

Transportation Of Students with Special Needs



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Transporting 45,000 students safely each and every school day



Student Transportation Services

The Toronto Student Transportation Group (which is a transportation consortium tasked with the management of the student transportation system) is committed to providing safe and reliable transportation for your child. To help achieve that goal, this brochure has been developed to provide general information about the transportation service for students with special needs who are eligible for school transportation and to outline the responsibilities of all parties involved in the safe transportation of students. The success of the transportation service depends on the cooperation of parents, teachers, and the transportation companies. We would encourage you to review the procedure outlines and to keep this brochure in a convenient location for easy reference. Some guidelines vary from school to school, i.e., Sunny View, Metro School for the Deaf. Please seek clarification of any concerns from your school Principal or by calling the Toronto Student Transportation Group at 416-394-4287.

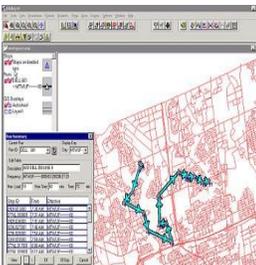


Did You Know

Did you know that the Toronto Public and Toronto Catholic District School Boards run transportation in a coterminous effort to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. The combined School Districts make up one of the largest School Districts in North America in terms of Students and Schools.

Coterminous sharing allows a single bus to travel towards its destination picking up students from both School Boards and delivering them to their schools. The planning is done in one location in order to route all students more efficiently. Computerized software displays digital maps and student information and provides our route planners with the tools to customize the bus routes to accommodate the unique needs for many of our students.

As a combined unit we transport over 10,000 special needs students on over 1000 special needs vehicles every day. These vehicles travel over 35,000 km every day!



Transportation Companies

Please keep the following list of bus company phone numbers in a convenient location for easy reference. Each operator is assigned a specific grouping of bus route numbers. Please use the list below to identify which bus company(s) provides service for your child.

School Bus Operators

| Operator | Telephone |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| (AR) Attridge Transportation | 416-255-5199 |
| (FX) First Student Ajax | 905-683-2350 |
| (CL) First Student Toronto | 416-444-7030 |
| (DT) Dignity Transportation | 416-398-2109 |
| (MC) McCluskey Transportation | 416-246-1422 |
| (SH) Sharp Bus Lines | 416-477-4804 |
| (ST) Stock Transportation West | 416-244-5341 |
| (SC) Stock Transportation East | 416-754-4949 |
| (SN) Stock Transportation North | 416-757-0565 |
| (SW) Switzer Carty Transportation | 905-361-1084 |
| (WA) Wheelchair Accessible Transit | 416-884-9898 |

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Parents Responsibility

Temporary Cancellation of Service

Please inform the Transportation Company (see directory of companies on page 10) if your child will be absent from school due to illness or for other reasons. You must also notify the Transportation Company before 7:00 AM or the evening before transportation is to resume following your child's absence.

Permanent Cancellation / Changes of Pick up and Drop off Locations

Please advise the principal of the school where your child attends of any permanent cancellation of service or requests for a change in the pickup and or drop-off locations.

The Transportation Company and its drivers are NOT authorized to accept permanent or temporary changes of pickup or drop-off locations from parents.

Any changes to transportation will require 72 hours to process once the request gets to the Transportation Consortium. Due to the high volume of changes in September requests will take up to a week to process at that time.

One Way Transportation

If your child only requires transportation one way (i.e. either to school or from school) then the school, Transportation consortium and transportation company need to have confirmation of this arrangement. Please clearly indicate this information on your transportation application form. Please remind the transportation company of this arrangement when they call to confirm your transportation.

Pick Up and Drop-off Times

Please have your child ready 5 to 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time and at your pickup location ready to board when the bus arrives. If your child misses the bus, it is the parent's responsibility to transport their child to school. A student who is regularly late for pick up may lose the privilege of being transported.

Drivers do their best to pick up and drop off your child on time. They know how important it is for your child and you that schedules are kept. However, bus schedules are affected by the traffic, weather, student's behaviour, and promptness of caregivers in meeting the vehicle.

It is not always possible to maintain consistent drivers and pickup and drop-off times. Transportation schedules may vary throughout the school year when new students begin school in your area or transfer to another school. In September, bus routes experience a number of changes and students may need to be relocated from once bus route to another.

Please Note: The Transportation Service is not organized to accommodate parent work schedules. It is essential that a responsible adult is available to be there for your child during the pick up and drop off windows which can be up to an hour and a half prior to and after school bell times.

General Information

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to maintain an open communication with the driver, school, and Transportation Consortium about the unique characteristics of their child (such as behaviour

concerns, seizure information, anxiety, vision/hearing impairment). This information should be communicated to your principal prior to service starting so that the student's accessibility issues are identified on the individual student transportation plan. This is in the best interest of your child especially if an emergency situation were to occur.

It is essential that your child be accompanied to the bus in the morning and be met at the bus in the afternoon by a responsible adult; either parent or caregiver designated by the parent. Parents must inform the bus company if someone unexpected will be meeting their child at the end of the school day. Please take some time to remind your child that if they do not recognize an adult or caregiver at the bus drop off location that they should not exit the vehicle.

