

CHILD'S NAME _____

PRESCHOOL and EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK

FOR PARENTS

The Westchester County Preschool/Early Intervention Transportation Program is managed by Westchester County Department of Health Children with Special Needs. We are pleased to provide you with this handbook as a guide to the transportation service options available. We hope this handbook will help you understand the procedures and answer any questions you may have. Please take a few moments to read this important information.

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September 2020 (Revised)

Transportation Service Options



Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) provides Transportation Service for children with special needs as mandated by Section 4410 of the Education Laws of 1989, Title II-A of Article 25 of the Public Health Law and/or other applicable acts.

Transportation Service is defined as transportation of each child to and from the child's special needs program (the program or agency providing educational services to the child) using a vehicle that can accommodate the specific needs of the specific child. This includes County-provided school bus service in vehicles equipped with a radio, child-restraint seat and properly trained drivers and monitors; and parent transportation by personal car or public bus. As the parent/guardian, you must discuss all available transportation service options with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator or your school district's Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE) Chairperson. Your school district is defined by the geographical area in which your family lives. Each school district has its own CPSE for children 3-5, which determines your child's special education needs.

Mileage Reimbursement and No-Cost Monthly Metro Cards are available to parents who choose to transport their child to/from an Early Intervention Toddler Development Group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), or to the approved 4410 Special Education Preschool Program contained in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Parents who transport their child to/from Early Intervention services occurring at a facility (not a toddler development group) or parent-child group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) may also receive Mileage Reimbursement, No-Cost Monthly Metro Cards, and in some cases, Taxi Fare Reimbursement.

County-Provided Bus Service is available to children attending an Early Intervention Toddler Development Group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), or the approved 4410 Special Education Preschool Program contained in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Whichever option is selected at the **IFSP or CPSE meeting**, it must be listed on your child's IFSP or IEP prior to the beginning of transportation services and it must be consistent for each day your child is scheduled to attend the program/service. You may not combine a Metro Card or transportation reimbursement and County-provided bus service.

Any necessary change in the selected transportation option must be communicated to either the Early Intervention Service Coordinator or your school district's CPSE Chairperson; and the appropriate paperwork completed prior to the beginning of the new service option.

Please ask your Early Intervention Service Coordinator or your school district's Committee on Preschool Education Chairperson for a copy of the WCDH brochure with information about Parent Transportation Reimbursement benefits.

If You Choose Bus Service

The Westchester County Department of Health Children with Special Needs-CSN must ensure safe and efficient transportation for all children approved for transportation service. Bus service will begin once the WCDH receives and reviews your child's IFSP or IEP authorizing transportation service and a properly completed Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF)

If the WCDH does not receive these required documents, if they are incorrect or arrive late, **BUS SERVICE WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE FIRST DAY OF PROGRAM.** Speak to your child's Early Intervention Service Coordinator to confirm that the correct paperwork is submitted in a timely manner. Or speak to your school district's CPSE to request that your child's meeting be scheduled in a timely manner and that all required documents have been completed and submitted to the WCDH.

Bus Service Facts:

- Your child will receive one round trip (from home to program, from program to home) on a vehicle equipped with child-restraint seats for all children. The vehicles will provide air conditioning as needed from May 1st through October 1st and be properly heated in cold weather months. The vehicles will be wheelchair accessible if necessary.
- Each vehicle will have one bus monitor who will assist your child with getting on, riding, and getting off the bus. The bus monitor is not permitted to help dress or feed your child while on the bus. Nor is he/she permitted to escort your child to or from the school bus.
- Medications are not permitted on the bus. If your child requires medication, it is your responsibility to bring your child's medication to the program.
- Parents may not enter or ride on the bus.
- Bus routes are generally scheduled for up to 60 minutes. If your child lives a significant distance from the program, the scheduled time of the bus route may be up to 75 minutes. Factors such as traffic congestion/accidents or inclement weather may cause the bus route to take more than the scheduled amount of time. Parents should also keep in mind that buses often depart from the program several minutes after the program's dismissal time once all children have boarded the bus.
- **Scheduled pick-up and drop-off times are approximate.**

