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**MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**405 E. Davis**

**Mesquite, TX 75149**

**972-288-6411**

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# PURPOSE

This handbook has been created to provide parents/guardians and school staff with a source of information that addresses responsibilities and procedures within special needs transportation. The full scope of Transportation Services is much broader than can be contained in this handbook. The handbook is not intended to be all inclusive, but rather an avenue to share important information with all parties associated with transporting students with special needs. Should you have any questions that this handbook does not address feel free to contact:

**MISD Transportation Services**

**700 E. Kimbrough**

**Mesquite, TX. 75149**

**972-882-7550**

**Mesquite Special Education Department**

**714 E. Kimbrough**

**Mesquite, TX. 75149**

**972-882-7700**

# RESPONSIBILITIES

The safe and efficient transporting of your student relies on positive communication and cooperation among students, parents/guardians, driver/attendant, school staff, Special Education Department, and Transportation Services. The following section outlines some of the various responsibilities of those involved.

1. PARENTS/GUARDIANS

* Assist the school by submitting accurate and timely information to be included on the **ARD** **Transportation Supplement**. Incorrect and untimely information delays the initiation of transportation services.
* Inform the school administrator of any medical condition or behavior which might affect the student’s safety or health on the bus.
* Provide up-to-date emergency and alternate drop-off location information to the Special Education Department as changes occur at 972-882-7700 as soon as the information is available.
* If the change of address requires rescheduling, 3 to 5 working days may be needed to establish a new route or make adjustments to an existing route with a new time schedule.
* If the ARD committee determines that the student cannot be left unattended, the person providing supervision must come to the bus or student will not be released from bus.
* Ensure the student meets the bus at the scheduled time. Buses are scheduled to arrive within a few minutes of the designated time each day. The bus driver will wait only 3 minutes past the designated pick-up time before proceeding on the route. MISD drivers are not allowed to honk their horns to notify parents of arrival.
* Contact Transportation Services at 972-882-7550 as soon as possible in the morning ***(by 6:00am)*** if the student will not be attending school that day. A voicemail may be left if no one is available.
* The bus will stop going by the student’s residence after the 3rd day the student has been a “no show”. “No show” means the student does not ride the bus and parent has not notified Transportation Services. Once transportation is notified that a “no show” student will begin riding again, resuming the student’s transportation will take up to 5 school days.
* Remember parents are not allowed on the bus unless requested by the driver or monitor to assist with loading or unloading the student.
* If the child attends daycare, the parent will ensure the daycare provider is made aware of the transportation guidelines.

1. STUDENTS

* Obey the rules established by the bus driver, attendant, and ARD. The safety of each student depends on how well all the students follow the rules. Distracting the driver could result in an accident.
* Respect the rights of the other students and adults on the bus. Having a positive attitude each day helps everyone.
* Be prepared to load the bus at the scheduled pick-up time and location.

1. DRIVER and ATTENDANT

* In addition to Transportation Services, notify the parent/guardian of the bus number and approximate time of pick-up.
* Be on time for pick-up and drop-off. Setting a high standard for providing reliable transportation service should be a priority. If the driver arrives earlier than the designated time of pick-up, he/she must wait at least 3 minutes past ~~t~~he designated pick up time before proceeding on the route.
* Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
* Be familiar with each student’s disabilities and any special considerations in providing transportation services. For students with medical conditions for which the school nurse determines the driver and attendant need training, the school nurse will provide the training and provide a signature page to document training to be signed by the driver and attendant.
* Be prepared to provide first aid or CPR as appropriate.
* Display appropriate concern for and patience with each student and parent/guardian.
* (Attendant) Be located in a position inside of the bus that best meets the needs of all students. The attendant is required to step on and off the bus with every student.
* Maintain an emergency evacuation plan, listing each student, for use by medical personnel in the event of an accident.
* Be prepared to effectively and efficiently evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
* **Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality for the families whose students he/she transports.**
* Assist students on and off the bus or per their individual needs. When appropriate and necessary, request loading and unloading assistance from school officials and parents/guardians.
* Implement the student’s BIP if required by the ARD. School staff will ensure driver and attendant are given a copy of the BIP, explain the strategies and answer any questions, and provide a signature page to document receipt of BIP by driver and attendant.

