

SHARYLAND

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS & STAFF

2009-2010



"Education Through Commitment, Cooperation and Communication"

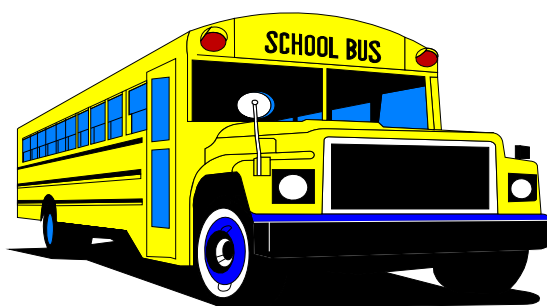
***Special Needs Transportation
Parent / Guardian Handbook***

The Sharyland Independent School District (District) does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in providing education or providing access to the benefits of educational services, activities, and programs, including career and technology education programs, in accordance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (34 CFR Part 110); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and local Board policies. The Executive Director for Human Resources coordinates compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 (Student Issues) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Coordinator for Legal Services coordinates with the provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The provisions and information set forth in this handbook are intended to be informational and not contractual in nature. Thus, this handbook is not intended, and shall not be construed, to constitute a contract between the District and any employee; prospective employee; agency of the local, state, or federal government; or any other person or legal entity of any and every nature whatsoever. The District hereby reserves and retains the right to amend, alter, change, delete, or modify any of the provisions of this handbook at any time, and from time to time, without notice, in any manner that the Administration or the Board of Trustees of the District deems to be in the best interest of the District. The contents of this handbook apply to all permanent employees (certified and auxiliary) and to all temporary and seasonal personnel in the District and do not amend, abridge, or replace Board policies or Administrative Regulations established by the District.

**SHARYLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
1106 N. Shary Rd. • Mission, Texas 78572
(956) 580-5240**

We dedicate this handbook and our services to all the special needs students in the Sharyland community.



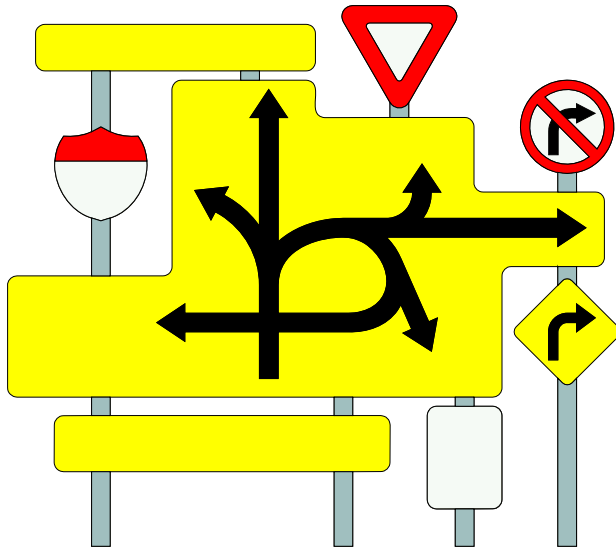
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PURPOSE



This handbook has been created to provide parents/guardians and school staff and faculty with a source of information that addresses responsibilities and procedures within special needs transportation. The full scope of the special needs transportation operation 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 special needs students. Should you have any questions that this handbook does not address, feel free to contact:

Special Needs Transportation Operations
Sharyland ISD Office of Transportation
501 South Shary Rd.
Mission, Texas 78572
(956) 580-5240





RESPONSIBILITIES

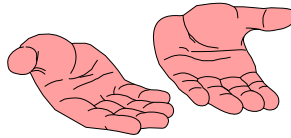
1. Parents/Guardians	4
2. Students	5
3. Driver & Attendant	5
4. Schools	6
5. Office of Special Education	7
6. Transportation Operations	7

PROCEDURES

1. Pick-Up/Drop-Off	9
2. Loading/Unloading	10
3. Student Behavior	11
4. Restraint Devices	12
5. Bus Evacuation Procedures	13
6. Bowel/Bladder Accidents	13
7. Medication and Other Items	14
8. Summer Activities	14
9. Travel Training	14



RESPONSIBILITIES



The safe and efficient transporting of your student relies on positive communication and cooperation among students, parents/guardians, driver/attendant, school staff, Office of Special Education, and Transportation Operations. 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 **Transportation Request Form**. Incorrect and untimely information delays the startup of transportation services.
- * Inform the school administrator, bus driver and attendant (if assigned to the bus) 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 school as changes occur.
- * Inform the school administrator of any change of address 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. Remember, all the other students on the route will also be affected by the change.
- * Ensure that an authorized person will be at the pick-up and drop-off location each day. Any exception to this requirement needs to be provided to the school and transportation office in writing. This includes alternate drop-off locations.
- * 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 is not required to wait for more than 2 or 3 minutes past the pick-up time. Any delays to the scheduled pick-up times have a negative effect on the other students within the route.
- * Assist the driver and/or attendant in loading or unloading your student if necessary. Please remember that parents are not allowed on the bus unless the driver has given permission to do so.