Bus Company Information:

All County Bus	914-963-9600
Astra Transportation	914-965-9006
MAT Bus	914-761-3400
Orange County Transit	914-428-1400
Phillip Trans Corp	914-393-0079
TLC Transportation	914-375-2258
White Plains Bus	914-328-1400

Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF):

A completed Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF) is required before your child can ride the school bus. Your school district or service coordinator will provide you with the TAF to complete. The TAF provides the following information:

- PICK-UP ADDRESS – Your home address. If you choose an address other than your home, the alternate address must also be located within Westchester County. **The pick-up address must be the same every day of the week.**
- DROP-OFF ADDRESS – Your home address or an alternate address within Westchester County. This address may be different from the pick-up address, but it **must be the same every day of the week.**
- EMERGENCY NUMBERS — in case we cannot reach you. This should be someone who knows your child and who has agreed to receive and assume responsibility for your child.
- MEDICAL INFORMATION — This is information you and your child's physician feel is important for us to have in order to provide safe transportation. Complete this section to help us understand your child's needs. Tell us if your child has special medical conditions such as seizures, temperature difficulties, allergies, etc., if your child takes medication regularly and what the medication is.
- Once a student's trip is scheduled according to the information on the TAF, it can only be changed if the family moves to a new address or permanently changes to an alternate pick-up or drop-off address. **Temporary changes to pick up or drop off locations are not permitted; no forms can be accepted for temporary changes.**

Your child's TAF must be up-to-date at all times. **Transportation service will stop if any significant information on the TAF is found to be incorrect.** Changes to bus routes cannot be made by submitting forms or requests directly to the bus driver/company. You must contact your school district or service coordinator as soon as possible to update the TAF if changes to any of the following occur:

- The pick-up or drop-off address
- The program location
- The program session time
- The name of the person(s) authorized to meet your child at the bus
- Telephone numbers for yourself or emergency contacts
- Your child's medical needs

Your school district/service coordinator will complete a new TAF and submit the form to the WCDH. Changes to the pick-up and/or drop-off address or the program location may take up to 10 days to accommodate.

Bus Service Procedures

Waiting For the Bus:

- The Bus Company will call to give you the **approximate** scheduled pick-up and drop-off times for your child.
- Your child must be ready 10 minutes before the pick-up time. If occasionally your child is not ready at the scheduled pick-up time, the driver is not required to wait more than 5 minutes before continuing on the route. **The driver is not required to wait 5 minutes for your child each day.**
- If you are waiting more than 15 minutes from the scheduled pick-up time, and are not contacted by the Bus Company, please call the dispatcher.
- If the bus is late more than two (2) consecutive times, report this to your child's EI or preschool program for assistance.
- Changes in pick-up and drop-off times happen during the school year when children are added or leave the program. The Bus Company will notify you of any schedule changes.

You or an Authorized Caregiver must meet the bus:

- All children must be met at the school bus by a **parent/guardian** (a person legally responsible for the care of the child; may be parent, foster-parent, relative, The Department of Social Services) or **caregiver/responsible person** (individuals designated by the parent/guardian to care for the child who are **at least 14 years of age**) **listed on the TAF.**
- For the safety of your child the **bus driver is prohibited from releasing your child to someone not named on the TAF.** ID must be presented.
- The parent/guardian must be waiting at the drop-off address 10 minutes before the scheduled drop-off time.
- If you or someone listed on the TAF are not available to meet the bus and the Bus Company cannot reach you or the emergency contacts, the Bus Company **must call 911 to report that no one is available to receive your child.**

Absence:

- The parent/guardian is required to **notify the Bus Company at least one (1) hour in advance** of the scheduled pick-up time if the child is going to be absent.
- If your child will not be need the bus for several days because of a family vacation, etc., a minimum of one (1) day advance notification is requested. **You must call the Bus Company dispatch office (do not tell the bus driver).** You must also notify the program.

