



REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
KANE COUNTY

School Bus Attendant Training Guide



Kane County Regional Office of Education
28 N First Street, Geneva, IL 60134

Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to school districts on areas that should be considered for training school bus attendants. Please note, the employees that provide assistance to students on the school bus have various titles such as Aide, Monitor, Paraprofessional, and Assistant; throughout this document they will be referred to as Attendants. As always, we suggest that you review this information with your special education leadership and district administration to determine the applicable areas to your district and students.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Students with unique or special needs are eligible for special education services. Those needs and how they will be addressed are directed by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a legal and binding agreement between the school district, the student, and the student's family. The IEP is very specific about the type of services and length of services that the student will receive. Transportation is just one of those services and may include the need for a bus attendant and adaptive or assistive equipment. It is imperative that service providers remain compliant with the services described within the IEP.

Attendant/Driver Teamwork

Bus drivers and attendants must work together as a team for the safety and wellbeing of their student passengers. The bus driver is primarily responsible for the overall safe operation of the vehicle. The Attendant is primarily responsible for supervising children on the bus as well assisting with the loading and unloading of students. Consistency and communicating expectations from both adults is critical for behavior management on a bus.

Treating each other with respect at all times is important to a good working relationship and presenting a unified approach to your passengers. **Disagreements should never be aired in front of the children, parents, or other school staff.** Disputes should be solved privately or with the help of Transportation Management.

Attendant Responsibilities

- Know your students and know their individual needs
- Be familiar with the unique characteristics of special needs students
- Assist driver in loading and unloading passengers
- Knowledge of workings of all special equipment, assistive and safety devices
- Assist with the proper securement of wheelchairs, safety vest, seat belts, and all other safety restraint systems
- Manage student behavior; introduce yourself and share the behavior expectations with them; remind them as needed; be patient, consistent and clear; use quiet, gentle but firm voice
- Assist all students on your route with any needs and communicate your actions to the student
- Be familiar with emergency equipment (fire extinguisher, body fluid kit, evacuation blanket, first-aid kit, seatbelt cutter, triangles, two-way radio)
- Report behavior/incidents following district/contractor policy
- Report safety, health or wellness concerns regarding your students to transportation management
- Assist driver with maintaining a clean and safe bus environment
- Ask for assistance or direction when needed

Professionalism and Confidentiality

Always maintain a high level of professionalism and dress appropriately for the job that you are hired to perform. Limit accessories such as scarves, long necklaces, dangling earrings, loose clothing, or drawstrings as these items could cause harm to you in the event of an altercation with a student. Personal items such as a purse, cell phone, iPod/earphones should be stowed away. Avoid personal grooming products with any fragrance or scent, as they can have a negative effect on students with sensory issues.

An attendant should consistently demonstrate courteousness to students, parents, school staff, and co-workers. Be sensitive to the needs of all students. The information that you have about your students must remain confidential and should never be discussed with other drivers/attendants, or parents. Do not have unprofessional conversations about students with your driver in front of other students.

Be respectful to the parents of your students by politely greeting them; do not engage in conversation with them regarding their child or any other child. Concerns regarding students must be shared with the appropriate transportation staff who will bring it to the attention of the appropriate school/district staff.

Mandated Reporting

Bus drivers and attendants are considered mandated reporters as defined by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have “reasonable cause to believe” that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused or neglected child. This is done by calling the DCFS Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 or 1-800-25ABUSE.

You may discuss your concerns regarding specific students with your immediate supervisor who will assist you with the process for reporting as well as providing the required mandated reporter training. Never attempt to gather information regarding suspicions from the child or anyone else. For further information refer to the attached document.

Loading/Unloading Students

All staff members have a shared and equal responsibility to work collaboratively during the loading and unloading of students. The duties may vary based on the specifics of the situation and/or the individual needs of the student. The student’s IEP will determine which adaptive equipment, accommodations and assistance is required. Students may require assistance maneuvering the bus stairs and/or climbing onto the seat. Always tell the student what you are going to do before you do it.

If a student is required to wear a safety vest, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to have the student in the safety vest before entering the bus. It is your responsibility to secure students requiring CSRS (Child Safety Restraint System) properly and to assist the driver in loading/unloading and securing wheelchair students.

The attendant must also assist the driver in releasing students. NEVER allow special education students to get off the bus at the school unless there is school staff present.

Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS)

There are a variety of safety restraint systems such as seatbelt, car seat, vest/harness, star seat (integrated and free standing), and wheelchair securement. All equipment has weight, height or waist circumference limits. All equipment has a useful life limit and carries an expiration date. It is important that the equipment fit the student properly and that manufacturer's directions for installation and securement are adhered to for safety compliance. Always let the child know what you are going to do before you do it. This may seem repetitive but it is important.

- **Seatbelts** - If the bus is equipped with seatbelts, they must be used (if appropriate) unless the student has another form of CSRS in the IEP.
- **Vest/Harness** - The size of the vest is determined by the student's (seated) waist measurement. Each size will accommodate a five inch span and are color coded by size. The vest has a rear zippered closure and eyehooks attached at the shoulders and waist; some include removable crotch straps. The bus seat will be equipped with either a floor mount or tether strap mount which hooks to the vest for securing the student to the bus seat. Just like a child's car seat, the vest and straps must be tightly secured. Passengers seated directly behind anyone in a vest/harness must also be restrained with a seat belt or another restraint or the seat must be unoccupied. A student in a vest/harness should not be seated next to an emergency exit window. The vest stays with the student not on the bus.
- **Five Point Restraint** - a five-point restraint system is much like a child's car seat. Some are integrated (built into the seat of the bus) or free standing (portable). They are designed for school buses and should not be used in passenger vehicles. They do have weight and height limits. Buckle the student into the seat ensuring that the chest clip is in the proper location. A student in a portable five- point restraint should not be placed next to an emergency exit window.
- **Wheelchair and Tie Downs** - Wheelchairs are loaded onto the bus using the lift. The student's chair should face away from the bus and the wheelchair brakes are in the locked position. The chair should be equipped with a seat belt and the seatbelt secured around the student. The roll stop on the lift must be completely in the "up" position. Powered chairs must be turned off. No one other than the student in the chair should be on the lift.

Next, back the chair into position on the bus. The wheelchair is forward facing on the bus centered on the anchorages on the floor. Brakes are set and the power is off. Attach straps to the chair at all four points following manufacturer's instructions. Straps do not attach to wheels or any movable or detachable part of the chair. Straps do not bend around any object, are clear of sharp edges or corners, and should have a clear path from the floor to the chair frame. Ensure that straps are not crisscrossed or twisted. Secure lap and shoulder belts; the lap belt should be snug and over the child's pelvic bones and not abdomen. The shoulder belt should not cross the child's face or neck and should not be under the arm, adjust for comfortable tension making sure the belt is not twisted. Make sure chair has no movement.

Oxygen Equipment

Some students may be transported with an active oxygen tank. Secure the tank in an upright position ensuring the tubing is not crimped. Secondary oxygen tanks should be safely secured in an Oxygen Buddy (locker) or some such device designed for transporting oxygen tanks on a school bus.

Tracheotomy Tube/Feeding Tube

Secure the student so that there is no interference with the tubes.

Seatbelt Cutters

Every bus is equipped with a seatbelt cutter. This is used in the event of an emergency for quickly cutting straps to release a child from their restraint. Attendants should be familiar with where the cutter is stored and how it is used.

Transportation Accommodations in the IEP

- Door to door, or curb to curb mean the same thing. It does not mean that you walk to the door of the student's home
- Adult Release – the student must be met by, or in the view of an adult, both at home and at school
- Adaptive/Assistive Equipment – if required, is defined in the student's IEP

Reporting and Documenting Student Behavior/Incidents

Follow district/contractor policy for reporting behavior and incidents that may occur during the route. These documents are the way that you communicate with school staff. They are important for student growth and management.

Reporting student behavior is an opportunity for school staff to identify and address corrective action. Incident reports inform school staff of issues other than behavior concerns.

Student Management

Driver and attendants have the responsibility to address and report negative student behavior following district procedure. School administrators have the authority to assign consequences for student behavior. The key to student management is to know your students. Be consistent in the message you deliver. Always greet the student by name. Reward good behavior with positive comments.

Characteristics of Children with Disabilities

It is essential for transporters of children with disabilities to be familiar with the individual characteristics of children with disabilities and their impact on transportation services. It is important to remember that all children are individuals first, and that descriptions of specific categories of disability do not apply to the same extent to all the children within a disability category. Students may qualify for special education services under one or more of the thirteen eligibility categories. These include: Autism, Emotional Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Other Health Impairment, Speech-Language, Specific Learning Disability, Developmental Delay, Multiple Disabilities, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, and Orthopedic Impairment.

Each disability category is unique and each student within a category may have different needs. Some students have difficulty in receptive and expressive language. This may mean that they need information presented to them non-verbally. Some students may be sensitive to sounds and smells. They may need to be allowed to listen to music or utilize other noise-altering accommodations. Some students may need the support of a behavior plan. The student's special education teacher will work with the bus driver and bus attendant to make appropriate accommodations for transportation.

