**SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION**

 **Parent/Guardian Handbook**

 Hall County School District



Department of Pupil Transportation

2915 Atlanta Highway

Gainesville, GA 30507

***P u r p o s e***

The Purpose of this brochure is to provide parents

and school staff with a source of information that

addresses issues, responsibilities, and concerns relating

to special needs transportation. The full scope of the

special needs transportation operation is much broader

than can be contained in this booklet; it is not intended

to be all inclusive, but is an attempt to share important

information with everyone who has a role in transporting

students with special needs. Working together, we can

create an effective transportation team which will help

provide our students with a safe, timely, and comfortable

ride to and from school.

***Questions and Concerns***

Questions about discipline should be addressed to the school

principal.

Parents may call the Special Education Transportation District Manager for their child’s school with questions or concerns about special needs transportation.

**Supervisors and their office locations are listed below:**

Karla Swafford - Central Office #: 770-534-1080

Ronya Churchwell- Central Office #: 770-534-1080

Clay Hobbs - Executive Director Transportation

 #: 770-287-0942

Mike Garner - Transportation Supervisor

 #: 770-287-0942

David Childers - Transportation Safety Supervisor

 #: 770-287-0942

Debbi Sutherland - Transportation Supervisor

 #: 770-297-9427

Please contact your child’s school or Special Education

Transportation if you are unsure of the appropriate supervisor, then record that information below for future reference:

**Telephone List**

School \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Department 770-287-0942

Driver’s Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Driver’s Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Bus Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Transportation Supervisor Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**WHO QUALIFIES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION AND HOW IS IT ARRANGED?**

 Special transportation will be provided for students who

 need it to access education because of their disability or

 the location of their program. All other students will ride

 the regular school bus or walk to school.

 Eligibility for transportation for students receiving

 special education is addressed in the IEP (Individualized

 Education Plan). If a student is deemed eligible, the

 parent should complete the **PARENT PERMISSION**

 **TO TRANSPORT** form at the IEP meeting. Incomplete

 forms will delay processing. Information from this form

 is forwarded to the Transportation Office from Special

 Education Support Services for routing.

 Requests for transportation of students with a **504 plan**

should be initiated through the local School Student

 Support team. Requests must be approved by and

 forwarded to Transportation from Special Education

 Support Services.

 It takes an average of five to ten business days for the

 school bus ride to be arranged after the request is

 received. Requests requiring special handling may take

 longer.

 When special needs transportation is requested two

 weeks or less before school starts, a bus route may not be

 arranged by the start of school.

 When transportation arrangements are complete, the

 driver will contact the parents/guardians with

 information regarding the stop location and pick up time.

 If the addition of a new student to the route creates a

 significant time change for other riders, those parents

 will be notified before the new student can begin riding.

 Only students assigned to the bus may ride; space

 limitations prevent us from transporting siblings and

 friends. Any exceptions must be approved through the

 school principal/designee and the Transportation

 Department. These exceptions will be subject to change

 as routes and load counts change.

 Parents may ride the bus only as an official chaperone on

 a school-sponsored field trip. Parents must board the bus

 at the school.

 Inform Special Education Support Services and the

 school of any change of address or telephone number as

 soon as this information is available.

***P r o c e d u r e s***

 The following procedures have been established by the Pupil Transportation Office to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students riding special needs buses. On occasion, the Transportation Office receives requests from parents to deviate from these procedures. Special Education Transportation office reserves the right to authorize or deny deviations from these procedures based on the need to provide an acceptable level of safety and service for all those entitled to special needs transportation.

**Pickup and Drop-off Locations and Times**

 Bus stop locations will be determined by safety factors,

 Available access for the bus, and the student’s disability.

 road conditions (dead end streets, narrow roadways,

 inaccessible apartment complexes) may make it

 necessary to place the pickup/drop-off site at a safe

 location away from the home or daycare facility.

 Hall County School District buses do not use private

 driveways or business parking lots (parent/guardian

 place of employment) in the course of providing

 transportation services.

 Students who live in communities or apartment

 complexes with or without electronic security gates must

 be picked up outside the gate. Drivers and/or bus

 monitors may not get off the bus to use access keys,

 cards, or key pads.

