Head Start Center attended. Calculation of distance between stops shall comply with the minimum distance required to activate the amber and red lighting systems. Students should not travel farther to a stop than the set walk distances for their respective school/center as deemed by each school district. Additional planning may require multiple considerations to include space availability, chain of custody, etc.

- A. Bus routes reflect an infinite number of routing techniques, including the following examples:
 - 1. A circular route circumscribes an area by using different roads on out-going and in-coming trips. It has the advantage of equalizing time in transit for transported students, since the first child on in the morning is the first child off in the evening.
 - 2. A shoestring route extends from the school to some terminal point in the district. If the bus is stored at the school, the same road or roads may be used on the out-going and in-coming trips; consequently, children are always traveling more or less directly toward the school.
 - 3. A feeder route extends from a point farther out in the district to a transfer point on the main route. This method may be advisable for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. To limit the use of large buses to improved roads;
 - b. To reduce travel time on the main route; or
 - c. To provide some form of transportation on roads which at times may be impassable by larger, more desirable motor vehicles.
 - 4. A shuttle route extends between two or more school buildings. Such routes are often required for the transfer of students in districts operating two or more schools.
 - 5. Retracing routes requires the bus to travel over the same route in the same direction and may be used to eliminate the need for students to cross the roadway. It may also equalize time in transit for transported students, since the first child on in the morning is the first child off in the evening.
- B. Emergency routes should be established and utilized in all school systems when weather or

road conditions dictate that it is not safe to travel on other than hard-surfaced roads. Announcements can be made by radio or other means when emergency routings are to be used.

- C. Computer-assisted routing and scheduling, which require the use of a computerized database of student, streets and bus routes, is a key part of the routing operation. Where student records are computerized, downloading student names, addresses, school names and grades is a routine task. Most student information systems are compatible with routing, GPS and radio frequency identification (RFID) applications that provide bus routing information and rosters. The key is for transportation staff to have access to accurate data for the location of students to be used in establishing ridership eligibility and assigning bus stops.

Many routing systems, through a geographic information system (GIS) component, have optimization features that allow the system to create bus routes based on the locations of students. It is important to make sure that before implementation, transportation staff analyze any computer-generated routes, because they will almost certainly need some level of adjustment. Computer-assisted routing can help to generate a more efficient routing system than a completely manual process. A computer system can also be of use in providing information needed to stagger bell times in order to share buses among schools or Head Start Centers.

The same information that is needed for bus routing can be very useful in school district planning. The grades and locations of students displayed in a graphic format is invaluable to school administrators as school district lines are redrawn or new schools are opened. Accessing this information from a routing system also may provide a side benefit of involving the transportation staff in the planning process.

- D. Methods of serving bus routes

1. The “single-trip plan” involves a morning and an afternoon trip by one bus on each route. This form of service is well adapted to sparsely populated areas. It also meets the needs of schools where the instructional program requires both elementary and secondary students to arrive at the same time, or where time required for the route prohibits additional assignments.
2. The “double-trip plan” calls for each bus to cover two different routes in the morning and afternoon. This plan is suited to districts of relatively dense population where distances are not great. As children of all grades may be carried on each trip, program adjustments in the instructional schedule are necessary to avoid idle waiting time at the school. If these adjustments can be made without sacrificing the interests of the children, the double trip may be economical by requiring fewer buses.

3. The “multiple trip plan” or “dual-trip plan” calls for more than two trips each morning and afternoon by each bus. This arrangement is feasible only where route distances are relatively short or time differences between locations are great. High school students, for example, may be brought to school on the first morning trip, with elementary children arriving on the second trip. In the afternoon, the elementary children should be brought home first if it is desired that the elementary day be shorter than the high school day. Districts whose program requires a day of equal lengths for both groups may transport the high school students on the first trip in the morning and return them on the first trip in the afternoon.