1. SCHOOLS

* Ensure the appropriate paperwork is submitted to the Special Education Department if the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee determines the student is eligible for transportation.
* Request the presence of someone from the Transportation Department during the ARD if necessary.
* Submit timely and accurate updates of the transportation paperwork to the special education office when changes are necessary. Ensure a copy of the transportation paperwork reaches the Special Education Departm following the completion of the annual ARD, revision ARD, or agreement to amend an ARD.
* Ensure students are ready for dismissal according to the student’s Schedule of Services.
* Notify parents/guardians of schedule changes that may affect transportation services (i.e. early dismissals, inclement weather, etc.).
* Provide appropriate arrangements for those students needing assistance in loading and unloading the bus at the school.
* Refer requests made by the parent/guardian involving alternate transportation arrangements to Transportation Services and Special Education Department.
* Notify Transportation Services when a student arrives at the school but did not ride the morning bus if the student is to ride the bus home and when a student rides the morning bus but departs school by other means.
* Accept and act on all **Bus Safety Report** forms when submitted by the bus driver or attendant. The principal or designee is responsible for disciplinary action, including the suspension of the student’s transportation service, when appropriate. *(See bus rules from ARD.)* Remember, transportation is a related service for a student with a disability. Any incident of misconduct on the bus should be viewed in the same manner as any disciplinary incident in school.
* The school nurse will provide yearly training in regards to specific student medical needs if she/he determines this to be necessary. Nurse will provide a signature page for driver and attendant to complete showing they have been trained concerning medical conditions of students on their bus.
* Special education staff member responsible for explanation of BIP will provide a copy to driver and monitor if BIP requires implementation by transportation personnel. Special education staff member will explain strategies and answer any questions, then provide a signature page for driver and attendant to complete showing they have been given a copy and been trained on BIP.

1. SPECIAL EDUCATION OFFICE

* Notify Transportation Services of any legal procedural changes within the Special Education Operating Guidelines that would affect transportation services.
* Assist Transportation Services by submitting student’s annual ARD transportation paperwork by the designated deadline.
* Assist with timely notification of any changes in student’s transportation.

6. TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

* Assign each eligible student to a route keeping with the information provided on the transportation form.
* Provide curb-to-curb bus stops unless directed to do otherwise by the Director of Transportation.
* Develop routes and schedules that will ensure the safest and most effective and efficient use of transportation resources.
* Address concerns from parents/guardians, school administrators, drivers, attendants and community citizens regarding special needs transportation.
* Provide the appropriate screening and training for staff, drivers, and attendants.
* Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules, and guidelines within the boundaries of school board policies.
* Ensure all buses are inspected in accordance with all federal, state, and local statutes and regulations.
* Provide assistive devices as needed, including, but not limited to seat belts, safety vests, and child safety seats. Ensure all wheelchair restraints meet federal safety standards.
* Provide annual Confidentiality Training to drivers, monitors, and Transportation Services staff.
* Coordinate with the Special Education Department to ensure drivers receive annual training in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention and any updates to the training.

# PROCEDURES

The following procedures were established by Transportation Services to facilitate safe, effective and efficient transportation for students riding special needs buses. On occasion, transportation services receives requests from parents/guardians to deviate from these procedures. Transportation services reserves the right to authorize or deny deviations from these procedures based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety for all students on the bus, and an acceptable level of service for those entitled to special needs transportation.

1. ***PICK-UP/DROP-OFF***
2. CURB-TO-CURB SERVICE

Under most conditions, students receiving transportation as a related service receive curb-to-curb service. This means the bus will pick-up and drop-off at the curb in front of the student’s home or daycare. The following are some of the exceptions to this procedure:

* In rare instances, the pick-up/drop-off location may require the student to cross the roadway. When applicable, the bus driver or attendant will escort the student across the roadway to and from the pick-up/drop-off.
* Due to road conditions (i.e., dead end, dirt/gravel or narrow roadways), there may be a requirement to place the pick-up/drop-off site at a safe location away from the home or daycare. Every effort will be made to locate the stop as close as possible to the home or daycare. **The bus driver or attendant is not responsible to escort the student to or from the home or daycare.**

