

# STUDENT AND PARENT TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK



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# Student and Parent Transportation Handbook

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Dear CPCSC Families,

I hope you find information outlined in this document to be helpful. In advance, please know that we view transportation as a partnership between home and school and welcome communication and feedback from families.

According to the NHTSA, school buses are the safest vehicles on the road. Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a bus instead of traveling by car. That's because school buses are heavily regulated and constructed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries. School buses are also highly visible and include safety features such as flashing red lights, cross-view mirrors, and stop-sign arms. Protective seating, high crush standards and rollover protection are also standard features. Moreover, laws protect students by making it illegal for drivers to pass a school bus while dropping off or picking up passengers, regardless of direction and approach. But vehicle equipment and safety features are only part of what it takes to get students to and from school safely. Maintaining open communication, developing relationships with students, and building trust with families are also essential. We ask that you join us in conveying these three basic expectations to all riders: **BE KIND, BE ON TIME, AND BE SAFE!**

School bus transportation is a service made available to all CPCSC students. We will make every effort to assign bus stops in areas that are efficient, accessible, and safe. Stops may be adjusted throughout the year to accommodate the construction of new roads, new subdivisions, and changing bus capacities. Additionally, it is essential that students be at designated pick-up points no less ten (10) minutes prior to the published pick up time. **Unfortunately, bus times may vary depending on ridership, weather, and traffic.**

In short, our unyielding commitment to our community is to put the safest vehicles and drivers on the road each and every day, and we invite you to contact our office if you have questions or suggestions as to how we can make improvements.

We are looking forward to a great year!

Respectfully,

Michael E. Akers  
CPCSC Director of Transportation

## General Rules

- All bus riders are expected to adhere to code of conduct and citizenship standards required on any school campus.
- All bus safety policies, protocols, and guidelines will be enforced to help the driver maintain a safe and orderly environment for the benefit of all riders.

## Eligibility

- Bus transportation is provided to students who live within the Clark-Pleasant Community School Corporation boundaries.
- Students living out of district are not eligible for bus transportation unless they are being transported to an approved location within our district boundaries.
- Students who fail to follow safety guidelines and expectations may forfeit their ability to use CPCSC transportation services. This also includes all extracurricular events.

## Special Needs Transportation

- In order to qualify for Special Needs transportation, the student's Teacher of Record must determine that special transportation is needed as a related service. Once approved, the school must convey this information to the Transportation Department to arrange services. It takes approximately 2-3 days to arrange transportation. Once arranged, the driver will contact the family to review the plan.

## Bus Assignments

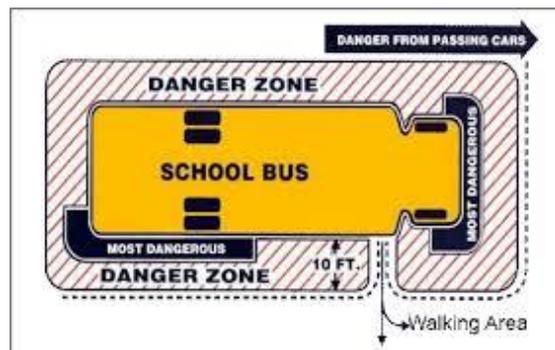
- Requesting transportation changes must be done by submitting an Alternate Bus Stop Request Form. Alternate Bus Stop Requests must be submitted to the Transportation Department no later than July 15 to be active on the first day of school. Requests submitted after July 15 will not be processed until one week following the first day of school. Parents will need to provide their own transportation to/from school until a request has been approved and processed. **Please remember all Alternate Bus Stop Requests remain in effect until they are either cancelled or changed by submitting a new request form.** Please allow 3-5 school days for an Alternate Bus Stop Request to be processed. Alternate Bus Stop requests may be denied if the bus is at full capacity or deemed unsafe.
- Students are expected to ride his/her assigned bus. Changes are not be permitted for any reason without prior permission.
- Assigned transportation is based on a student's home address unless an alternate bus stop has been approved.
- Same day/last minute transportation changes must be processed through the school office. A bus pass will be issued if necessary. Bus passes are only available for emergency situations.

## Co-Parenting Requests

- Co-Parenting request forms must be filled out and approved before a student is allowed to ride to/from any address other than the legal settlement address provided to the school. This information must be documented in Synergy.

## Procedures for Boarding

- As a school bus is approaching, students should begin forming a single line at least 10 feet away from the roadway while waiting on the bus to come to a complete stop.
- Students should never approach any bus until the driver has motioned for riders to board.
- If students must cross the street, the driver will motion for students to cross when s/he verifies that it is safe to do so. Students **MUST** wait for the driver's signal.
- Once on the bus, students should report to their assigned seat and remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Any area within 10' of a school bus (front to back and side to side) is considered the **"The Danger Zone"**. Students within this area are potentially in a driver's blind sight.



- For the safety of all students and route schedule, it is an expectation that all riders report to their bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled pick up time.
- It is critical that students follow the driver's instructions at all times.

