



# Grand Prairie ISD Transportation Handbook



**Guidelines for Transporting Students with IEPs**

# Grand Prairie Independent School District

## Special Education Transportation Parent Handbook

### Purpose

Thank you for choosing Grand Prairie ISD and entrusting us to transport your student(s). Safety and student achievement are our top priorities. This handbook is designed to assist all collaborators (i.e., campus staff, the Special Education Department, the Transportation Department, and the parent(s)/guardian(s)) to help ensure the safe and efficient transportation of students with IEPs. Transportation services provided through Special Education are available to eligible students residing within the Grand Prairie ISD attendance zone.

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# School Bus Transportation

## Special Education Transportation Parent Handbook

### Responsibilities

The safe and efficient transportation of a student relies on the cooperation and efforts of the school staff, GPISD Transportation Office, the Special Education Department, the bus driver and monitor, and the parent/guardian. The following section outlines some of the various responsibilities of those involved.

#### 1. Parent Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the parent to:

- Assist the school by submitting accurate and timely information to be included on the Transportation Request Form, including the student emergency information to avoid delays in transportation services.
  - Pick up and Drop off locations may differ; however,
    - There may be no more than 1 drop off location
    - There may be no more than 1 pick up location
  - *ALL Pick up and drop off locations MUST meet the ALL following criteria:*
    - *All locations MUST be within GPISD boundaries,*
    - *MUST not cause a major disruption to the routes (delaying the schedule for 10 min or longer), and*
    - *MUST be a place of residence or childcare facility (locations that are a place of work or campus to campus locations are prohibited).*
- Inform the school administrator, bus driver, and bus monitor of any medical condition or behavior(s) which might affect the student's safety or health on the bus.
- Provide up-to-date emergency information to the school and GPISD Transportation Office.
- **Ensure that an authorized person will be at the designated delivery address, on time, when your student(s) is/are delivered.**
  - **Authorized person** is defined as an adult, 18 years of age or older.
    - Authorized persons must be in the student's Skyward profile.
  - In **special circumstances**, an alternate individual may be authorized by the parent/guardian to receive the student. If a parent/guardian wishes to authorize an alternate receiver, the alternate receiver and contact information must be listed on the transportation supplement of the student's IEP. An ARD meeting will be requested to review the following considerations of the alternate receiver.
    - Age
    - Maturity
    - Relationship to student
    - Ability to provide care
    - Any other relevant information to ensure the student's safety

- Ensure that 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 required to wait for **two (2) minutes** and cannot wait for a tardy student, as this creates late pick-up times for other students.
- **STUDENT ABSENCE** – A parent must call the GPISD Transportation Office at 972-343-4402 to reschedule services when the student is absent. If the parent knows in advance that transportation services will not be used for consecutive days, the parent must report that information the GPISD Transportation Office at 972-343-4402, along with the date transportation service is to be restarted. If a student does not ride the bus for 3 or more consecutive days without advance notice, an ARD meeting may be requested to discuss alternate transportation.
- **EQUIPMENT** – For students who are non-ambulatory, it is the parent’s responsibility to provide a wheelchair and/or other necessary equipment, where the student can be safely loaded, unloaded, and transported. Upon inspection, if the wheelchair or other equipment is found to not meet safety requirements, the parents will be notified by the Transportation Department. Wheelchairs used for transportation must have the following: locking device on wheels, headrest, seatbelt, and harness (if needed) that are approved by the district.

## 2. Student Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the student to:

- Follow the posted rules for bus riders to the best of his or her ability.
- Respect the rights of the other student passengers.
- Be ready at the designated pick-up time and location.

## 3. Driver & Monitor Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the bus driver and monitor to:

- Notify the parent/guardian of the bus number and approximate time of pick-up and delivery. A notice will be left on the front door of the residence or given to the day care with information of the pick/delivery time 3 days prior to the first day of school.
- Be on time for the pick-up and delivery. The driver is not required to wait for a student for more than **two (2) minutes**. This procedure must be adhered to because of the number of students to be transported in a fixed period of time. If the driver arrives earlier than the designated time of pick-up, the driver must wait.
- Ensure the overall safe operation of the bus.
- Be prepared to provide appropriate first aid.
- Display appropriate care and patience.
- Be located in a position inside the bus that best meets the needs of all students.