2. *STUDENTS*



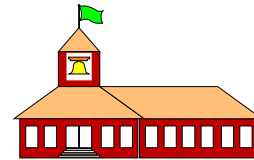
- * Obey the rules established by the bus driver and attendant. The safety of each student depends on how well all the students follow the rules. Distracting the driver could result in an accident.
- * Respect the rights of the other students and adults on the bus. Having a positive attitude each day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

3. *DRIVER & ATTENDANT*

- * In addition to transportation operations, notify the parent / guardian of the bus number and approximate time of pick-up and drop-off.
- * Be on time for the 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 until the designated time before proceeding on the route.
- * Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- * Be familiar with each student's disability, and any special considerations in providing transportation services.
- * Be prepared to provide appropriate first aid or CPR.
- * 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.
- * 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.

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- * Complete and submit a **Bus Safety Referral Guidelines and Consequences** form to the designated school administrator if a behavior problem occurs on the bus.
 - * Assist students on and off the bus as required by their disabling condition. When appropriate and necessary, request loading and unloading assistance from school officials and parents / guardians.

4. *SCHOOLS*



- * Coordinate with the Special Education Administration in the formulation of an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee decision, and the completion of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If required, ensure a Transportation Request Form is submitted to Special Needs Transportation Operations.
- * Request the presence of the transportation operations during the ARD if necessary.
- * Submit timely and accurate updates of the transportation request form to the transportation office when changes are necessary. Ensure a copy of the request form reaches the transportation office following the completion of the annual ARD.
- * Ensure that students are ready for dismissal at the time established between the school administrator and transportation operations.
- * Notify parents/guardians of schedule changes that may affect student 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 the transportation operations.
- * Notify transportation operations when a student still arrives at school, but did not ride the morning bus, and when a student rides the morning bus, but departs school in the afternoon by other means.

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- * Accept and act on all **Bus Safety Referral Guidelines and Consequences** 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 privilege, when appropriate.

5. OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

- * Notify transportation operations of any legal or procedural changes within the Special Education Policies and Procedures that would affect transportation services.
- * Assist transportation operations by ensuring schools submit their annual ARD transportation request forms by the designated deadline date.

6. SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS

- * Assign each eligible student to a route that is in keeping with the information provided on



the transportation request form.

- * Provide curb-to-curb bus stops unless directed to do otherwise by the Route Services Coordinator or 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 that are 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 car seats. Ensure all wheelchair restraints meet federal safety standards.



The following procedures were established by the Special Needs Transportation Operations to facilitate safe, effective and efficient transportation for students riding special needs buses. On occasion, transportation operations receives requests from parents/guardians to deviate from these procedures. Transportation operations 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.

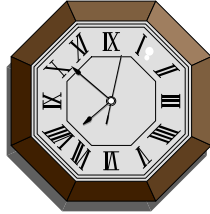
1. *PICK-UP / DROP-OFF*

A. *Curb-to-Curb Service*

Under most conditions, special needs transportation provides curb-to-curb service. This means that the bus will pick-up and drop-off at the curb in front of the student's home or day care. 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 day care. Every effort will be made to locate the stop as close as possible to the home or day care. The bus driver or attendant is not responsible to escort the student to or from the home or day care.

B. Pick-up and Drop-off Times



- * Assigned route pick-up and drop-off times at the beginning of the school year reflect the transportation operation's 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 and drop-off times will change. Either transportation operations or the bus driver should notify the parents/guardians before these changes occur.
- * Bus routes are scheduled to accommodate the arrival and dismissal times for each school, and to maximize efficiency of transportation for all students transported to and from school. **Transportation operations will not honor requests to lengthen or shorten a student's bus ride to accommodate day care or parent/guardian work schedules.** Drivers are authorized to wait only 2 to 3 minutes past the scheduled pick-up time before proceeding on their route.

C. ALTERNATE DROP-OFF

Drivers are authorized to drop-off students only at the school or designated drop-off. If there is no authorized person to accept the student at the primary drop-off location other than the school, the following steps will be taken:

- * (Elementary Student) The driver will attempt to drop-off the student at the alternate drop-off location designated on the transportation request form. If there is no authorized person at the alternate drop-off or no designated alternate drop-off location on the transportation request form, the driver will attempt to drop-off the student at least twice, **time permitting**, before proceeding to the secondary school for the second run. Depending on distance and time, the driver will attempt to drop-off the student one more time before dropping-off the secondary students. If contact has not been made with the parent/guardian by transportation operations, the student will be taken to the campus. If the parent/guardian does not arrive to pick-up the student by 5:30 p.m., Mission Police Department will be contacted to take custody of the student.
- * (Secondary Student) The driver will attempt to drop-off the student at the alternate drop-off location designated on the transportation request form. If there is no authorized person at the alternate drop-off or no designated alternate drop-off location on the transportation request form, the driver will attempt to drop-off the student at least once more before returning to campus. If contact has not been made with the parent/guardian or the parent/guardian has not arrived to pick-up the student at the campus by 5:30 p.m., Mission Police Department will be contacted to take custody of the student.

