

A JOINT ESE DEPARTMENT AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT SOP

I. Procedure Name: IEP Planning and Development

II. Basic Procedure:

1. General Guidance on ESE Transportation.

a. Determining student transportation needs in a student's IEP and 504 plan follows the same guiding principles that identifying his or her other education needs do: child-centered services, least restrictive environment, services based on individual strengths and needs appropriate to the student's unique disability, expectation of student development, progress, and adult outcomes in planning, determining, monitoring, and revising level of service needs.

b. As with identifying classroom levels of service, the parent's participation and shared responsibility in identifying the appropriate level of transportation service is essential. However, the parent and the IEP team do not have a role in identifying specific bus stop locations and times. Those elements of transportation service are determined by the Transportation Department, based on levels of service prescribed by the IEP team.

c. Parents of District students who are transported at public expense are responsible for the safety and supervision of their children while they are at and en route to and from the assigned bus stop.

d. If the District provides transportation services for a particular category of student who studies under the District's general education curriculum, it must also provide transportation services for ESE students who fall into the same category in accordance with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). For instance, if the District provides transportation services for other students attending a choice school or program, it must provide transportation services for ESE students who share the same eligibility requirements for the choice school or program as the other students, provided the ESE student does not by-pass a center where specialized services are available. (SBR 6.04 pertains)

2. Collaboration with the IEP Committee. Transportation Department collaboration can occur in the form of Transportation membership on applicable IEP committees or close coordination between the ESE and Transportation Departments on standing criteria for determining specific transportation accommodations for students with disabilities. To the maximum extent possible, IEP committees should include Transportation Department personnel in IEP planning and development. This SOP serves as a reference for

collaboration and concurrence that has already occurred between ESE Department and Transportation Department leaders.

3. Basic Student Eligibility for Specialized Transportation. A student shall be eligible for transportation services when the student's disability requires specialized transportation services be provided as determined by the Individual Education Plan (IEP) committee, or when the student's placement by the IEP committee is in a school other than the student's regular zoned school as directed by federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and rules.

4. Consideration of Services. Consideration shall be given to whether a student's disability makes getting to school in the same manner as other students who do not have disabilities more problematic. If a student with a disability can use the same transportation with the same equipment as students who do not have disabilities, specialized transportation shall not be recommended. In framing recommendations, the desire to provide necessary services, but in the least restrictive environment possible should be a guidepost. Determinations regarding specialized transportation accommodations relate ONLY to the specific and unique nature of the student's disability, not the convenience of the parent or District.

In making determinations regarding cognitive skills, IEP teams should bear in mind that the State of Florida and the Escambia County School Board have established a "reasonable walking distance" between home and the assigned bus stop for students of all ages. An IEP team's sense of a "reasonable walking distance" should compare the IEP student's cognition and mobility relative to other students of similar age and grade level who are bound by state parameters, and not venture into whether the distance parameters articulated in the law or in School Board Rules are themselves reasonable for that or any other child of that age.

a. Specialized Transportation in General. Specialized transportation accommodations relate only to the specific and unique nature of the student's age and disability, not the convenience of the parent or the District.

b. Bus Inclusion. A student who receives an inclusive education in the classroom would not necessarily be provided inclusive school bus service if the nature of his/her disability would put him/her at physical or emotional risk, or place other students at physical or emotional risk, given the dynamics of an inclusion school bus. That notwithstanding, every student should be placed in the least restrictive school bus environment in order to promote the student's progress and development. IEP teams should remember that any student who is deemed "non-inclusive" will ride a bus with other non-inclusion riders which would generally exclude their siblings.

When school bus inclusion is not permitted, the unique student disability and rationale that makes that level of service appropriate shall be described in the IEP and in the Specialized Transportation Slip.

c. Bus Assistant. A bus assistant shall be specified on the IEP and the Specialized

Transportation Slip to the extent that one is needed to attend to the student's disability. The level of service and rationale shall be specified on the IEP and the Specialized Transportation Slip. In some instances, a bus assistant may be required to enable a student with a disability to ride an inclusion bus with their non-disabled peers. In such cases, the IEP committee shall state the requirements accordingly.

d. Drop-off Supervision. Students whose age, cognitive ability or development, or level of function evoke a concern for the child's safety at a regular bus stop shall require bus stop supervision. IEP teams shall indicate when students who are prone to running and have that fact annotated on the IEP so the Transportation Department can select an appropriate bus stop location for the student. It is essential that IEP teams inform parents of their responsibility with respect to bus stop supervision. They shall also remember that establishing a more accommodating bus stop level of service is not an approved alternative to bus stop supervision and also that students who are provided bus stop supervision do not necessarily require curb-to-curb transportation service. As a rule, students who are provided curb-to-curb transportation service shall also be required to have supervision at the bus stop. (*See also the subparagraph on Curb-to-Curb Bus Stops below.*)

When bus stop supervision is required, the unique student disability and rationale that makes that level of service appropriate shall be described in the IEP and in the Specialized Transportation Slip.

e. Curb-to-Curb Bus Stop. Curb-to-door transportation service is provided for students whose unique mobility limitations make service at regular bus stop locations inappropriate. Other unique circumstances related to the student's disability may be considered by the IEP team in collaboration with the Transportation Department.