- Maintain an emergency evacuation plan, listing each passenger, for use by medical personnel in the event of a vehicle accident.
- Be prepared to effectively and efficiently evacuate the bus in the event of an emergency.
- Understand and support the privacy and confidentiality of the families and scholars they serve.
- Complete a *BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL* and submit it to the GPISD Transportation Office.
- Report to the school administration and transportation supervisor any significant changes in a behavior.
- Assist students on and off the bus, as required by their individual needs.

#### 4. School Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the school to:

- Work with the Special Education Office in the formulation of an Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARD) decision and the completion of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Upon completion of the IEP, the Special Education Office will submit a transportation request to the GPISD Transportation Office [guadalupe.davila@gpisd.org].
- Update the information included on the GPISD Transportation Request form, when necessary.
- Ensure students are ready for dismissal when the final school bell rings.
- Notify parents of schedule changes that may affect transportation (i.e., early dismissals, inclement weather, etc.)
- Provide appropriate arrangements for those students needing assistance in loading and unloading from the bus at the school. Educators will escort students to the bus.
- Refer requests by the parent or guardian involving alternate transportation arrangements to the GPISD Transportation Office. GPISD Transportation Office must be notified by the school principal, or his/her designee, when approval is given for the student to go home by another method. Notify the GPISD Transportation Office if the student arrives at school by means other than the bus and the student requires bus transportation home.
- Accept and act on discipline forms submitted to the campus by the GPISD Transportation Office. The principal or his/her designee is responsible for disciplinary action, including the suspension of the student's transportation service, when appropriate. Please note: removal from the bus due to disciplinary action, constitutes a day "out of placement". Refer to *BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL*.
- Schedule an ARD to review the student's supports and services and revise the IEP, if necessary, after the student receives 3 bus referrals, or as needed.
- Make appropriate arrangements to assist the driver and attendant in loading and unloading students upon arrival and dismissal.

- Communicates with appropriate campus based assessment & related service personnel regarding authorized individuals to receive the student other than their parent/guardian.
- Be available at the campus to accept an undeliverable student.

## 5. Office of Special Education Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the Office of Special Education to:

- Assist the GPISD Transportation Office in getting appropriate updates from the schools at the end of each school year.
- Submit timely and accurate updates to the GPISD Transportation Office at the end of each year to assist in routing and scheduling for the following year.

## 6. GPISD Transportation Office Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the GPISD Transportation Office to:

- Submit timely and accurate updates to the GPISD Office of Special Education at the end of each year to assist in routing and scheduling for the following year.
- Assign each eligible student to a bus.
- Determine bus stop locations according to the needs of the student and the accessibility of the residence.
- Develop special education bus routes and schedules.
- Address concerns from parents, school administrators, drivers and attendants, and the motoring public regarding special education transportation.
- Provide the appropriate training and screening for bus drivers and attendants.
- Establish and enforce transportation procedures, rules, and regulations.
- Inspect all buses in accordance with all state and local statutes and regulations.
- Provide assistive devices as needed, including, but not limited to vests, harnesses, and child seats.

## Procedures

The following procedures have been established by the GPISD Special Education and Transportation Offices to facilitate safe and efficient transportation for students with an IEP. **Beyond the start of the school year, a minimum of three (3) working days or a maximum of five (5) working days may be needed to establish a new route and schedule any pick-up/delivery changes.**

## 1. Pick-Up/Drop-Off

- **STUDENT ABSENCE** – A parent must call the GPISD Transportation Office at 972-343-4402 to reschedule services when the student is absent. If the parent knows in advance that transportation services will not be used for consecutive days, the parent must report that information to the GPISD Transportation Office at 972-343-4402, along with the date transportation service is to be restarted. If a student does not ride the bus for 3 or more consecutive days without notice, an ARD meeting may be requested to discuss alternate transportation.

### *Curb-to-Curb Service*

Under most conditions, special education transportation provides curb-to-curb service. This means that the bus will pick-up and deliver at the curb in front of the student's home or daycare. The following are some of the exceptions to this procedure:

- Due to road conditions (dead end roadways, dirt or gravel roadways, or narrow roadways) it may be necessary to place the pick-up and delivery 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. When an escort is appropriate, it will be the responsibility of the parent or their designee to escort the student to and from the pick-up and delivery location. The bus driver or monitors are not responsible to escort the student to or from the home.
- **REMOVAL FROM BUS ROUTE** – If a student fails to use the district's transportation service for a period of three consecutive days without prior notice given to GPISD Transportation Office, an ARD meeting may be called to discuss alternate transportation. In instances where prior notice is given yet there is limited to no use of the related service of Special Education transportation, an ARD meeting may also be called to review the data and discuss alternate transportation.