Suspension of Service:

- If you fail to notify the Bus Company that your child will be absent and the bus arrives at your home to provide service, this is considered a No-Show. **If your child is a No-Show for two (2) consecutive days, bus service will stop.** You may call the Bus Company to start service again. If it has been five days or more since your child's bus service was stopped due to No-Shows, you must contact your child's service coordinator or school district to request bus service. **It will take 5-10 days for bus service to start again.**
- **If the bus company is unable to transport your child safely due to his/her behavior while traveling or boarding and alighting the bus, it may be necessary to temporarily suspend bus service. Your child's program will notify you if there is a problem. The program, your school district, the bus company and the WCDH will work with you and your child to find a solution. Bus service will resume when your child can be transported safely.**

Inclement Weather:

- Please listen to local radio or TV or search online for school delays or closing notifications. You may find school district and program closings by following these links to News 12 Westchester and WHUD Westchester:

<http://westchester.news12.com/> and <http://pam1.com/stormcenter/whud.php>
- If you are not sure about your child's program, contact the program directly.
- The WCDH follows the local school district closings throughout the county. If your school district is closed, WCDH transportation will also be canceled.
- If your child's program chooses to open and WCDH does not provide bus service, you may drive your child to the program; **please be aware that you are responsible for round-trip transportation.**
- Please be aware that if bus service is provided in bad weather you should expect delays.

Complaints:

- If you have questions or concerns about your child's bus schedule, lateness, or other service problems, please call the bus company office and speak with the dispatcher or the manager. **Do not discuss problems with the bus driver or monitor.**
- Please report unresolved bus service problems to your child's program for assistance.
- If the program is unable to resolve the service problem, they will contact the WCDH Program Administrator.

Our most important mission is the safe transport of your child. If your child is in an accident or appears to be ill, the following steps will be taken.

When there is an accident:

- The Bus Company immediately notifies WCDH and your child's program.
- During program hours, your child's program will contact you. After program hours, the Bus Company will contact you.
- Your child may be taken to the Emergency Room; the police officer(s) at the scene will determine if this is necessary.
- Since New York is a no-fault insurance state, **in the event that your child is involved in a school bus accident and requires medical treatment, the parent/guardian's automobile insurance is primary for all costs, including the emergency room.** This is a New York State Law.
- Should the parent/guardian not have automobile insurance, the bus company is responsible for insurance and possible post-accident costs.

When there is illness or an injury on the bus:

- The bus driver and monitor do not administer first aid.
- In the event of an emergency, the bus driver will park the bus in a safe location and contact the dispatcher.
- The bus driver will wait for assistance/an ambulance to arrive.

REOPENING

As we approach the start of the new 2020-2021 school year, we hope everyone is healthy and dealing well with the new normal we are now experiencing. Communities and schools are facing unprecedented challenges. In July, the State Education Department (NYSED) published RECOVERING, REBUILDING, AND RENEWING: THE SPIRIT OF NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS REOPENING GUIDANCE. The section on School Bus Transportation, pages 59-63, are below. Following each section, are the new procedures the bus companies under contract with the Westchester County Department of Health Children with Special Needs (CSN) have put in place to ensure your child receives safe transportation.

NYSED Guidance

TRANSPORTATION The school bus is an extension of the classroom; therefore, many of the recommendations that apply to school buildings (like social distancing and frequent cleaning) should be applied to the school bus, as well. Pupil transportation also presents certain unique challenges, especially with regard to the transportation of homeless students, students in foster care, students in nonpublic and charter schools, and students with disabilities. Therefore, it is critical that schools and school districts must be sure to include Transportation Department staff in all school re-opening planning.