1. PICK-UP and DROP-OFF TIMES

* Assigned route pick-up times at the beginning of the school year reflect Transportation Services’ best estimate based on a number of variables. These are estimated times only. During the school year, as students are added or deleted from the routes, the actual pick-up time will change. Transportation Services does not state drop-off times when delivering students from school. Someone should be available at the time the student is RELEASED from school. For students whose ARD requires they not be left unsupervised, If there is no authorized person at the scheduled drop off, the bus will continue the route until all others in the immediate area have been delivered. Then the bus will return to attempt a second delivery, if reasonable and time permits. If no authorized person is at home, a **Notice of Non-Delivery Form** is left to inform you that your child has been returned to the campus.

1. ALTERNATE DROP-OFF

Drivers are authorized to drop off students only at the school or designated drop off locations.

* The driver never attempts to drop off the student at an alternate drop-off address **UNLESS** the parent or guardian has previously contacted Transportation Services and the Special Education Office requesting they do so and the address is stated on the ARD Transportation Supplement. If there is no authorized person at the alternate drop-off; a **Notice of Non-Delivery Fo**r**m** is left to stating that the student has been returned to the campus.
* The alternate drop-off must be within the neighborhood of residence. The alternate drop-off must be listed on the ARD Transportation Supplement.

1. PRIVATE DRIVES and PARKING LOTS

* Mesquite ISD Transportation Services is considered to be public transportation with a primary responsibility to transport MISD students. The designated pick-up locations are always placed on public roads or streets unless otherwise approved by the Director of Transportation.
* On occasion, condominium/apartment management companies and business owners deny school buses access to their parking lots. In these cases, the pick-up/drop-off location will be placed at a safe location close to the student’s home or daycare.

1. ***LOADING and UNLOADING***
2. AT PICK-UP/DROP-OFF LOCATION

* The driver and/or attendant will load and unload students at the pick-up/drop-off location. Under certain circumstances, the parent/guardian may be requested to assist with his/her student only. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to communicate to the driver and/or attendant any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading.
* Parents/guardians should not send students to the bus with food or drink to be consumed on the bus. This includes candy, gum, suckers, etc. This puts the student at risk of choking and could cause an allergic reaction in other individuals on the bus. Food/drinks dropped or spilled inside the bus are also a safety hazard. Heavy perfumes/colognes should be avoided for students riding the bus due to allergic reactions to other individuals as well.
* Parents/guardians should not send anything on the bus with the student (i.e. toys) that could be a potential choking hazard.
* MISD Transportation Services will transport students to and from licensed day cares/child care providers no more than .5 (one-half of a mile) from MISD boundaries.

1. AT THE SCHOOL

* To facilitate a smoother student transition on and off the bus, designated school personnel are encouraged to help load and unload ambulatory students, especially the ones in safety vests and child safety seats. As other needs may arise, the driver may request other types of assistance.
* School administrators and teachers should not send students to the bus with food or drink to be consumed on the bus unless required by the student’s Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

C. CARRYING STUDENTS ON AND OFF THE BUS

* To avoid the risk of injury to students or assisting adults, students should not be carried up or down the bus steps during loading and unloading. If a student cannot negotiate the bus steps with a reasonable degree of assistance, an alternate method of loading/unloading or transporting the student will need to be resolved between school administrators, parents/guardians and the Transportation Department.

D. WHEELCHAIRS AND EQUIPMENT

* As a general rule, wheelchairs are not to be left on the bus during the day when the student is not being transported. Only under unique circumstances would transportation department consider this arrangement. Transporting a wheelchair without the student often affects the driver’s ability to properly serve other wheelchair students on subsequent bus routes or interferes with shuttles being conducted during the day.
* Generally, transportation is for students only, not equipment, unless the equipment is necessary for the health/safety of the student.