D. Private Drives and Parking Lots

- * Sharyland ISD Transportation is considered to be public transportation with a primary responsibility to transport SISD students. The designated pick-up locations are always placed on public roads or streets unless otherwise approved by the Route Services Coordinator or 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 day care.

2. *LOADING AND UNLOADING*

A. 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.

B. 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 car 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 drinks to be consumed on the bus. Some exceptions may apply on a case by case basis.

C. Carrying Students on/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 or 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 transportation operations.

D. Wheelchairs Without Students

- * As a general rule, wheelchairs are not left on the bus during the day when the student is not being transported. Only under unique circumstances would transportation operations entertain 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.

3. *STUDENT BEHAVIOR*



A. Policies and Procedures

- * SISD Special Needs Transportation is responsible to provide 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 that students behave in a safe and responsible manner. Any behavior that interferes with the safe transportation of students must be reported. This policy applies to all students, public and nonpublic, 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 Referral Guidelines and Consequences** 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 Referral Guidelines and Consequences** 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 Special Needs Transportation Operations for instructions.
- * When the behavior of a student on a special needs bus creates an imminent serious danger to other students or adults on the bus, the driver should immediately call 911 for police assistance. After calling 911, the driver will call transportation operations to inform them of the situation and the bus location.

4. RESTRAINT DEVICES



A. Car Seats

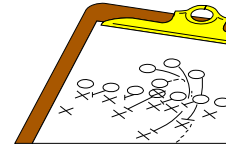
- * Most small students with disabilities can be comfortably and securely restrained in a conventional car seat. Many larger students with disabilities that affect their ability to sit upright without support can use regular restraint belts or a safety vest. Special Needs Transportation Operations provides all conventional car seats required to transport small students.
- * Students who weigh less than 20 pounds should be placed in a rear-facing infant car seat.
- * Students who weigh from 20 to 40 pounds and are 26"-40" in height, should ride in a forward-facing car seat.

B. Safety Vests

- * Special Needs Transportation Operations will place the safety vest on a student only after the school administrator and parent / guardian have provided written permission.

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- * A safety vest is designed for students with behavioral or emotional disabilities who need to be restrained because of safety concerns while on the school bus. 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 car seat. The vest and mounting straps remain on the bus when not being used by the student. This safety vest is also designed to provide upper body support for students with physical disabilities.

5. ***BUS EVACUATION PROCEDUES***



All students are expected to participate either physically or verbally during practice evacuation drills conducted by the driver and/or attendant twice each school year. Each student should understand actions to be taken in case a real emergency occurs while riding on the school bus.

- * The driver and/or attendant will be responsible for ensuring each student fully understands what actions are to be taken if required to evacuate the bus during an emergency. The students should know which emergency door to exit with certain types of accidents or emergency situations.
- * During a real emergency, the driver will call transportation operations to inform them of the situation and seek instructions if necessary. Depending on time and type of emergency, the driver should call transportation operations before evacuating the students. Transportation operations will need to know what emergency exists, location and assistance required. The driver is authorized to call 911, if necessary, before making any other calls or evacuating the students. Transportation operations will notify 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 Transportation Operations to not accept students for transport with soiled clothes from bowel or bladder accidents.
- * 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 body 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 Route Services Coordinator or Director of Transportation. These items should be provided to the school directly by the parent or guardian or vice versa. If these items are placed in the student's back pack or other carrying device, the driver and/or attendant will not be held responsible for safe keeping during the bus ride.

8. SUMMER SCHEDULES AND ACTIVITIES

- * If your student is involved in Extended Year Services, the routes will be developed once transportation operations has a full listing of all students attending summer sessions. Parents / guardians will be notified of pick-up / drop-off times by transportation operations or the driver after the routes have had a practice run to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
- * The routes for the new school year are developed during the summer months based on the transportation request form that was created during each student's annual ARD. If this form has not been received by Transportation Operations by the last day in May, the student will not be included in the initial development of the route. Once the new school year begins, and the transportation form is provided to transportation operations, the student will then be added to the appropriate route. Depending upon the workload at the beginning of the new school year, the scheduling process could take a maximum of 3 weeks.
- * Each parent / guardian needs to ensure the transportation request form has been completed properly at the school prior to the last day of school. Transportation operations will collect these forms from each school the day before school ends for the summer. If the student's home address changes or any other changes occur during the summer, transportation operations **must** be notified to ensure the student has been placed on the correct route for the first day of the new school year.

9. TRAVEL TRAINING

- * On occasion, the ARD Committee may stipulate the use of the school bus for travel training. Transportation encourages the use of travel training when appropriate, but reserves the right to be involved in the development of the program to ensure a safe and efficient transportation service is maintained throughout the training cycle.

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- * The driver and/or attendant's participation in the training program will be limited due to other responsibilities during travel time. Paraprofessionals and/or teachers may ride the bus and conduct the training program for one or all students.



The Special Needs Transportation Operations is committed to providing safe, effective and efficient transportation services for special needs students. Our sincere hope is that this handbook will contribute to a clearer understanding of special needs transportation services.

The Office of Transportation hopes that each student, parent and guardian has a safe, happy and successful school year.

