



**PARENT AND DRIVER INFORMATION
FOR CHILDREN RECEIVING
SPECIAL EDUCATION
TRANSPORTATION SERVICE**

West County Transportation Agency
367 West Robles Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95407
(707) 206-9988

www.schoolbusing.org

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The West County Transportation Agency has prepared this information booklet to acquaint you with the rules and regulations covering your child's school transportation. Our goal is to provide the safest, most reliable transportation service possible for your child.

Please read this information to familiarize yourself with the guidelines and procedures for transportation. Your cooperation is needed to ensure reliable, safe and efficient school bus service.

Thank You,

West County Transportation Agency

BUS STOPS

Under most conditions, special education students are transported from a safe bus stop location near your home to school and back. All transportation services are during the student's school day. Services have been expanded to allow for pick ups and drop offs at day care providers. With the exception of therapy, all alternate addresses must be within a ten (10) mile radius of the student's pick up address and each student will be limited to two (2) addresses: the home and one alternate address.

Unless physically impossible for the bus, the stop will be in front of and on the same side of the street as the student's address. Students who reside in mobile home parks, apartment or condominium complexes may have a bus stop on the street outside of the park, or at the office or common location just inside the park or complex. Pick up or release of a student will not be made in any area determined to be unsafe. Safety always takes precedence over other criteria.

Each child is assigned to a definite bus route and may be assigned to a particular seat. State law requires that no child be permitted to leave the bus at a point other than his/her assigned stop. Parents or guardians must not make private arrangements with the bus driver. All changes must be cleared through the student's principal as well as this Agency.

Drivers must follow established routes. They may not make changes in these routes unless authorized by West County Transportation Agency.

BUS SCHEDULES

Prior to the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians will be notified of their child's pick up and drop off schedules. Buses, routes and times may need to be changed throughout the school year to accommodate new students on the route or other route changes. Parents/guardians will be notified of time changes of more than ten (10) minutes. Buses may run late during days of unfavorable weather conditions such as rain or fog. Buses may also be delayed by unusually heavy traffic, road construction, or other student's needs on the bus.

PICK UP PROCEDURE

An adult must supervise each child until the bus arrives. You are required to have the child ready for pick up ten (10) minutes prior to the scheduled time. You are responsible for promptly assisting the student on to the bus as soon as the bus arrives.

There is a Vehicle Code regulation prohibiting drivers from honking their horns (except in a driving emergency as per CVC 27001(b).) Bus Drivers will not honk the horn to alert you of their presence. Buses must operate on a definite schedule in order for classes to start on time. Buses will not depart from a stop prior to the designated pick up time and will not wait before continuing on the route, if you are not present and ready to immediately board the bus.

A bus will not be sent back to pick up a child who was not ready on time.

The parent/guardian is responsible for assisting the student to the bus stop and on to the bus. **The bus driver may not leave the bus except to operate the lift gate for students in wheelchairs.** It is the bus driver's responsibility to load and unload the students and to ensure that the wheelchairs are secured and all seat belts are fastened.

DROP OFF PROCEDURE

The parent/guardian or authorized care provider must be at the assigned stop to receive the student when delivered by the bus driver. No student will be permitted to leave the bus at any point other than the assigned stop. If there is an emergency and the designated adult is unable to meet the bus, arrangements must be made for another adult to be there when the bus arrives. If the parent/guardian feels that the student does not need to be met by an adult, this must be authorized on the form titled "Transportation Emergency Information" (see below).

In the event that no responsible or authorized adult is available to meet the student at the designated drop off point, and there is no authorization on

file to drop the student off unattended, the following procedure will be observed:

The bus driver will notify the dispatcher by radio immediately and, if other students are on board, continue the route. This can take up to two hours or more. The dispatcher will make every attempt to locate a parent/guardian or an alternate drop off point using the information provided on the "Transportation Emergency Information" form. At the completion of the route, if no responsible adult has been located, the student will be delivered to the Police Department or the Sheriff's Office.

Consistent failure to meet the bus will be cause to suspend transportation service.

