

PARENT & STUDENT
GUIDE
TO TRANSPORTATION



OFFICE OF
TRANSPORTATION
BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MISSION

The mission of the Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Transportation is to provide safe and efficient school transportation services in an environment that fosters positive social interaction and allows students to be successful learners.

INTRODUCTION

This guide explains the roles and responsibilities of students and parents/guardians regarding Baltimore County Public Schools bus transportation. Parents/guardians are asked to review the contents of this guide with their students.

The Office of Transportation provides services as outlined in Board Policies and Superintendent's Rules 3410 and 3420. These policies and rules can be found in their entirety on the Baltimore County Public Schools ([BCPS](#)) [website](#).

ELIGIBILITY

As noted in Policy 3410, the Board recognizes its' responsibility to provide school transportation services for eligible students, based on safety, efficiency, adequacy, consistency, and economy.

The Office of Transportation is responsible for establishing transportation boundaries for all schools; as such, school bus transportation is provided under the jurisdiction of the Board for students who reside within the transportation boundary for their home school for:

- All-day prekindergarten, elementary and middle school students who must walk more than one (1) mile to their home school.
- High school students who must walk more than one and one-half (1-1/2) miles to their home school; and
- All half-day prekindergarten students.

The Office of Transportation shall develop guidelines for the transportation of eligible students beyond the transportation boundary surrounding a school when:

- An accommodation or assistance is required by a student's individualized education program and/or 504 plan.
- A student is identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- A student is enrolled in an authorized Baltimore County Public Schools' educational program; or
- The Office of Transportation has determined the walking conditions are unsafe and transportation is required.

The supervision of non-transported students to and from school is the responsibility of the students' parents/guardians. Students are subject to the Board's disciplinary policies while embarking, exiting from, and riding in vehicles used for BCPS Transportation.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

School Bus Stop Law

Maryland Transportation Article, Section §21-706

If a school vehicle is stopping or has stopped, and is operating the alternately flashing warning lights, the driver of any other vehicle meeting or overtaking the school vehicle shall stop at least 20 feet from the rear of the school vehicle (if approaching the school vehicle from the rear), or 20 feet from the front of the school vehicle (if approaching the school vehicle from the front) and may not proceed.

Crossing Procedures

As outlined in Rule 3420, students should adhere to the following crossing procedures:

- Students are to be at the designated school bus stops on the side of the road of the bus pickup five (5) minutes before the bus arrives.
- Students are not to cross the road relying on the bus's red or yellow warning lights to stop traffic.
- Students exiting the bus are to:
 - Wait on the side of the road where they exit the bus;
 - Stand clear from the side of the bus until the bus pulls away; and
 - When traffic is cleared and it is safe to cross, students may proceed to the other side of the road.

Bus Stops

As outlined in Rule 3420, bus stops will be established with the following factors given consideration:

- Same side service shall be provided for elementary school students residing on a road with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or greater.
- Same side service shall be provided to secondary students residing on a road with a posted speed limit of 40 mph or greater.
- As deemed appropriate in the interest of student safety by the Office of Transportation.
- A student will be assigned to a designated bus stop based on the student's home and/or an alternate address.

- A student’s designated bus stop may differ from morning, mid-day and afternoon pickup and drop off, but the student is required to use the same designated or alternate bus stop(s) every day. A student’s designated and/or alternate bus stop(s) may not vary from week to week.

Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Mid-day

Mid-day bus stops for preschool and pre-kindergarten students generally will be established at the student’s home or the nearest corner to the home. Bus stops may be grouped (for example: apartment complex, adjacent houses, etc.).

Bus stops shall be at the same location five days a week.

Schools will be responsible for seeing that all preschool and pre-kindergarten students board the bus from school wearing a prominently placed identification (ID) tag with the following information:

- School name
- Student name
- Home address
- Home and emergency phone numbers
- Bus stop
- Applicable day care information (provider name, address, phone number)
- Picture ID or color-coded tag with the bus name/color

Half-day preschool and pre-kindergarten students must be met by a responsible, authorized person at each mid-day stop. If a student is not met, the driver shall immediately notify the Office of Transportation, complete the route, and return the student to school.

End of Day

Afternoon half-day preschool, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will use the regular stops established for eligible full-day students. Bus stops will be at the same location five days a week. Students will be discharged at their appropriate bus stop at the end of the day. A parent does not have to be present at the bus stop.

Bus drivers are responsible for the students from the time they enter the bus until they exit the bus. When the regular or substitute bus driver is not sure whether the stop is the correct bus stop or is concerned for the safety of the student for any reason, the driver shall complete the route and then return the student to school. When the driver makes the decision to return a student to school, the Office of Transportation must be called immediately.

End of the day transportation procedures will be used for scheduled early dismissals and emergency early dismissals.