School Bus Mandatory Requirements Assurances of the following will be required when submitting the Reopening Plan: Students who are able will be required to wear masks and social distance on the bus; All buses (conforming and non-conforming to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Standards, as well as type A, C or D) which are used every day by districts and contract carriers must be cleaned/ disinfected once a day. High contact spots must be wiped down after the am and pm run depending upon the disinfection schedule. (For example, some buses might be cleaned between the am and pm runs while other buses may be cleaned/disinfected after the pm run); School buses shall not be equipped with hand sanitizer due to its combustible composition and potential liability to the carrier or district. School bus drivers, monitors and attendants must not carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer with them on school buses; Wheelchair school buses must configure wheelchair placement to ensure social distancing of 6 feet.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- Students will be required to wear masks whenever possible. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health, or students with a disability which would prevent them from wearing a mask will not be forced to do so. These students cannot be denied transportation. **The student's school district must notify Westchester County prior to the start of school if a student is unable to wear a face mask.**
- The expectation is your child will wear a face covering before he/she boards the bus and for the entire bus ride. If your child needs a face covering, please contact your school district. Your district is responsible to provide your child with a face mask. If your child does not have a face covering, he/she will not be permitted to board the bus, unless he/she is unable to do so as noted above. The bus company will maintain a supply of masks in case a student is occasionally missing his/her mask, but the parents must be responsible for providing the daily masks.
- Students must social distance (six feet separation) on the bus.
- The number of students transported on each bus will be limited to ensure proper social distancing and limit travel time.

- The safety harnesses will be installed so that only one student is seated per bus seat and in every other row of the bus to allow for proper distancing between students.
- All bus companies contracted with CSN to provide bus service to 4410 Preschool Programs and Early Intervention Toddler Development Groups will follow the above standards for cleaning/disinfecting vehicles. CSN inspectors will monitor compliance.
- Bus company staff will not carry hand sanitizer.

NYSED Guidance

School Bus Considerations Districts and other applicable schools may want to consider adding the following best practices to their reopening plan:

School bus companies may choose to install sneeze guards by the driver's seat and in between each seat to protect children and increase capacity. If installed, the sneeze guards must be made of a material approved by the Department of Transportation. Sneeze guards will need to be disinfected every day; Sneeze guards may be installed on wheelchair buses between securement stations with the approval of the Department of Transportation; When temperatures are above 45 degrees, school buses should transport passengers with roof hatches or windows slightly opened to provide airflow.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- The New York State DOT inspectors have told our bus companies sneeze guards are not permissible, for safety reasons, on our vehicles.
- The bus companies will open windows and roof hatches when appropriate.

NYSED Guidance

School Bus Staff Mandatory Requirements School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics shall perform a self-health assessment for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving to work. If personnel are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 they should notify their employer and seek medical attention; School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics must wear a face covering along with an optional face shield; Transportation staff (drivers, monitors, attendants, mechanics and cleaners) will be trained and provided periodic refreshers on the proper use of personal protective equipment and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19; Transportation departments/carriers will need to provide Personal Protective Equipment such as masks and gloves for drivers, monitors and attendants in buses as well as hand sanitizer for all staff in their transportation locations such as dispatch offices, employee lunch/break rooms and/or bus garages. Drivers, monitors and attendants who must have direct physical contact with a child must wear gloves.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- Bus company staff will follow all recommendations. The bus drivers and bus monitors will wear face coverings. The bus monitors will wear gloves and change them each time they handle a student.

NYSED Guidance

Considerations for Reopening Plans Districts and other applicable schools may want to consider adding the following best practices to their reopening plan:

The driver, monitor, and attendant may wear gloves if they choose to do so but are not required unless they must be in physical contact with students; Transportation staff should be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before and after am and pm runs to keep healthy and prevent the spread of respiratory and diarrheal infections from one person to the next. Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

- touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- touch a contaminated surface or objects
- blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- Bus company staff will follow all recommendations.