***3. STUDENT BEHAVIOR***

A. TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

* MISD Transportation is responsible for providing safe transportation for all students who ride school buses to and from school and on school-related activity trips. In the absence of a teacher or school administrator, the school bus driver is responsible for ensuring students behave in a safe and responsible manner. Behavior that interferes with the safe transportation of students must be reported. This policy applies to all students for whom bus transportation service is provided. Behavior problems involving special needs students are dealt with in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws, policies and procedures. Any inappropriate behavior on the school bus will be reported by the driver to a school administrator using the **Bus Safety Report Form**. Bus drivers and/or monitors are responsible for making an attempt to contact the guardian to discuss any concerns/discipline issues encountered on the bus before submitting a **Bus Safety Report Form**. School administrators are responsible for any disciplinary action required to be taken.

B. BEHAVIOR ON THE SCHOOL BUS

* Any unsafe behavior should be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible using the **Bus Safety Report Form**.
* When the behavior of a student on a special needs bus creates a potential danger to other students or adults on the bus, the driver will immediately call the Transportation Department for instructions.

***4. RESTRAINT DEVICES***

A. CHILD SAFETY SEATS

* MISD utilizes a five-point restraint system called the **STAR SEAT** that safely secures and adapts to children of a wide range of sizes and needs to ensure proper and safe transportation.

B. SAFETY VEST

* The Transportation Department will place the safety vest on a student only if authorized by the ARD committee or in the event the student’s behavior is jeopardizing safety to themselves or others on the school bus.
* A safety vest is designed for students with behavioral or emotional disabilities or to provide upper body support for students with physical disabilities that an ARD committee has determined to be necessary due to safety concerns. The vest is equipped with a zipper in the back that, when properly attached, is not accessible to the student. The vest is attached to two straps with four rings mounted on the child safety seat. The mounting straps remain on the bus when not being used by the student; however, on many occasions the vest is sent with the student into the classroom and home so the student is already wearing it when the bus arrives.

C. SEATBELT

* Special needs students that ride on a special education bus are encouraged to wear a seatbelt while being transported to and from school.

***5. BUS EVACUATION***

* During an emergency, the driver will call the Transportation Department to inform them of the situation and seek instructions if necessary. Depending on time and type of emergency, the driver should call the Transportation Department before evacuating the students. The Transportation Department will need to know what emergency exists, location and assistance required. The Transportation Department will notify the parents/guardians of all the students on the bus, and school administrators as necessary.

***6. BOWEL and BLADDER ACCIDENTS***

* This is an issue where the developed procedures are designed to protect the health and dignity of all individuals riding the bus. Bus drivers and attendants are instructed by the Transportation Department to not accept students for transport with soiled clothes from bowel or bladder accidents. If the student has a bowel or bladder accident on the way to the bus, the driver will wait while the caregiver/school returns inside to change the student if reasonable and time permits.
* If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip, drivers and attendants are instructed not to attempt cleaning up the accident in route, but to proceed to the scheduled stop at school or home. After unloading the student at the stop, the driver and/or attendant will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting any affected surfaces on the bus utilizing the bodily fluid cleanup kit.

***7. MEDICATION and OTHER ITEMS***

* The driver and /or attendant are not authorized to handle any type of medication, note or other papers for any reason unless approved by the Director of Transportation. If these items are placed in the student’s backpack or other carrying device, the driver and/or attendant will not be held responsible for safe keeping during the bus ride.

**BUS RULES**

**Rules For The Student While On The Bus:**

1. Student will cooperate with the bus driver at all times.

2. Student will stay seated and face forward.

3. Student will not talk loud, yell or cause loud noises on the bus.

4. Student will not use profanity.

5. Student will not extend arms, legs, or head out the window.

6. Student will not use tobacco products, alcohol, or drugs on the bus.

7. Student will not damage any part of the school bus.

8. Student will not fight on the bus.

9. Student will not open the back door. (For Emergency Use Only)

10. Student will not throw any object from the bus.

**Restrictions for Violation of School Bus Rules and Regulations**

Bus drivers will report all violations to the School Administrator who will determine the appropriate action based upon the student’s Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). If no Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) has been developed, the student can be expected to comply, without modification, with the rules and policies governing student behavior established by MISD School Board Policy. This may may include written notice of misconduct and/or suspension of school bus privileges.