TRANSPORTATION EMERGENCY INFORMATION FORM

In order to keep emergency information on each child as current as possible, parents/guardians will be required to complete this form at the beginning of each school year. West County Transportation Agency will provide the form to the parents/guardians along with their child's bus schedule prior to the start of the school year. The completed form can then be mailed to West County Transportation Agency or given to the child's bus driver. **West County Transportation Agency must receive the emergency form ten (10) days prior to commencing transportation service.**

CHANGES THAT EFFECT YOUR CHILD'S TRANSPORTATION

If you move or make any changes that will effect your child's transportation during the school year, you must notify your school or Special Education Department, five (5) days in advance to insure continuous transportation service.

Once you provide the school with the new information, the school will forward the information to West County Transportation Agency. The Agency will assign your child to a bus route and you will be notified of the new pick-up and return times.

Note: Bus drivers cannot accept changes of address from parents. Transportation service will not be provided until we receive the new address information from the school.

ILLNESS

Please notify West County Transportation Agency by telephone at least one hour prior to the pick-up time whenever you are not sending your child to school.

Please do not send even a mildly ill child to school because he/she may become acutely ill on the bus. In fairness to your child and other children, keep a sick child at home. Most doctors recommend that children be free of fever for at least 24 hours before sending them back to school.

If a child becomes ill at school, the parent/guardian will be asked to transport the child home.

After three (3) consecutive days of a student not riding the school bus and no notification, the bus service will be discontinued until the parent/guardian calls West County Transportation Agency to restart the service.

If you drive your child to school, you will need to call West County Transportation Agency to let us know he/she needs a ride home.

Medication - For safety purposes, medication must be placed in a plain, brown paper bag and handed directly to the bus driver by the parent and/or teacher and must not be placed among the child's personal belongings.

Personal Hygiene - For the comfort of the other persons on the bus, it is important to maintain adequate standards of hygiene. Please be sure to have your child use the restroom before they board the bus. If your child has a problem in this area, please be sure to supply the school with a change of clothes and a bag for transporting them in.

Emergency Medical Information - Please notify the school nurse and West County Transportation Agency of any medical conditions (seizures, asthma, allergy to bee stings, etc.) your child may suffer from. The bus route sheet will contain specific information regarding information you share with us (on the Transportation Emergency Information Form) giving the

driver basic instructions on what to do when faced with a medical emergency on the bus. Serious medical conditions may require the driver or West County Transportation to call 911 for professional emergency medical assistance.

LOST ARTICLES

Please label all personal items sent to school. West County Transportation Agency assumes no responsibility for lost articles. Any articles found on a bus will be returned to the school.

BUS RULES FOR STUDENTS

Please discuss with your child:

Students are expected to be courteous, respectful and obedient to the driver at all times. Classroom behavior is expected on the bus.

1. Students may be assigned to a particular seat.
2. Students must remain seated at all times when the bus is in motion.
3. Seat belts are to be worn at all times.
4. For safety purposes, conversations and singing need to be kept within reasonable limits.
5. Hands, arms, legs and feet must be inside the school bus at all times.
6. No foul or abusive language is to be used.
7. Eating or drinking is not permitted on the school bus.
8. No items may be brought aboard the bus that could be hazardous to other passengers. Example - large toys, glass, straight or safety pins, insects, animals (with the exception of seeing eye dogs and assistance animals), plastic bags, knives, skateboards, bowling balls, weapons of any kind, irritants and objects too large to hold safely on the lap.
9. Smoking is not permitted on the school bus.
10. Fighting, pinching, hitting, biting, spitting, etc. will not be permitted.
11. Vandalism to the interior or exterior of the bus is prohibited.
12. Follow all directions of the driver. Be courteous and respectful of the driver and other students on the bus.

BUS SUSPENSION POLICY

The bus driver has the authority to recommend the suspension of students for disruptive and/or dangerous behavior, including, but not limited to, infractions of the bus rules. Any student may receive the maximum suspension and/or be denied bus transportation if it is determined that he/she created a safety hazard on the bus. The principal of the student's program will make the determination of the suspension in conjunction with West County Transportation Agency officials.

Citations will be issued for serious or chronic violations of the bus rules. Prior to the issuance of the citation, the driver has repeatedly warned the student verbally, and in most cases will have notified the parent/guardian and teacher. In each instance, the student, principal and parent will get a copy of the citation.

RECOMMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:

NOTE: ONLY THE PRINCIPAL OR PROGRAM OPERATOR HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND SERVICES

1st Violation: Verbal notification, driver informs teacher
Action _____ Date _____

1st Citation: Student warned, citation to teacher, copy to principal, notice sent to parent
Action _____ Date _____

2nd Citation: Citation to teacher, copy to principal, notice sent to parent. A behavior management plan is recommended.
Action _____ Date _____

3rd Citation: Student suspended for 1 to 5 school days.
Action _____ Date _____

This process will be followed except when the circumstances and/or the severity of the misbehavior warrants emergency action.

VANDALISM

The California Civil Code, Section 1714.1 states: "Any act of willful misconduct of a minor which results in injury or death of another person or in any injury to the property of another shall be imputed to the parent or guardian having custody or control of the minor for all purposes of civil damages, and such parent or guardian having custody or control shall be jointly and severally liable with such minor for any damages resulting from such willful misconduct up to a maximum of \$10,000."

WHEELCHAIRS

Students who cannot sit safely secured by a seat belt or safety vest must be transported in a wheelchair.

Each parent shall arrange for a properly equipped wheelchair. Wheelchairs shall be equipped with brakes and seat belt properly maintained by the owner of the chair. (Velcro fasteners do not meet minimum state requirements and shall not be the sole source of seat restraint.) All wheelchair brakes must be maintained so as to prevent the wheels from moving when the brakes are applied.

Electric wheelchairs transported on school buses shall be capable of being locked in gear when placed in a school bus or shall have an independent braking system capable of holding the wheelchair in place. Wheelchair power shall be turned off prior to being transported in a school bus. Batteries used to propel electric wheelchairs shall be both leak-resistant and spill-resistant or shall be placed in a leak-resistant container. Batteries shall be secured to the wheelchair frame in such a manner as to prevent separation in the event of an accident.

Any wheelchair, which does not meet minimum state requirements, shall not be transported. It is the parent's responsibility to provide all equipment, which meets the minimum safety requirements. West County Transportation Officials may require a physical inspection of the wheelchair prior to the student being transported on a bus.

SCHOOL BUS EQUIPMENT

To assure use of safe equipment, all school buses are inspected daily by the bus driver and annually by the Department of California Highway Patrol. In addition, each vehicle must be certified so that it meets all applicable regulations and laws relating to pupil transportation in the State of California. In addition, all of the buses are equipped with two-way radios.

California law requires seat belts for school bus passengers if the vehicle is equipped. Students will be required to wear them while riding the school bus. Seat belts are not to be unfastened until the bus has stopped at the proper destination. Safety vests are available for students unable to sit upright without the extra support.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

Special education transportation requires drivers who are especially competent to give the best service and protection for your child. To assure safe drivers for the children, the West County Transportation Agency requires all school bus drivers to attend regularly scheduled safety meetings and in-service training sessions to improve their skills in transporting special education children. In addition, state law requires each driver to have a California Special Driver Certificate valid for operating a school bus and first aid training, to pass a physical examination, and to submit to fingerprinting for criminal background screening, and to also submit to pre-employment drug testing, and random drug and alcohol testing upon employment.

SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENTS

A school bus accident is any accident, no matter how minor, involving a school bus while students are on board. In every instance, a law enforcement officer must respond to the scene and delays of up to one hour are common. When an accident occurs, it is the responsibility of West County Transportation Agency to determine if there are any injuries and the extent of the damages, and to notify the proper authorities, to include California Highway Patrol, the Driver's Supervisor (who must also respond to the scene), Ambulance (if necessary), and the School Office. West

County Transportation Agency will notify the parents and schools immediately upon determining the names of the students on board, the extent of the injuries (if any), the location of the accident, and a description of the accident.

SERVICE PROBLEMS OR COMPLAINTS

West County Transportation Agency is committed to providing the finest quality school transportation service to you and your child. For any service related questions, please contact one of our dispatchers directly at 206-9988 Ext. 219. Serious complaints are forwarded to the driver's Supervisor. Please be prepared to give your child's name, bus route and state the nature of your concern.

For your information, you may contact us at:

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