### *Multi-Family Residence*

- Condominium and apartment management on occasion deny school buses access to their parking lots. In these cases, the pick-up and/or delivery will be placed at a safe location close to the student's home or day care.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to provide remote controls to operate a gate at a residence or the gate code for gated communities.

### *Student Delivery*

Drivers are permitted to release students only at the school or designated delivery address. When there is no authorized person to accept the student at the drop-off, the following steps will be taken:

- **UNDELIVERABLE** – In the event there is no authorized person at the delivery address to receive your student, the student **will be returned to school**. The parent will be contacted by a campus designee or a member of the special education team. The parent will then be responsible for transporting the student home. If the student is “undeliverable” **three times**, an ARD meeting may be requested to discuss alternate transportation.

- If this should frequently occur, transportation services may be suspended, pending a conference with the parent or guardian.

## **2. Loading/Unloading**

### *At the Pick-Up/Delivery Location*

It is the responsibility of the driver and monitor to load and unload students at the pick-up and delivery location. Parents and child care providers are strongly encouraged to communicate to the GPISD Transportation Office any information about the student that would help facilitate safe loading and unloading. Parents and child care providers should be careful not to interfere with the driver or monitor while they are performing their duties. Parents and child care providers are not permitted on the bus to assist with loading and unloading.

- Parents/guardians should not send students to the bus with food or drink to be consumed on the bus.
- In an attempt to hold the student's bus riding time to a minimum, the transportation department has adopted the following procedures:
  - The bus driver will (1) **honk the horn** in front of the student's home; (2) **wait exactly two minutes** and (3) **then proceed** with the bus route. **Exception:** If the student is ill and will not need bus service for that day only, the parent will need to call transportation at 972-343-4402.

### *At the School*

When it facilitates a smoother transition to and from the bus, school personnel are encouraged to help load and unload ambulatory students from seats equipped with any of the following restraint devices: seat belts, child seats, or a safety vest. The bus driver and attendant have the ultimate responsibility to check these restraints before leaving the school. Only the driver, monitor, or trained school staff should load, unload, and secure students in wheelchairs.

## **3. Bus Evacuation Plan**

Students with IEPs who are able to get on and off of the bus unassisted or with little assistance are expected to participate in bus evacuation drills. For students who are non-ambulatory or who have an orthopedic impairment, a bus evacuation plan should be developed and maintained to include the following:

- The exact roles of the driver and monitor during an evacuation.
- Identification of students who have special medical conditions, such as brittle bone syndrome or attachment to a respirator needs to be considered in planning for an evacuation.
- Whether or not students should be removed from their wheelchairs during an evacuation.
- Seating location of all students on the route.
- Brief description of the physical disability of each student.



- Exact location of every emergency exit on the regular bus used on the route.
- Exact location of emergency equipment on the bus - extinguisher, first aid kit, etc.

#### **4. Student Behavior**

It is the District's responsibility to provide safe transportation for students who ride school buses to and from school and on school-related trips. In the absence of a teacher or school administrator, the school bus driver and monitor are responsible for ensuring that students behave in a safe and responsible manner. Any behavior which interferes with the safe transportation of students must be reported. Drivers and monitor are to use the *BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL* to refer any unsafe or inappropriate behavior to the GPISD Transportation Office. The GPISD Transportation Office will forward the *BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL* to the campus administrator or his/her designee. The campus administrator or his/her designee is responsible for disciplinary action, including the suspension of the student's transportation service, when appropriate. Please note: removal from the bus due to disciplinary action, constitutes a day "out of placement". Refer to *BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL*. If a student receives 3 bus referrals, an ARD must be scheduled to review the student's supports and services and make revisions to the IEP, if necessary.

##### *Dangerous Behavior on the Bus*

The following are GPISD Transportation Office guidelines for bus drivers responding to unsafe behavior on the bus:

- Any unsafe behavior should be reported to the GPISD Transportation Office as soon as possible. A BUS CONDUCT REFERRAL should be submitted as a follow-up.
- When the behavior of a student on a special education bus poses a potential or imminent danger to others on the bus, the driver should immediately call the GPISD Transportation Office.

#### **5. Medical Staff**

Grand Prairie ISD is ready and willing to provide all necessary supports for a student to access specialized transportation. If a parent is concerned about specific supports or staff training, they will need to contact the special education nurse at 972-237-5544.