E. Route and Stop Review and Planning

A periodic review should be conducted for the purpose of identifying factors that might indicate the need for a route change. After the review is completed, someone may drive over the route in the same equipment that will be used in the actual operation, or GPS systems can be used for verification and comparative data as well. A time study should be part of this review. The driver(s) who will operate the bus(es) over the route(s) should regard the trip as a dry run. All scheduled stops and times between stops should be indicated. This data, if accurately obtained, will permit the development of a schedule which probably will need little revision once it is placed into effect.

After the route has been established, a schedule showing individual stops and accompanying student roster should be provided for drivers (to include substitute drivers). Requests for new or additional service should be investigated thoroughly before a change is made. Stops should be established only after thorough investigation has revealed the location to be the most desirable in the area clear of hazards or dangerous situations. It is considered poor practice to negotiate a U-turn on main arteries of traffic even though provisions for such turns may have been made; to minimize turning across multiple lanes of traffic, right turns should be factored and utilized. The projection of the rear end of the bus into inside traffic lanes from medians that are too narrow to accommodate bus length often creates traffic interference that places the lives of transported students in jeopardy. Stops should always be located at a safe distance from the crest of a hill or curve to allow motorists traveling at the posted speed to stop within the sight distance.

Each state should establish a uniform set of procedures for drivers to signal students when it is safe to cross the roadway upon which the bus is stopped.

Additional precautions should include, but may not be limited to, the following:

1. Plan routes that will permit optimum and effective student safety, program efficiency and operational economy.
2. Specified criteria should be used when selecting stops. Criteria examples include, but

may not be limited to, the following:

- a. Visibility;
 - b. Safe waiting distance from roadway;
 - c. Proximity to intersection;
 - d. Adjacent property;
 - e. Line-of-sight distance to the stop by approaching traffic from any direction;
and
 - f. Ability to add signage and/or warning devices to alert oncoming traffic of a stop ahead.
3. On highways divided into separate roadways and highways with three or more marked traffic lanes, fleet operators, schools and Head Start Centers should design bus routes that service each side of the highway so students do not have to cross the highway unless there is a traffic control signal or an adult crossing guard within three hundred feet of the bus stop to assist students while crossing such multiple-lane highways. A bus shall never be routed such that students are required to cross lanes of traffic in which vehicles are not required by law to stop for a school bus displaying red lamps and stop signs.
 4. Determine the location, ridership and destination of all students to be transported.
 5. For every route, drivers shall be provided with a route sheet or manifest, with stops sequenced by, or under the direction of, the transportation director, and containing the following elements:
 - a. The names and addresses of all students in buses;
 - b. The location or written description of each (where an intersection is involved, the compass orientation of the stop location within the intersection) and an optional map for orientation purposes (i.e., 1st Ave at S Main St / SE corner);
 - c. Scheduled times for each pick-up and drop-off point, which should be provided (scheduled time should be reflected and relayed to student/parent(s); if “time” is arrival or departure);
 - d. Blank lines adjacent to the scheduled arrival time in which the driver may notate his/her **actual** arrival time;
 - e. The routine crossing status (i.e., “cross” or “no-cross”) of each stop for

- students on the route;
 - f. The school of attendance (or destination) of each student;
 - g. Shuttle or transfer information for students if applicable;
 - h. Identification of students with health care plans to include dormant medical problems that may require specific actions in the event the problem becomes active; and
 - i. An updated hard copy of the route sheet or manifest should be kept in transportation and attendance offices.
6. Every school, school district, Head Start or other agency should develop age-appropriate training for children who ride buses or other passenger vehicles to and from attendance centers and on activity trips. Instruction should begin as soon after the beginning of the school year or program year as practicable and should be reinforced as often as necessary to assure optimum understanding by the respective passengers.