NYSED Guidance

Students on Transportation Students on Transportation Mandatory Requirements As was outlined in the Health and Safety section of this guidance, all parents/guardians will be required to ensure their child/children are not experiencing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and do not have a fever of 100 degrees or more prior to them boarding their method of transportation to school; Students must wear a mask on a school bus if they are physically able. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, including students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health are not subject to the required use of a face covering; Students must social distance (six feet separation) on the bus; Students who do not have a mask can NOT be denied transportation; Students who do not have masks must be provide one by the district; Students with a disability which would prevent them from wearing a mask will not be forced to do so or denied transportation.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- **Parents must check their child's temperature at home before bringing him/her to the bus each day.** Upon arrival at the bus, the bus monitor will ask the parent/guardian the following Health Status Attestation questions:
 - 1) Did you take your child's temperature today?
 - 2) Was it within normal range and less than 100.4?
 - 3) Has your child, or anyone in your household, been in close proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for or who has symptoms of COVID-19?
 - 4) Has your child, or anyone in your household, traveled to one of the restricted states on the Governor's quarantine list in the last 14 days?
 - 5) Has your child, or anyone in your household, tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

6) Has your child, or anyone in your household, had any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

- The student may only board the bus if the parent has taken his/her temperature, it was within the normal range and the parent has answered “no” to questions 3-6. All answers will remain confidential in accordance with State and federal law.
- The bus monitor will note on the attendance sheet or other form that the parent answered the Health Status Attestation.
- The student will be helped into his/her seat by the bus monitor.
- The monitor will change his/her gloves to prepare for the next student.
- Students who do not have a mask can NOT be denied transportation (see page 8).

NYSED Guidance

Students on Transportation Considerations Districts and other applicable schools may want to consider adding the following best practices to their reopening plan: Siblings or children who reside in the same household should be encouraged to sit together. A student without a mask may be provided a mask by the driver/monitor/attendant. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, including students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health are not subject to the required use of a face covering. In such a situation the seating will have to be rearranged so the student without a mask is socially distanced from other students. Students who are transported in a mobility device should use seating positions that provide the required social distancing or have NYS-approved sneeze guards installed. Students should be reminded of the bus rules, like, to not eat or drink on the school bus, which would require them to remove their mask. When students embark and disembark the bus, they should follow social distancing protocols. This will increase the time required to load and unload buses at stops.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- Bus companies will allow siblings to ride together on the bus to increase capacity and efficiency.
- Bus companies can provide a student with a mask occasionally (see page 8).
- Bus companies will ensure all students are travelling at a safe distance from one another on the bus; only one student per bus seat (except siblings) and every other row will be left empty, but no sneeze guards will be installed (see page 9).
- No student is permitted to eat or drink on the bus.

NYSED Guidance

Protocols Once Students Disembark from Transportation Districts and other applicable schools may want to consider adding the following best practices to their reopening plan. When students embark and disembark the bus, they should follow social distancing protocols. This will increase the time required to load and unload buses at schools in the morning and afternoon.

- Schools should consider staggered arrival and departure times to ensure social distancing.
- Schools should reconfigure the loading and unloading locations for students who are transported by bus, car or are pedestrians.
- Since hand sanitizer is not permitted on school buses, schools should consider policy to dispense hand sanitizer when students enter the building or classroom.

CSN Bus Company Procedures

- When meeting the students at the bus, the school staff will check the attendance sheets, or other form, to verify that the parent answered the Health Status Attestation questions.
 - School staff will follow their procedures for ensuring social distancing while meeting students at the bus and bringing them into the school building.
 - School protocols may include taking the child's temperature to ensure it is within the normal range before permitting the child to participate in the program that day.
 - The bus company will not be responsible for transporting home any students not permitted to participate in the program.
 - Speak to the staff at your child's school about their procedures for what to do when your child is not able to attend his/her program that day.
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During the first semester of school, your child may experience changes in his/her transportation schedule. Transportation changes may occur because:

- Many programs have an abbreviated schedule for in-class instruction in September, at some point; they may resume a regular schedule.
- Many children were not authorized for services for the start of the school year because of the pandemic, but as they become authorized, they will be added to the bus routes and these changes to the routes will affect your child's pick-up and drop-off times.

We are aware that route changes have an effect on all children. So, please keep these impending changes in mind when you are preparing your family schedule.

We are looking forward to a new school year. If you have any questions or concerns with bus service, please contact your bus company directly; the bus company telephone numbers are on page 2. You may also mention bus service concerns to the contact person at your program.