 Bus routes can only allow for one address for the pickup

 and one address for the drop-off, five days a week.

 Since school assignments are usually based on the home

 address, day care picks ups should be close to the home

 address and must be located in hall county but must not

 be in the city. Exceptions must be cleared through the

 Transportation department before it is approved.

 The pickup and drop-off times assigned at the beginning

 of the school year reflect the driver’s best estimate based

 on a number of variables and are subject to change. In

 addition, as students are added or deleted from the route,

 time adjustments must be made. It is important to talk

 directly to the driver to confirm pickup and drop-off

 times.

 Students should be ready and waiting for the bus five

 minutes before scheduled time. The driver is allowed to

 wait no more than three minutes past the scheduled stop

 time for any student. Waiting for students may cause

 delays in the route, placing other students at risk and

 could also interfere with time on task in the classroom.

 The driver is not allowed to blow the horn because this

 could result in complaints from neighbors and violate

 local ordinances.

 Bus routes are scheduled to accommodate the arrival and

 dismissal times for each school and to maximize the

 efficiency of service for all students transported to and

 from the school. The Special Education Transportation

 office cannot honor requests to lengthen or shorten a

 student’s bus ride to accommodate day care schedules or

 parent/guardian work schedules.

 Very young students and students whose disabilities

 mandate that they not be left at a drop-off point without

 a designated responsible person to receive them. If such

 a person is not present at the scheduled drop-off time and

 the emergency contact is unavailable, the student will be

 returned to school. If no one is available at the school to

 receive the child, he or she must be released to the

 School Resource Officer. Consistent failure to have

 someone present to receive a child at the stop may result

 in an interruption of transportation services.

**Address Changes**

 An address change may require a bus change. Bus

 drivers are not authorized to make changes without

 approval from Transportation.

 Parents should notify the students attending school in

 advance to report change in address, phone numbers,

 emergency contacts, or request a change in pickup and

 drop-off locations. Bus route changes may take three to

 five business days to start.

 When a student moves into a new school attendance

 area, the needs will be reassessed and the service school

 site may be changed.

**Bus Evacuation Drills**

Georgia law mandates that emergency evacuation practice drills be conducted for all buses twice each school year. Drivers of special needs buses prepare individual plans based on the unique needs of their students and conduct their practice drills at school sites with the assistance of school and transportation staff.

The evacuation plan includes identification of students who have special medical conditions, such as brittle bone syndrome, who are dependent upon a respirator need to be considered during an evacuation. A list of written instructions of the proper procedures for each student should also be a part of the bus evacuation plan.

The evacuation plan should also include an exact designation of the roles of the driver and monitor during the evacuation.

**Bladder and Bowel Accidents**

The following guidelines have been established to protect the health and safety of all passengers on the school bus.

Bus drivers may not accept students for transport with soiled clothes from bowel or bladder accidents. Parents are requested to keep extra clothing at school so that any needed change may be made before this time.

If a bowel or bladder accident occurs during the bus trip,

drivers and monitors are instructed to proceed to the

scheduled stop at the school or home. At that point, the student should be immediately released to a parent/guardian (home) or school staff member for appropriate attention. The bus driver and monitor will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting any affected surfaces on the bus utilizing the body fluid cleanup kit.

**Transporting Items**

 Book bags, projects, and musical instruments may be

 transported if they can be held in the student’s lap. Items

 may not block the aisle or emergency door, or take up

 seating needed for other students.

 No items can be placed on the bus which might create a

 danger to students; these include breakables, sharp

 objects, balloons, animals, insects, or weapons of any

 kind. Any item which cannot be properly secured can not

 be transported, as it becomes a safety hazard to the

 students.

 Medication should be taken to school by the parent,

 Students should never carry medication on their person

 or in book bags. Adaptive equipment required on the bus

 for medical reasons must be secured at all times.

 Parents should deliver refreshments and other special

 items for school events personally.

**Loading and Unloading the Bus**

 At the pickup and drop-off locations: The bus driver is

 responsible for the safe loading and unloading students.

 Students should be ready and waiting for the bus. Parents

 and care providers are strongly encouraged to

 communicate to the bus drivers any information about

 the student that would help facilitate safe loading and

 unloading. Parents, siblings, and care providers should

 be careful not to interfere with the driver or monitor

 while they are performing their duties.