Depending on the nature or the severity of the student's disability, the attending physician may recommend that a private duty nurse (PDN) accompany the student when he or she is using special education transportation. A parent may request that a PDN ride with their child in order to provide necessary medical intervention. This would strictly be on a volunteer basis. In order to ride with a student, the PDN would need to complete a Criminal Background Check (CBC) annually, as part of the agreement between the district and the parent and subject to completion of criteria specified within that contract. An application for the CBC must be completed online through the District's website by going to <https://www.gpisd.org/domain/11877> ([www.gpisd.org](http://www.gpisd.org), click on "Community", choose "Volunteer", select "Grand Prairie ISD Volunteer/Chaperone Online Application" at the bottom of the Volunteer/Chaperone Program page. If assistance is needed to complete the process, please contact the campus the student is enrolled at. The campus secretary may be contacted after 72 hours to confirm approval.

## 6. Restraint Devices

### *Child Seats & Booster Seats*

By law, the State of Texas requires the use of child seats and booster seats in cars, trucks, and multipurpose vehicles. They are not required on Type 1 school buses. Therefore, there is a degree of flexibility in determining the appropriate type of seat and/or seat arrangement to be used by each student on the bus.

Most small students with disabilities can be comfortably and securely restrained in conventional child seats and booster seats. Many larger students with disabilities that affect their ability to sit upright without support can use a safety vest installed in school buses.

The following guidelines are generally used to determine the appropriate seat to use for each student:

- Infants who weigh under 20 pounds should be in a rear-facing infant car seat.
- Toddlers who weigh from 20 to 40 pounds and are 26" - 40" in height should ride in a forward-facing car seat.
- Children who weigh 40 to 60 pounds may ride in a forward-facing booster seat.
  - The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) does not recommend the use of booster seats based on the compartmentalized design of bench seats on the bus which is a safety feature. Unlike car seats and safety vests, booster seats are not equipped to be secured to the frame of the bench seat. Use of a booster seat on a bench seat would not comply with the safety feature of the compartmentalized design.
  - GPISD follows the guidance.

### *Safety Vest*

These safety vests may only be used at the direction of the Individualized Education Program after consultation with the school staff and parents.

- A safety vest is designed for students who need to be secured while on the bus above what a lap restraint is intended to provide. The safety vest is equipped with a zipper in the back that, when properly attached, is not accessible to the student. The safety vest is attached with a strap mounted to the bus seat.

The GPISD Transportation Office, in collaboration with the parent and Special Education Department, is committed to providing safe and efficient transportation services for special needs students. For questions or concerns, please contact the campus administrator or diagnostician and/or the following:

| Name             | Title  | Department                   | Phone Number | Email address              |
|------------------|--|------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Guadalupe Davila | Special Education Route Coordinator                | Transportation Department    | 972-343-4402 | guadalupe.davila@gpisd.org |
| Crystal Flores   | Special Education PEIMS and Transportation Liaison | Special Education Department | 972-237-5345 | crystalm.flores@gpisd.org  |
| April Greathouse | Special Education Coordinator                      | Special Education Department | 972-237-5336 | april.greathouse@gpisd.org |
| Rodney Traylor   | Executive Director of Special Education            | Special Education Department | 972-237-4048 | rodney.traylor@gpisd.org   |
| Dana Acock       | Director of Transportation                         | Transportation Department    | 972-343-4400 | dana.acock@gpisd.org       |

## Resources

## **SMART Tag**

SMART tag is a full-featured system designed to ensure authorized ridership resulting in increased safety and security of students who utilize school bus transportation. SMART tag monitors student loading and unloading, providing real-time information to the Transportation Department, and you, the parent.

### Accessing the SMARTtag Parent Portal SMART Tag

- Visit [www.gpisd.org/SmartTag](http://www.gpisd.org/SmartTag) and click the Parent Portal button. You will be directed to SMART Tag's secure and easy Parent Portal.

### Search for your student

- Search for your child using their student ID number, date of birth, and campus name.

### Confirm your student's information

- Enter your email address to confirm your student's information. Once you receive the confirmation email, enter the confirmation code in the prompted box.

### Register

- Enter your parent/guardian information including: name, address, city, state, zip code, and email address. Next, create a password.

### Enable SMART alerts

- Enter your cell phone number to receive text messages when your student is approximately 10-15 minutes from their stop (time of message receipt may vary based on mobile network provider and specifics on bus route). If you prefer not to receive text message alerts, you can disable this feature inside the Parent Portal after you have completed registration.

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