Magnet Schools

Elementary Schools

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from elementary magnet programs for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Some transportation is arranged as shuttle service from the home school location. This may require parents to provide students with transportation to the home school where they are picked up as a group and then transported to the magnet program.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of specific transportation provisions prior to the opening of school.

BCPS transportation is not provided for students who reside outside of the established transportation zone of a magnet program.

Secondary Schools

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from magnet programs in secondary schools for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Transportation is provided from a limited number of pick-up points located at designated schools. Parents/ guardians are responsible for providing transportation for their students to and from their designated pick-up point.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of the respective pick-up points prior to the opening of school for the upcoming year.

**NOTE* – Secondary Pick-up points do not fall under the same guidelines as regular bus stops with regard to distance and walking conditions. In addition, supervision is not provided by the school system at the pick-up point.

BCPS transportation is not provided for students who reside outside of the established transportation zone of a magnet program.

Childcare Facilities Transportation

BCPS will provide transportation from a childcare facility to the student's home school when the childcare facility is within the transportation boundary of the home school.

Students attending a childcare facility that is not within the transportation boundary of the student's home school will not be provided transportation, unless the Office of Transportation determines the walking conditions are unsafe and transportation is required.

SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

Bus Stop Location

Transportation service to the home address is provided for students with disabilities who have a documented requirement for transportation services in their 504/IEP. However, there are many streets that buses cannot safely negotiate. In these cases, parents/ guardians or childcare providers are responsible for meeting the bus at the nearest safe location as determined by the Office of Transportation.

Special Needs Equipment

The Office of Transportation will work closely with the school, parents/guardians, and IEP team to plan for approved occupant restraints or support devices, as required for individual students.

Pickup and Drop-Off of Special Need Students

- All children must be ready to board the bus at least five (5) minutes before the scheduled time.
- Special needs students must be accompanied to and from the approved bus stop by a parent/guardian.
- Bus attendants assist with loading, unloading, and the care of students while on the bus.
- If no one is at the approved bus stop to receive a student, the driver will contact the Office of Transportation to receive further direction. The driver may return to the bus stop after completing the route or return the student to school.
- Parents/guardians may provide prior written authorization for students to be discharged from the bus without someone to receive them.

Special Needs Transportation Considerations

Parents/guardians, the Office of Special Education, and/or the IEP chairperson may request that a representative from the Office of Transportation attend the IEP meeting to address transportation concerns.

SCHOOL BUS EVACUATIONS

In September and February, each school must conduct school bus emergency evacuation drills. Every precaution must be taken to see that the procedures and appropriate behavior for leaving a school bus in case of an emergency have been discussed and practiced with all students. Students must have practice in leaving the bus through the emergency door, as well as through the front door.

Evacuation drills are to be conducted with the same seriousness as displayed during the monthly fire drills in the school building. Students should practice leaving the bus in an orderly manner without pausing to gather up books and personal belongings.

Practice drills in emergency evacuation are to be conducted on the school grounds. It should be noted that in a true emergency many hazards would exist along a roadway that do not exist in a practice drill on school grounds. Therefore, parents/guardians should reinforce appropriate conduct of students after they have left the bus.

VIDEO RECORDINGS

The following information pertains to buses that are equipped with video recording technology:

- All BCPS buses are equipped with video recording technology.
- The installation and removal of all digital data from the system is the responsibility of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or the owner, manager, or supervisor of a contracted vehicle.
- School bus drivers do not have the ability to activate or deactivate the video equipment and do not have access to the recorded material.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians have the responsibility to ensure that their children know, understand, and follow all bus rules. Listed below are some suggestions for parents:

- Teach children that riding the school bus is a privilege. This privilege may be temporarily suspended or permanently revoked if a child's behavior jeopardizes the safe operation of the bus or the safety of other children riding the bus. Speak with children about the importance of obeying the safe riding rules.
- Children should leave home early enough to arrive at their school bus stop five (5) minutes before the scheduled arrival time of the bus. If they arrive too early, they may become involved in behavior that could lead to injury, or if they arrive too late, they may miss the bus.
- All parents/guardians should be familiar with the walking route children will be taking. Shortcuts through isolated fields and woods, or across streams or railroad tracks often can be dangerous. Entering abandoned houses or deserted buildings on the route can also be dangerous.

- Parents/guardians with younger children should walk with the children to and from the school or bus stop, taking the opportunity to teach the children proper pedestrian practices, such as when and how to cross streets.
- Parents/guardians should encourage children to carry all their papers, books, and other belongings inside a backpack.
- Buses may be delayed during bad weather, so it is important that children dress appropriately for the weather.
- During inclement weather, media announcements regarding school closings begin at approximately 5:15 a.m. Pertinent information concerning school closings or delays will be announced on the local radio and television channels, BCPS-TV, BCPS Twitter and Facebook accounts, BCPS news e-mail and text message alerts and on the web at www.bcps.org.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their children from the time the children leave home in the morning until they board the school bus, and at the end of the day from the time the school bus departs the unloading area until the children reach home.