## Student Safety

- Students shall be seated immediately upon entering the bus. Lap-shoulder safety belts must be used if installed.
- Students must sit in his or her assigned seat.
- Students shall not stand or move from place to place while the bus is in motion.
- Inappropriate conduct, verbal abuse, or other behaviors that jeopardizes the safety and wellbeing of those on the bus will not be tolerated.
- Students must remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
- Windows must remain closed unless permitted by the driver. If allowed, windows should not be opened more than 50%.
- Students must be present at the bus stop no less than 10 minutes prior to the published arrival time. The driver will stop and look for students, then continue if no students are waiting.
- Kindergarten and Preschool students will not be released from the bus without the presence of a parent, guardian, sibling, or appropriate adult caretaker present.
- Schools may deny bus privileges to students who refuse to conduct themselves in a courteous and safe manner.
- The aisle of a school bus must be kept free of objects that could obstruct an emergency evacuation. Objects that cannot be held on a student's lap are not permitted on the school bus. For example, large musical instruments, science fair and other types of projects, athletic and PE equipment, bags, flagpoles, flowers, balloons and other such items that could pose a safety problem.
- Students must keep their head, hands and feet inside the bus at all times.
- Tobacco, alcohol, illegal substances and all other items prohibited by school board policy are strictly prohibited and subject to school/corporation discipline.

## Video Surveillance

- Video surveillance devices have been installed on CPCSC buses. Their primary purpose is to assist drivers in providing the safest environment possible for all riders.
- Video surveillance data is the property of the Clark-Pleasant Community School Corporation and may be used when investigating situations.

## Property Damage

- School buses are considered to be school and government owned property.
- Riders who inflict damage will be responsible for paying expenses associated with repairs and subject to corporation disciplinary action: loss of riding privileges, suspension/expulsion, and/or legal action.

### **Personal Belongings/Lost Items**

- The following cargo is forbidden to be transported on a school bus: pets, alcohol, drugs, ammunition, explosives, firearms, knives, tobacco, nicotine-containing products, or any other dangerous or objectionable objects consistent with school board policy.
- Use of technology is permitted as long as it does not cause a distraction to the driver or others. Drivers will revert to CPCSC technology guidelines if students abuse the use of technology devices.
- The school corporation is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen personal belongings.
- Drivers inspect their buses at the end of each route. If an item is left on the bus, they will keep those items and return them to the student the next day. The transportation office will not radio a bus driver while on a route to locate an item left on the bus.
- Bus drivers may confiscate any object that has been deemed questionable and submit the item to school administration.

### **Medication**

- All medication transported by a student must be in the original container and secured in the student's bag at all times while on the bus.
- A note from the parent MUST accompany any medication.
- Medication may not be used or taken while riding the bus without prior consent from the parent and school health office.

### **Food and Beverages**

- Students are not permitted eat or drink, with the exception of water, while riding a school bus. Food allergies and maintaining cleanliness of the bus are the two critical reasons. Any exceptions regarding food and drink will be at the discretion of the driver.

### **Safety Requests from Parents**

- Be certain that your student arrives at the bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled pick up time.
- Make sure your student is dressed appropriately for the weather and safety conditions.
- Assist your student in developing safe habits when walking to and from the bus stop.
- Supervise travel to and from the bus stop and while your student is waiting for their bus.
- Encourage your student to obey all traffic rules, signs, and signals.
- Help your student understand that riding a school bus is a privilege, not a right. Transportation privileges may be suspended or permanently revoked if a student's conduct poses a threat or safety concern to others.

- Instruct your student to report any concerns s/he may experience while at the bus stop to an adult.
- Do not board or approach the bus for safety reasons. Use the driver side window to communicate or make other arrangements to speak with the driver later in the day.
- Refrain from sending items with your student to the bus stop that are too large to safely transport.
- Understand that parents will be held accountable for damage or vandalism caused by their student.
- Understand that drivers will not intercede in student/parent conflicts. Their responsibility is to radio dispatch with information, ask for guidance, and contact 911 if necessary.
- Cooperate and support the driver at all times to help provide the safest environment possible for transporting students.
- Know that students are expected to follow the same rules and expectations as they would while in school.

### **Student Discipline**

- The school bus driver is responsible for the safety and security of all on his/her bus.
- It is essential that students adhere to bus safety rules at all times. Students are expected to follow the same rules and expectations as they would while in school.
- Drivers will work with students to ensure safe and courteous behavior.
- Drivers are expected to document and communicate student discipline concerns.
- If a student's behavior does not improve after attempts by the driver to work with the student, a conduct referral will be submitted.
- If a student has had his/her bus privileges revoked, the student may not ride any Clark-Pleasant bus while suspended.
- If suspension is warranted, the principal or designee will contact the parent to notify them of the suspension and determine a return date of service. If the infraction has been deemed as a major infraction, the length of suspension can be extended longer than a semester.
- Disciplinary Action:
  - 1st Referral - Verbal Reprimand/ Warning
  - 2nd Referral - Probation
  - 3rd Referral - One Day Suspension
  - 4th Referral - Three Day Suspension
  - 5th Referral - Five Day Suspension
  - 6th Referral - Suspension for Semester (Depending on the severity of the misconduct, it may be necessary to suspend the student immediately for an indefinite amount of time).

