



Updated March 15, 2021

Special Education Transportation Considerations

Overview of Special Education Transportation Considerations

These considerations for special education transportation supplement the [School Year 2020-2021 Reopening Transportation Guidance](#), updated February 11, 2021. The Department consulted with special education transportation experts at Easterseals and the National Association of Pupil Transportation (NAPT) in preparing this document.

Students with disabilities may require specialized transportation as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). **Parents of students for whom specialized transportation is provided for in their IEPs and who transport their student are eligible for reimbursement**, as described in [603 CMR 28.07\(6\)](#). In these cases, the student maintains the right to access transportation for a disability-related need at a future date. The IEP should not be amended to reflect the temporary change in transportation arrangements, but the family should be notified in writing of this temporary change if they agree to transport their student.

In cases where special transportation is provided for in the student's IEP and the family is unable to transport their student, **school districts must coordinate and provide transportation for those students, including students in out-of-district placements.**

Core health and safety practices

Please review the [School Year 2020-2021 Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) for a detailed description of the core health and safety practices for transportation. Some of the core health and safety practices include:

- **Masks**
Everyone on the bus and waiting at bus stops must wear masks that cover the nose and mouth at all times.
 - **Adults**, including drivers and other transportation staff (e.g., bus monitors), are required to wear masks.
 - **Students are required to wear masks, regardless of age**, when on the bus.
 - **Exceptions to masks for students:** Face shields may be an option for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks. Please see the "physical distancing" section below for protocols on how to work with families of students who cannot wear masks due to medical, behavioral, or other challenges.
 - Masks should be provided by the student/family, but districts must ensure that sufficient extra disposable masks are made available on all buses for any student who needs them.

- **Physical distancing**
 - o As of February 2021, physical distancing guidelines and resulting bus capacities have been updated as outlined in the [School Year 2020-2021 Reopening Transportation Guidance](#), and apply to special education transportation vehicles (such as smaller buses, vans, etc.). **Districts may adopt these updated standards only when the required mitigation measures outlined in the rest of the [School Year 2020-2021 Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) document (wearing masks, opening windows, etc.) are followed.** In all cases, maximum distance between students should be maintained during boarding and transportation.
 - o **Preschool and Elementary schools:**
 - o Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted.
 - o **Middle and high schools:**
 - o Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted, except for middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence.
 - o For middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence, capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements on buses are amended to allow 2 students per bus bench.

Students who are not able to wear a mask while riding the bus must maintain six feet of distance between themselves and others when feasible. If possible, those students should wear a face shield while on the bus. Districts should discuss with the families of students who are regularly unable to wear a mask possible alternative transportation arrangements.

As described in the [School Year 2020-2021 Reopening Transportation Guidance](#), students should be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat.

Consider installing signage with visual cues on the school bus to encourage physical distancing protocols and to communicate this information to students with vision or reading disabilities.

- **Ventilation on Vans**
The use of specialized vans may be necessary for student transportation, and the standard for ventilation on those vehicles is similar to the standard set for larger vehicles: “Keep windows open at all times during operation at least two inches.” To meet this standard in small vans, windows should be open and ventilation systems should be set to maximize airflow from outside.
- **Bus Monitors**
Guidance for bus monitors has not changed and should be provided in accordance with a student’s IEP.
- **Developing Transportation Plans**
Parent surveys can help to identify which families will continue to rely on special education transportation as provided by school districts. Transportation plans should be updated based on the newly released transportation guidance and new surveys for families can be disseminated by school districts on behalf of all their students, including those attending collaborative programs and approved private special education schools.