No consumption of food or drink is allowed on busses due to the hazard of choking or the possibility of another student on the bus with food allergies.

Parents / guardians should initially discuss transportation problems or concerns with the Principal. If the problem cannot be resolved at the school level, please contact the Transportation Consortium at the number listed on the back of this brochure.

Drivers are to report to the Principal when a student's behaviour is causing problems or an unsafe condition on the bus. The Principal will contact the parent/guardian to gain the co-operation of the parent/guardian in solving the problem. If the problem cannot be resolved, the parent/guardian could be asked to provide alternate transportation for their child.

September Start-Up

Transportation planning for the next school year begins in the spring when parents/guardians fill in their Student Transportation Application forms at the school. Parents/guardians are required to provide the necessary information to the school by the end of May in order to set up transportation services for September. The applications are forwarded to the transportation consortium via your school office before the end of June.

Transportation service will not start unless the Transportation Consortium has a completed application on file for your child.

The transportation companies receive a copy of bus routes with the critical information (phone number, medical condition, emergency contact etc.) printed on the reports. The transportation companies also have direct electronic access to the Transportation Consortium's student transportation database. In case of an emergency, information on the application may be released to a medical practitioner.

Parents/guardians will be contacted the week (weekend) before school starts by the bus driver to advise them of their pickup and drop-off times.

(Please note that you may have a different bus driver or even a different bus

company providing service at different times of the day.) If you are not contacted prior to the first day of school, please contact the bus company to confirm the times if you are aware of which transportation company is providing your service. If you do not know who is providing this service, please contact your school or the Toronto Student Transportation Group to confirm that an application is on file and that service has been scheduled for your child.

It is the parents' responsibility to keep the school and transportation company up to date on any changes to your child's medical health. Also, it is critical that phone numbers for parents/guardians and emergency contacts be accurate at all times throughout the year.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather may force the closure of schools and/or the cancellation of transportation service. Radio and television stations will broadcast a public service announcement to inform parents about school closures and transportation cancellations.

If parents are concerned about inclement weather, they have the right to keep their child at home (especially in the case of medically fragile students) even if transportation is not cancelled by the School Board.

Your Bus operator should contact you if they are running more than 20 minutes behind schedule.



Safety Equipment

Seat Belts, Car Seats, Safety Vests

All 16 to 24 passenger school busses and minivans are equipped with seat belts for each student. (72 passenger vehicles are not equipped with seat belts)

All students 18kgs (40lbs) or under and travelling in a mini-bus or minivan will require a car seat in order to be transported. The car seat is to be provided by the parent, must be CSA approved, and tethered into the school vehicle (by the Transportation Company) before transportation can start.

Students who remove their seat belts and move about the vehicle while in transit or are aggressive to other students create an unsafe condition for both student and driver. A safety vest may be required to provide safe transportation. In these cases, parents will be requested to complete a permission form.

Where appropriate and prior to a request for a safety vest, a seat belt buckle guard or other methods for keeping students seated will be considered.

Parents, school staff, and drivers are collectively responsible for ensuring that each student is secured by a seat belt (and/or in a car seat or safety vest where applicable) before the vehicle goes into motion.

Parents should be securing their child when the bus arrives in the a.m. and unloading in the p.m. if the child is unable to do so on their own.

School Staff should be securing the students when they are dismissed from school and arriving in the morning if the child is unable to do so.

The driver of each vehicle is responsible for ensuring that students are safe and secure while the vehicle is in motion.

Wheelchair Transportation

To ensure safe transportation it is important that wheelchairs are maintained in good operating condition; i.e. tires fully inflated, brakes operational, and wheels snugly in place. If a wheelchair is in need of repair, transportation may be put on hold until the deficiency is corrected.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles will have this symbol displayed



Parents and/or Caregivers are responsible for securing all personal chairs restraints such as wheelchair seat belts, harness, and trays.

Parents and/or Caregivers must physically assist their child to the wheelchair bus and on the return trip assist their child from the vehicle into the residence.

The driver is responsible for ensuring that all "Q" Straint belts are secured on the wheelchair vehicle.

Only the driver or authorized company personnel shall operate the wheelchair ramp. Parent and school staff should not assist with this task. Assistance may be required and appreciated by holding onto the wheelchair in certain circumstances.

Driver Responsibility

The Transportation Company shall transport students from their designated stop to their respective schools and return them to their designated drop off location. Parents/guardians are responsible for their child to and from their pickup and drop off locations.

No student shall be left by a driver at the designated location for drop-off unless the student is met by a responsible adult (either parent or caregiver designated by parent). The driver will not leave your child unattended or with a person unknown to them. If a responsible person is not at the drop off location to receive the student, the driver has the following options after notifying dispatch:



Continue to drop off the remaining students on the run and return to the bus stop

Deliver the student to the emergency contact person if available and within reasonable distance.

Return the student to the school if staff are available to receive the child

or

Deliver the student to the nearest Police Station

All drivers are required to have first aid and epi pen training.

The driver must call the parent/guardians of new students to confirm with them the pickup and drop off times and location the evening before transportation service is to start.

The driver will also notify parents/guardians of any changes to pick up times and drop off times throughout the school year.