### **Emergency Procedures**

- All drivers are trained to handle emergency situations.
- Drivers are expected to assign student helpers to assist in emergency situations.
- Bus evacuation drills are conducted during the school year.
- (Parents) In the event of an emergency, please contact the school or transportation office for direction as to where to meet your child. For your own safety, do not go to the scene of an accident.
- In the event of an emergency, students will be released to parents after proper documentation has been completed and approval by school administration.

### **Communication**

- Parents are encouraged to contact the driver, transportation department, or school with questions/concerns. Similarly, drivers are instructed to contact and work with parents to resolve conflicts or areas of concern.
- Should situations arise, parents and transportation will work jointly to resolve issues.
- Threats to any school employee is considered, by law, a Class D felony. IC: 35-44-2-1
- Please allow 24 hours for the transportation department to return messages.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How are bus stops determined?**

We make every attempt to place bus stops no more than ¼ mile from each rider's home. However, the distance to most stops is usually far less. Bus stops are located at street corners and centralized locations.

### **Why does my bus stop change from year to year?**

CPCSC is a growing school district with new homes and neighborhoods being added continuously. This, along with grade level advancement from year to year (for sure building to building changes), creates routing challenges and forces us to make intended adjustments for the safety of our students. Our routing software, Versatrans, calculates the number of students in given area and determines the safest location for bus stops and student travel.

### **Our subdivision does not have sidewalks and is poorly lit. How can I get the stop moved closer to our home?**

Versatrans, along with driver and staff input, helps us place bus stops in the safest locations possible. Please remember that we transport more than 7,000 students every day. It simply isn't feasible to do a home to school pick up for every student.

### **Parents have been notified of a pick-up/drop-off time that is different than what's been communicated. Why is that?**

Versatrans calculates pick-up/drop-off information based on mileage of a route, number of stops, and range of speed limits. What the routing system cannot calculate is traffic, weather, road conditions, and construction. As a result, it sometimes becomes necessary for a driver to make adjustments. That being the case, drivers are instructed to contact dispatch in advance to communicate and request guidance. Information will then be shared with the student's school and family. If you feel your student's bus is running later than normal, 15 minutes or more, please contact the Transportation Department at 317-535-7255 for more information.

### **The bus was late by 15 minutes or more. Why wasn't I contacted?**

We make every effort to communicate essential information as soon as possible. However, depending on circumstances and timeframe, there may be an unfortunate delay in communicating with families.

### **My child is being threatened or bullied by another student on the bus. Who do I contact?**

A driver's first and foremost responsibility is to safely transport students. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to see everything that happens on a bus at all times. Should you have a concern of this nature, please contact the Transportation Office at 317-535-7255, or student's school, so we can resolve the situation together.

**What qualifications/credentials must school bus drivers possess to transport students?**

To drive a school bus for CPCSC, a person must be at least 21 years of age, possess a valid Indiana Class B Commercial Driver License (CDL) with Passenger (P), School Bus (S) and Air Brake endorsements, as well as maintain a safe driving record. Clark Pleasant does offer training to obtain these credentials. Additionally, drivers must pass a criminal background check (which includes CPS), drug screening, and physical before being considered for employment. Lastly, drivers must also complete a comprehensive School Bus Driver Safety Training Program provided by the state of Indiana and undergo yearly safety training certification.

**How many students can ride a bus?**

Under Indiana law, the maximum number of students that can be transported on a school bus corresponds to the seating capacity designated by the manufacturer. An 84-passenger bus can carry 84 students, regardless of their age and size. Most of our newly purchased vehicles are 78-passenger. Federal regulations govern how manufacturers determine seating capacity, using a 15-inch block for each designated seating position and rounding up to the nearest whole number. Most school bus seats are 39" wide; dividing by 39/15 produces 2.6, which rounds up to 3 seating positions per seat. While state law does not limit the number of students per seat, it does require that aisles and exits be free of obstruction.

**What is the bus driver permitted to know about student records?**

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) imposes significant obligations on local school units regarding access to student educational records. The state of Indiana has incorporated these requirements into its own laws when dealing with student records without parental consent; specifically, school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in a specific student may have access to student records without the parents' permission. Under these laws, a school bus driver is defined as a school official, and if that driver operates the school bus in which that specific student rides, it is recognized that the school bus driver has a legitimate educational interest in those parts of a student's record relating to transportation. The "legitimate educational interest" is applicable whenever a school official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. If a student has a cognitive disability, such as autism or ADD, and the disability is likely to manifest itself on the school bus ride, the driver needs to be familiar with appropriate responses to this behavior in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities to all the students on the bus.