 At the school: Students should be released to school staff

 in the bus loading zone. Drivers may not escort students

 into the school if they have other students on the bus.

 When it facilitates a smoother transition to and from the

 bus, the school personnel are encouraged to help load

 and unload ambulatory students from seats equipped

 with restraint devices such as car or safety vests. Only

 the driver and monitor should load, unload, and secure

 students in wheel chairs and safety restraints.

**Mobility Aides and Child Safety Restraint Systems**

 Parents should indicate on the Parent Permission to

 Transport form if the student will be riding in a

 wheelchair or will need to have special equipment

 transported. A transportation staff member may need to

 see the wheelchair or equipment prior to arranging

 service to determine the safest way to transport.

 Students who ride to school in wheelchairs are provided

 Service on buses equipped with lifts and securement

 systems which meet federal standards. Wheelchairs must

 be a good condition, with operating breaks, foot rests

 and good tires.

 Medical equipment such as oxygen tanks and suction

 Machines must be properly secured during transport.

 Time must be given to train staff on proper use of the

 equipment.

 The Hall County School District follows federal safety

 recommendations for transporting small children with

 disabilities. Children under the age of five or weighing

 40 pounds or less will be transported in an approved

 child safety restraint systems.

 These systems include car seats, Star seats and safety

 vests. The type of restraint system will be determined by

 the size and needs of the individual student.

 Larger children with disabilities that affect their ability

 to sit in the bus seat without support may use safety

 vests. These devices are used at the direction of the

 Special Education Transportation Office after

 consultation with parents/guardians and/or the IEP

 Committee. If the use of a safety restraint is mandated in

 The student’s IEP, the student will not be transported

 without the appropriate restraint.

 Drivers are instructed by the Special Education

 Transportation Office not to transport a wheelchair

 without the student except in an emergency.

 Transporting a chair without the student often affects

 the driver’s ability to serve other students in wheelchairs

 on subsequent routes and may result in a chair being left

 unattended outside the student’s home. An example of

 an emergency would be when a student is taken to the

 hospital during the school day, leaving the chair at

 school.

**Behavior on the Bus**

The school bus is an extension of the classroom, and bus behavior

should reflect that expected in the school building. An incident which might be simply distracting in class can be deadly on a school bus.

***R u l e s o f C o n d u c t***

1. Be on time and come to the bus properly

2. Stay in your seat with arms and legs out of the aisle

3. Talk quietly and politely; no profanity is allowed

4. Always follow the driver’s directions

5. Treat the driver and other students with respect

6. No eating or drinking is allowed on the bus

 All students are expected to follow the bus safety rules

 so that everyone will have a safe ride.

 The bus driver must have complete control of the bus to

 Ensure the safety of everyone. The driver may assign

 seats and use behavior modification plans, when

 appropriate, to make the bus safe.

 The bus driver will submit a discipline referral to the

 principal for students whose behavior continues to be

 unsafe after a warning.

 The principal will determine what disciplinary action

 will be taken to enforce student behavior on the bus.

 Actions may

***Responsibilities***

The safe and efficient transportation of your child depends on the cooperation of all members of the Transportation Team, which includes the Pupil Transportation Office, the Department of Student Support Services, the school staff, the bus driver and monitor, the parent and the student. Each team member has responsibilities in this effort.

**Student Support Services Responsibilities**

 Identify students who are eligible for special needs

 transportation based on the appropriate guidelines and

 submit transportation requests to the Transportation

 Office.

 Provide all information about the student which is

 necessary for the driver/monitor to provide safe and

 appropriate service to the student to the transportation

 staff.

 Assist the Transportation Office in getting appropriate

 updates on students throughout the school year and at the

 end of each school year.

**Special Needs Transportation Office**

**Responsibilities**

 Assign each eligible student to a bus. No one may assign

 A student to a bus or reassign a student to a different bus

 Without permission of the Transportation Office.

 Determine bus stop locations according to the disability

 of the student and the accessibility of the residence.