Seizures and Convulsions

It is important that you are aware of students with seizure disorders. The main concern is that injury could occur during a seizure or convulsion because of the involuntary, uncontrollable body movements. You can protect the student from physical and emotional injury by doing the following;

- Do not attract unnecessary attention to the victim; move seat mate to another seat
- Remain calm, inform the driver at the first sign of seizure who will notify dispatch
- Reassure the other students that everything will be OK
- Time the seizure and note its characteristics
- Remove any sharp or hard objects from around the student
- Try to keep the student in the most comfortable and safe position
- Loosen any item from around the neck
- Gently turn student to his/her side
- Do not force anything between the student's teeth
- Do not inhibit the student's movement
- Stay with the student, reassure and calm the student when seizure has ended
- Follow protocol based on student's needs

Accident/Emergency Evacuations

A successful plan is based on teamwork. It is important that everyone is informed and understand what to do in the event of an accident/emergency. A well thought out emergency plan can increase the survival of most or all of your passengers. Always practice best judgment during an accident/emergency. That could mean that you may need to accept assistance from by-standers. The most important thing is the safety of your students during an accident/emergency. A copy of the emergency evacuation plan should be in your bus at all times.

Student Evacuation

Advise your passengers in a calm but firm voice that it is necessary to evacuate the bus. Use language that your students will understand. Attendants should be trained and comfortable in using the radio if the driver is unable to do so. It is important to know safe locations along the route that you travel.

Be aware of each student's needs and abilities; assist them accordingly. Once off the bus find a safe location for students to wait at least 100 feet from the bus. Use a "tow line" if appropriate to keep students together. During an emergency situation accept assistance from bystanders as needed.

Environmental Conditions

You may be exposed to body fluids, diesel fumes, heat, and cold.

Operating the Lift on a Wheelchair Bus

The responsibility of lift operation is determined by the district/contractor. Attendants should be familiar with the process of lift operation and should perform the process on a regularly scheduled basis to remain familiar.

The lift is designed to work electronically. The bus needs to be running in order to operate the lift. In addition, the gear-shift must be in neutral and the emergency brake should be set. In the event of power loss, the lift can be operated manually.

Equipment Maintenance

In order for the equipment on the bus to work as intended, it must be maintained. Water, dirt, salt, etc. will corrode the equipment causing it to become a safety hazard to you and your passengers. Attendants will be trained how to properly clean the equipment.

Child Check

State law mandates that the bus driver is responsible for ensuring no student has been left on the bus at the end of the route, however, the attendant too should make sure that no students are left behind.

Subbing a Route

It is the responsibility of the sub-attendant to be aware of the needs of the students on the route.

In Conclusion

The job of an attendant is equally as important as the job of the driver. After training it is the hope of the authors that you will be well prepared to perform your responsibilities for the students of Kane County to the best of your ability. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your position never hesitate to reach out to your supervisor.

Thanks to the Kane County Curriculum Development Committee

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Courtnee Davis, CUSD 303 Trip Coordinator

Driver

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Route

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Bus # _____

Seating Chart

32 or less student capacity

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5 pt

5pt

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5 pt

5pt

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Each front row seat has two integrated 5 pts (some busses have add'l)

List any additional 5 pts or attached equipment accordingly under students seat placement

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Evacuation Plan and Add'l notes:

Driver (and if applicable assistant) are required to work as a team to decide who, how, and when to evacuate students from the bus in the event of a real emergency. Keep this information in your route folder and review it often so if an actual emergency arises you are able to respond swiftly, and safely. Write down names; which can assist whom, who needs extra assistance, and any other information you feel may assist another driver if you are absent. Example: student does not speak, child does not walk, child will run if unattended, student is visually impaired, etc.

add'l information on reverse

18 Seated + 1 Wheel Chair

Driver

Route

Bus # _____

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5 pt

5pt

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5 pt

5pt

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use reverse if needed

Bus #

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WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
MAKING A HOTLINE CALL?

EVERYONE.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL?

IMMEDIATELY.

1-800-25-ABUSE

**Take no chances in reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.
You risk nothing; they could lose everything.**

When a call is made, a hotline social worker will listen to the report. The worker will ask questions and gather enough information to determine whether to take a formal report. If a formal report is taken, a child protection investigator will begin the investigation within 24 hours – much sooner if the child is considered in immediate risk of harm.

REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION KANE COUNTY



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