In evaluating the student's unique disability in terms of determining the appropriate level of transportation service for students, the student's age shall not be the sole basis for requiring curb-to-curb bus stop service.

Florida law requires parents to ensure the safe travel of their students to and from home and at the assigned bus stop. Requests for services and accommodations beyond the student's unique condition are to be processed through the Transportation Department's bus stop change and accommodation request process, not the IEP.

Transportation for students with curb-to-curb service will be provided to the nearest publicly-maintained street location to the student's official residence accessible by a full-size school bus. In the rare instance where the IEP team notes that the student's unique mobility limitations are so severe that transportation service utilizing a charter vehicle capable of maneuvering in tight publicly-maintained roadways is necessary, the requirement and rationale shall be specifically articulated in the IEP.

When curb-to-curb transportation service is required, bus stop supervision shall also be required in the IEP and the Transportation Slip. However, the fact that a student

requires drop-off supervision is not, by itself, justification for curb-to-curb service except in extreme cases.

Exception: Mature and self-sufficient high school students whose sole need for curb-to-curb service is based on the need to reduce the distance they must maneuver their wheelchair may not require bus stop supervision.

When specialized transportation service is required, one of the following two levels of service shall be referenced (the appropriate underlined text in the choices below) in the IEP and in the Specialized Transportation Slip along with the unique mobility limitation to which the service pertains.

(1) Regular Bus Stop Transportation Service at a bus stop established by the criteria pertaining to general education students of this student's age. IEP teams mindful of least restrictive environment prescribe this level of transportation service when the student's unique mobility limitations are such that he/she can utilize the same bus stop that general education students utilize.

(2) Curb-to-Curb Transportation Service to and from the nearest publicly-maintained street location to the student's official residence, accessible by a full-size school bus. IEP teams mindful of least restrictive environment prescribe this level of transportation service when the student's unique mobility limitations are such that transportation service from a distance beyond the nearest publicly-maintained street location is not appropriate. When curb-to-curb transportation service is required, bus stop supervision shall also be required in the IEP and the Transportation Slip.

Note: In the rare instance where a student's unique mobility limitations are so severe that the IEP team is concerned that curb-to-curb transportation service as described above is not adequate, the IEP team shall collaborate with the Transportation Department to determine the precise location of the bus stop and other details of the transportation service and note the final determination on the IEP.

f. Transportation for Students Assigned to Schools Located Outside of the Student's Residential Transportation Zone. Students with disabilities on an IEP will be provided transportation services consistent with the IEP to schools they have been assigned to when the assignment to those schools is made by the District because of the availability of required services at those schools, and the corresponding absence of those services at their zoned schools.

Note: Transportation is not provided in support of the McKay Scholarship Program.

5. Requests for Other Services. As specialized transportation services and accommodations are tailored to relate ONLY to the specific and unique nature of the student's age and disability and not the convenience of the parent or District, requests for transportation services and

accommodations that lie outside the scope of the IEP should be referred to the Transportation Department directly. For instance, requests for accommodations such as transportation to after-school child care and bus stop changes should be made to the Transportation Department via the Request for Transportation Accommodation form or the Bus Stop Change Request and not be mentioned in the IEP. **Transportation services to after-school child care to facilities outside of the student's assigned school attendance zone are not provided.**

6. Transportation Services Requirements in the IEP. All requirements for transportation services shall be specifically and thoroughly explained in the IEP and mirrored in the Specialized Transportation Services Slip. Each requirement shall also be accompanied by the justification for the level of service required. Additionally, a thorough explanation of the nature of the student's condition that warrants each specific service and thoughtful input on student management strategies shall also be noted on the Specialized Transportation Services Slip to facilitate effective student management on the bus. All requirements and justifications shall be made in a manner consistent with the specific guidance contained in this SOP with particular emphasis on the requirements articulated in paragraph 4 above.

7. Student Management. It is vital that the student management portion of the Transportation Services Slip (page 3) be thoroughly completed for those students with Positive Behavior Intervention Plans in order to make the school bus crew aware of any manifestations or factors related to the student's disability, triggers or actions to be avoided, triggers or actions that are effective, unique behaviors or mannerisms that should be considered, and other helpful tips for managing a student during the bus trip to and from school. Route managers will not accept transportation slips for students for whom this portion is not completed in full, when they have a Positive Behavior Intervention Plan checked on their IEP.

III. Contingencies/Variations: None