Instruction should include, but may not be limited to, the following topics:

- a. Travel to and from bus stops;
 - b. Roadway crossings;
 - c. Loading and unloading procedures;
 - d. Behavior at bus stops;
 - e. Behavior on board vehicles; and
 - f. Use of applicable passenger restraints and other safety items identified by transportation safety experts.
7. Provide parents or guardians of all students with the driver's name, bus number, pick-up and return times, school closing information, school calendar, procedures to challenge routing decisions, etc.
8. Determine the advisability of utilizing computer-assisted route scheduling.

MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT

- A. Teamwork and written policies are essential to a well-organized maintenance program.

1. Comprehensive school bus maintenance policies and appropriate training that provide efficient guidelines for the transportation supervisor, maintenance personnel, and operators of the vehicles should be adopted.
 2. Such policies should include the maintenance responsibilities of each person involved and should provide for a planned preventive maintenance program.
- B. Preventive maintenance is a carefully organized system of inspections at regular mileage or time intervals combined with the immediate attention to all reported defects.
1. Manufacturer's service manuals and warranty protection guidelines, as well as state inspection guidelines, contain valuable information for successful preventive maintenance programs. These instructions and procedures should be followed carefully for maximum efficiency and safety in fleet operation. Vehicle and component manufacturers (transmission, electrical, occupant restraints, etc.) offer training for fleet technicians. Those interested in efficient operation will take advantage of these training programs.
 2. Objectives of a planned maintenance program:
 - a. Keeping the vehicles in safe and efficient operating condition;
 - b. Preventing failures;
 - c. Conserving fuel;
 - d. Lowering maintenance costs by reducing the need for unplanned or emergency major repairs or overhaul;
 - e. Extending the useful life of the vehicle and its components, as referenced in D, below; and
 - f. Enhancing vehicle appearance.
- C. School districts or private contractors should develop a system whereby written communication would allow interchange and feedback relative to maintenance work needed and maintenance work completed. An efficient system should include:
1. Driver's report form to initiate needed maintenance;
 2. Technician's certification of completed work;
 3. A method for permanently recording repairs and the maintenance history of each vehicle and special equipment; and

4. Inspection by the appropriate state agency or its designee.
- D. Life-Cycle Analysis

It is prudent for a school transportation director, contractor and/or vehicle maintenance manager to be aware of the on-going efficiencies associated with vehicle replacement. While it may not always be possible to purchase new vehicles, analyzing the intended life-cycle and developing purchasing specifications consistent with anticipated use is recommended.

EMERGENCY AND RESCUE PROCEDURES

Emergency and Rescue Procedures: A Guideline Manual for School Bus Involvement was developed by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services and disseminated to each state director of transportation for reproduction in the respective states. Distribution of the manual was intended for police, fire and ambulance personnel, emergency medical technicians and any other entity designated to respond to a school bus crash, emergency or disaster. (Head Start agencies may contact their respective state directors of transportation for copies.)

This manual is a reference to be used by school systems (and can be used by Head Start agencies) in developing their own specific emergency plans. Copies of the school system's (or Head Start agency's) plan should be carried in each bus. This plan should be developed in cooperation with the personnel in those agencies that will render service during emergencies. The school or Head Start transportation director, school and Center administrators, teachers, drivers, attendants, maintenance and service personnel, students and others should be instructed in the procedures to be followed in the event of the following situations:

- A. Crashes
1. When and how to evacuate and control students;
 2. How to evaluate the need for medical assistance;
 3. How to get help from the police, the fire department and the garage;
 4. How to collect and record data essential to the preparation of the required crash reports and an operational plan to provide two-way communication with parents and/or guardians which is imperative; and
 5. How to prevent further crashes; and
 6. Talking points regarding protocol of dissemination of information while at the crash site (including communication with the media, etc.).

B. Sudden disability of the driver

Procedures for handling situations resulting in the fatal injury or disability of the bus driver should be established and communicated to appropriate persons. A list that includes the name of the bus operator, emergency telephone numbers, names of students assigned to the bus and any special needs of students should be in the bus.