 Route and schedule special needs buses, ensuring the

 safest and most effective use of the vehicle. A minimum

 of five working days to include assigned seating, bus

 behavior check sheets, loss of privileges at school, parent

 conferences, suspensions from the bus and/or suspension

 from school, or other consequences as determined.

 Parents can help by supporting the bus driver,

 reinforcing the school bus safety rules, and encouraging

 appropriate bus riding behavior.

 Parents may be asked to respond to behavior check

 sheets and/or to meet with the driver and teacher to work

 on behavior strategies.

**Driver and Assistant Responsibilities**

 Notify the parent/guardian of the bus number and

 approximate time of pickup and drop off.

 Be on time for the pickup and drop off. If the driver

 arrives earlier than the designated time of pick up, he or

 she must wait until the scheduled time. If the student is

 not exiting the home on time, the driver can wait no

 more than three minutes past the scheduled pickup time.

 Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.

 Be familiar with special needs of students assigned to the

 route based on information received from the Student

 Support Services; follow any IEP mandated directives

 related to the student’s transportation.

 Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality

 of the families whose children they transport. Maintain

 the confidentiality of information received in the

 performance of duty as a school official.

 Follow appropriate loading and unloading procedures for

 all students based on disability; ensure that all child

 safety restraints and mobility devices are properly

 secured and children appropriately positioned.

 Display appropriate care and patience.

 Assign clearly defined roles for the driver and monitor.

 The monitor should be in a position inside the bus that

 best meets the needs of all students.

 Communicate and cooperate with parents, guardians,

 school and transportation staff to resolve safely and

 procedural concerns.

 Maintain an emergency evacuation plan as trained and

 be prepared to evacuate the bus in the event of an

 emergency.

 Work cooperatively with Student Support Services to

 ensure that transportation services are in compliance

 with IEP mandates. Provide a transportation

 representative to attend IEP meetings when

 transportation related issues are involved.

 Address concerns from parents, school administrators,

 drivers and monitors regarding special needs

 transportation. Several days may be needed to establish a

 new route and/or schedule pickup and drop-off changes.

 Provide appropriate training and supervision for bus

 drivers and monitors.

 Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules,

 and regulations.

 Maintain discipline on the bus to ensure student safety;

 refer students who violate safety rules to the proper

 school administrator.

 Attend all mandated training sessions and keep required

 certifications current.

**School Responsibilities**

 Work with Student Support Services and the

 Transportation Office to maintain current information on

 each student’s address, telephone number, and

 emergency information.

 Inform the bus driver of any school action which affects

 a student’s transportation service (for example, a school

 or bus suspension).

 Work with the bus driver to address discipline and safety

 concerns resulting from the student’s bus behavior.

 Provide staff to receive students in the morning.

 Assure that students are ready for dismissal at the time

 established by the Principal and the Transportation

 Office.

 Notify parents of schedule changes that may affect pupil

 transportation (i.e. early dismissal, inclement weather,

 school building safety, etc.)

**Student Responsibilities**

 Obey the rules established by the bus driver

 Respect the rights of the other passengers

 Be ready for the bus at the designated pickup time.

*These rules and regulations have been set forth to ensure the overall safe operation of the school bus and to transport your student(s) to and from school safely.*

**Parent Responsibilities**

 Provide accurate and timely information on the Parent

Permission to Transport form, including if requested an alternate pick-up or drop-off location and the names of persons authorized to receive the child.

 Inform the school administrator and bus driver of any

 Medical condition or behavior which might affect the

 student’s health or safety on the bus.

 Assure that the student meets the bus at the scheduled

 time. Accompany the child to the bus stop if

 appropriate, based on his/her disability. (Buses are

 scheduled to arrive within five minutes of the designated

 time each day. The bus driver cannot wait more than

 three minutes past schedule time for any students, as this

 creates late pickup times for other students).

 Assure that, when applicable, an authorized person will

 be at the bus stop on time when the child is dropped off.

 Notify the driver or the Transportation Office if the child

 will not be riding. If a child does not ride the bus for

 three consecutive days and no communication is

 received from the parent or the school, bus service will

 be discontinued and will only resume once the school,

 transportation office or bus driver has heard from the

 parent/guardian.

 Provide some type of identification on the child’s book

 bag or equipment.

***Thank you in advance for your collaboration!***