C. Bus breakdown

The emergency plan should cover procedures for the following events:

1. Securing the bus;
2. Maintaining control of passengers and accounting for passengers (head count);
3. Diagnosing the cause(s) of bus breakdowns and communicating with base and vehicle maintenance;
4. Notifying school, administration, parents, communications, PIO (Public Information Office) or Head Start officials;
5. Recovering disabled school bus(es); and
6. Providing replacement transportation for passengers.

D. Inclement weather conditions

The emergency plan should provide procedures for actions to be taken in the following events:

1. When schools or Head Start Centers are to be closed, delayed or require early dismissal;
2. Who is to make such decisions;
3. How decisions are to be relayed to parents, students, school or Head Start officials and staff (including teachers and cafeteria managers), drivers, contractors, maintenance and service personnel, the news media and others; and
4. How to react to such natural phenomena as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.

E. Other types of emergency situations

The emergency plan should include communication norms, data collection and stress

reduction and should cover such conditions and events as the following:

1. Defense/disaster drills;
2. Strikes or other job action by school staff, teachers, drivers or contractors;
3. Road or bridge washouts and landslides that might block school bus routes;
4. Bus hijacking;
5. Weapons or suspected explosives on board or at bus stops;
6. Unauthorized boarding;
7. Student health emergencies;
8. Student fights;
9. Suspicious person and/or vehicles; and
10. Terrorist-related planning or incident.

EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

- A. Each school district or Head Start agency should have a plan for evaluating its student transportation program. Such evaluations should enable school districts or Head Start agencies to:
 1. Verify compliance with rules, regulations and laws;
 2. Audit the efficiency of program service;
 3. Monitor operational economy;
 4. Ensure the safety of the program in operation;
 5. Improve the quality of service; and
 6. Verify student knowledge of school bus rules and procedures.
- B. Major types of evaluations include the following:
 1. Informal reviews by district personnel;
 2. Formal evaluations by:

- a. A private consultant;
 - b. A state agency; or
 - c. PRISM (Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring of Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees).
 3. Periodic evaluations:
 - a. Monthly;
 - b. Annually; and
 - c. Biennially.
- C. Areas subject to evaluation include:
1. Board of Education or Head Start policies;
 2. Routing procedures and processes for route hazard analysis;
 3. Types of service provided;
 4. Financial obligations;
 5. Quality of service;
 6. Training of staff and students;
 7. Maintenance of buses, other vehicles and equipment;
 8. Record keeping systems; and
 9. Other areas as determined by state and local policy.
- D. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—Measuring Success

Key performance indicators are used as a best practice to measure performance, goals, efficiency and productivity. Standard measures and metrics can be molded to fit many different sized transportation operations.

Examples of performance indicators that can easily help a department focus on success include the following:

1. Cost per student transported;

2. Percentage of students receiving transportation;
3. Number of individual routes per bus per day;
4. Number of student riders per bus;
5. Cost per bus per year to operate;
6. Percent of the district's budget spent on transportation;
7. Number of drivers employed versus the number of active buses;
8. Percentage of bus stops made at individual homes versus group stops;
9. Age of the bus fleet;
10. Crash frequency, costs, and injuries;
11. Ratio of buses per mechanic;
12. Average student ride time;
13. Seat utilization/passenger capacity; and
14. Time on road vs. number of routes.

SCHOOL SITE SELECTION AND FACILITY PLANNING

When school or Head Start sites are being selected, consideration should be given to the safety of the students riding school buses. School buses will be required to utilize the roads in and around the school site, plus public roadways leading into and away from the school area. High-density traffic flow near exits and entrances should be avoided. Proper site selection, ingress and egress and facility planning for improved transportation are extremely important. (See APPENDIX D.) More specifically, school officials should provide the following items:

- A. Separate and adequate space for school bus loading zones;
- B. Clearly marked and controlled walkways through school bus loading/unloading zones;
- C. Traffic flow and parking patterns for the public and non-bused students separate from the school bus loading zone;
- D. A designated loading area for passengers with special needs, if required;
- E. An organized schedule of loading areas with stops clearly marked;

- F. A loading and unloading site to eliminate the backing of transportation equipment;
- G. Written procedures for evaluating each school site plan annually; and
- H. Appropriate signage.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)

A. Overview

In January 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). The act makes substantial new requirements for state and local education agencies (LEAs; or “school districts”) in order to continue to receive Federal money for education. The act also provides additional rights for students and parents. Information on how the ESEA relates to pupil transportation and descriptions of transportation choice options and requirements for school districts follows.

B. Attendance choice options

1. Low performing

If a school receiving Title I, Part A funds is identified as “low performing” for two consecutive years, parents have the option of enrolling their students in another public school that has not been identified as *low performing*. There are many rules and regulations controlling this process, including the determination of which school the parent can select as the alternate school. The Act does not provide for unlimited choice, however. For instance, if the “low performing” school is the sole elementary school in a school district, there is no obligation to provide an alternate school choice. If a school continues not to show “adequate yearly progress” (as defined in the NCLB), students continue to have a right to transportation to a choice school.

2. Persistently dangerous

If a school receiving Title I, Part A funds is identified as “persistently dangerous,” students have the right to be offered other optional public school enrollment opportunities. (A discussion of the process leading to the “persistently dangerous” designation is beyond the scope of this material.) Once a school is designated as “persistently dangerous,” parents are afforded rights to school choice for their students at that school.

3. Violent Students

Students involved in violent incidents have a right to attend another public school. All of these situations require LEAs to provide students and parents the option of enrolling in an appropriate alternate public school, i.e., *school choice*.

C. School categories for choice

An LEA must offer all students in identified Title I schools the opportunity to transfer to another public school when those schools fall within one of the four stages of improvement detailed in the ESEA. Those stages are based upon the number of years in which a school has failed to make adequate yearly progress. Schools in the following categories must offer public school choice to their students:

1. Schools that are in their first year of school improvement;
2. Schools that are in their second year of school improvement;
3. Schools that are in corrective action; or
4. Schools that are in restructuring.

D. Transportation

1. When required

If a parent has the choice option to select an alternate public school because the student's school is identified as, "low performing," or "persistently dangerous," or the student was involved in a violent incident, transportation to the alternate public school must be provided by the school district. There is no requirement for a particular mode of transportation, however. For instance, if there is a local transit system with an appropriate schedule, providing a transit pass would meet the requirement for provision of transportation service. If a school building is not receiving Title I, Part A funds, choice transportation is not required to be provided.

2. Length of transportation service

If an eligible student exercises the option to transfer to another public school, a local LEA must permit the student to remain in that school until he or she has completed the highest grade in the school. However, the LEA is no longer obligated to provide transportation for the student after the end of the school year in which the student's school of origin is no longer identified for school improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

3. Out-of-district transportation

The ESEA does not require that transportation be provided to schools outside the LEA. For example, if a school district has only one elementary school, and that school has been identified as low performing for two consecutive years, the school district is not required to provide enrollment opportunities and transportation to schools in other school districts. (In the case of homeless students, however, transportation is required across district boundaries to the original school of enrollment.)

4. Payment for choice-related transportation

Unless a lesser amount is needed to meet demand for choice-related transportation and, if applicable, to satisfy all requests for supplemental services, an LEA must spend up to an amount equal to 20% of its Title I, Part A allocation, before any reservations, on the following items:

- a. Choice-related transportation;
- b. Supplemental education services; or
- c. A combination of (a.) and (b.).

This flexible-funding approach means that the amount of funding that an LEA must devote to choice-related transportation depends in part on how much the LEA spends on supplemental education services. However, if the cost of satisfying all requests for supplemental education services exceeds an amount equal to five percent of an LEA's Title I, Part A allocation, the LEA may not spend less than five percent on those services. An LEA may, but is not required to, spend an amount exceeding 20% of its Title I, Part A allocation if additional funds are needed to meet all demands for choice-related transportation and supplemental education services. A school district could also spend state or local funds to assist in paying for transportation. (See D.7. below regarding *supplementing* and *supplanting*.)

5. Insufficient funds

If the funds available are insufficient to provide transportation to each student who requests a transfer, the LEA must give priority to the lowest achieving eligible students from low-income families. However, the LEA must still offer the opportunity to transfer to all students.

6. Optional fund sources

The statutory phrase *an amount equal to* means that the funds required to pay the costs of choice-related transportation and supplemental educational services need

not come from Title I allocations, but may be provided from other allowable federal, state, local, or private sources.

7. Title I funds and transportation funds

Like other Title I funds, transportation funds must be used only to supplement the level of funds that, in the absence of Title I funds, would be made available from non-federal sources for the education of children participating in Title I programs. For example, if a particular state provides funding for transportation, a local school district could not use Title I funds to supplant the state or local funds that it would otherwise use to provide for transportation, even though transportation costs are generally an allowable use of Title I funds. However, if the state funds were not adequate to cover the entire costs of the school choice-related transportation, Title I funds, within the statutory limits, could be appropriately used to cover the unfunded portion of the school choice related transportation.

8. Transportation Zones

LEAs have latitude in deciding which options to provide for eligible students. For example, they may establish transportation zones based on geographic location and may fully fund transportation to different schools within each respective zone. This option would allow the district to offer more than one choice school while ensuring that transportation can reasonably be provided or arranged. Outside the transportation zone, the district could pay for only part of the transportation to the school. Parents may select a school outside of a designated attendance zone, but they should be informed prior to making this decision that they may be responsible for providing or arranging transportation for their children. If transportation zones are developed, they should be drawn to provide genuine choice and to address only issues of geographical distance. LEAs should ensure that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the demand for choice within each zone.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

A. Overview

The following information describes how the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act relates to pupil transportation and describes transportation choices and requirements.

B. Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

If “homeless” eligibility is determined and placement in the student’s school of origin is determined to be in the best interest of the student, local education agencies (LEAs) may be required to provide transportation to and from the student’s schools of origin for students

experiencing homelessness, upon the request of the parent or guardian. For an unaccompanied youth, the request would originate with the LEA's homeless liaison.

C. Transportation for the homeless in relation to distance

There is an assumption of "reasonableness" with the transportation of the homeless student, unless attending the school of origin is against the student's best interest. Every LEA has a homeless liaison who should make the determination of whether or not the transportation of the student is in the student's best interest or not. *Reasonableness* should not be determined solely on the basis of cost. Air flights, extensive travel time, or other circumstances that result in extremely unusual travel demands may all result in appropriate denial of transportation to the school of origin. There is an appeal process that a parent can use when the parent disagrees with the decision of the school district.

D. Other considerations regarding homeless transportation

Providing sensitivity training to bus drivers and arranging bus stops to keep student's living situations confidential is important in being able to assist these students through this difficult time in their lives with as little disruption as possible. Developing close ties among school district homeless liaisons, school staff and pupil transportation staff will help make this process work smoothly.

E. School district responsibilities for transportation costs when a homeless student requires transportation across district boundaries

When a homeless student requires transportation to the school of origin and that school is outside the current school district, the two districts involved should collaborate to determine which district is going to assume responsibility for transportation and how the cost is to be shared. If there is no agreement between the two districts, the responsibility and cost for transportation shall be shared equally. Each district is required to pay half the cost.

F. Length of time that transportation must be provided after a homeless student has moved into permanent housing

Students can stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing.

G. Mode of transportation

There is no requirement that provided transportation be of any specific mode. (School buses are not necessarily required.) Transportation must be safe and appropriate for the individual student's situation and age. Modes may include school bus, transit passes, gas vouchers or reimbursement for parents or youths with cars, contracts with taxi companies (with driver background checks required) or contracts with Medicaid transportation brokers (with driver

background checks required).