Students

Students receiving transportation services have the responsibility to follow all bus rules. These rules include:

- At the bus stop, wait in an orderly manner, out of the way of all traffic, until the bus stops, and bus driver opens the door.
- Stand at least five (5) feet back from the stopping position of the bus.
- Wait until the bus stops completely before moving forward to board it.
- The aisle of the bus must be kept clear, so that the rear emergency exit is always accessible. Large objects such as musical instruments, athletic equipment, and school projects are prohibited, unless the student can carry the object themselves, hold the object on his/her lap, or place the object on the floor between his/her legs.
- Once on board the bus, follow the Bus Rules as posted:
 - Follow directions the first time they are given.
 - Stay seated, facing forward at all times.
 - Keep all body parts inside the bus.
 - Keep hands, feet, legs, arms, personal property, and your voice to yourself.
 - No eating, smoking, drinking, or vulgar language at any time on the bus.

- Wait until the bus stops moving before getting out of the seat and moving forward to get off the bus.
- Always board your assigned bus and get on and off at your regularly assigned bus stop.
- Once off the bus, proceed immediately away from the bus.

BUS DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES AND CONSEQUENCES

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) is committed to providing safe and supportive environments for all students and staff. The Office of Transportation’s #1 goal each day is to transport all student bus riders safely to and from school. In order to accomplish this goal, we need the cooperation of the entire community. Positive student behavior while entering, riding and leaving the bus contributes to safe transportation by making it possible for drivers to dedicate their full attention to the roads and other drivers. Student bus riders are expected to act responsibly and respectfully at all times.

The primary purpose of rules and procedures on buses are the safety of all passengers- students and staff. Please take a few minutes to review the information below with students concerning bus behavior expectations and bus discipline prior to the beginning of the school year. Students will also review the documents with school staff.

The code below classifies unacceptable behavior into four levels. The examples are not exhaustive but illustrative. Additionally, all consequences are dependent upon the severity and frequency of the behavior. The Office of Transportation reserves the right to consider extenuating circumstances in determining disciplinary action.

Level 1	
Infraction	Consequences
Infractions that interfere with the orderly transportation of students. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screaming • Failure to stay seated • Littering on the bus • Tampering with the possessions of other passengers 	The bus driver reports infractions on the bus. The school administrator administers consequences. This action may include any or <u>all</u> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning and referral issued • Contact with parent • Assigned seat at the discretion of driver

Level 2	
Infraction	Consequences
<p>More severe infractions that interfere with the safe transportation of students. Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated occurrences of Level 1 behaviors • Bullying other passengers, including verbal abuse • Profanity towards staff • Damage to the bus interior/exterior 	<p>The bus driver reports infractions on the bus. The school administrator administers consequences. This action may include any or <u>all</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral issued • Contact with parent • Assigned seat at the discretion of driver • Loss of bus privileges for up to 5 days and cost of repairs

Level 3	
Infraction	Consequences
<p>Actions that endanger the safety of the driver or students and which impairs the driver's ability to drive safely. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated occurrences of Level 1 or 2 behaviors • Refusal to remain in seats • Sexual misconduct • Throwing objects • Refusal to follow staff directions for safety 	<p>The bus driver reports infractions on the bus. The school administrator administers consequences. At more serious levels, the Director of Transportation may be involved. This action may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral issued • Contact with parent • Loss of bus privileges for 6 to 9 days • Repeated incidents of Level 2 behavior may result in removal from transportation for the remainder of the school year

Level 4	
Infraction	Consequences
<p>Infractions that endanger the safety of the driver or students and may require local police to intervene. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting, including pushing and/or wrestling • Sexual misconduct • Possession of dangerous objects or weapons • Possession or use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs or controlled substances • Opening emergency exits and/or exiting the bus without authorization 	<p>The bus driver reports infraction on the bus. The school administrator administers consequences. At more serious levels, the Director of Transportation may be involved. This action may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral issued • Contact with parent • Loss of bus privileges for 10 days • Repeated incidents may result in removal from transportation for the remainder of the school year • Illegal activity will be referred to Baltimore County Police Department • Suspension from school and/or extended suspension

Consequences for repeat infractions related to transportation include, but are not limited to:			
1st Offense	2nd Offense	3rd Offense	4th Offense
<p>Parent notification required Appropriate Action required Student Conference Seat change on bus Bus or School Suspension commensurate with offense Code of Student Conduct implemented as appropriate</p>	<p>Bus Suspension (up to 5 days)</p>	<p>Bus Suspension (6 to 9 days)</p>	<p>Bus Suspension (remainder of the school year)</p>
	<p>Appropriate Action Required Additional Bus or School Suspension commensurate with offense Implement Code of Student Conduct as Appropriate For students with disabilities, bus suspension is counted as a suspension from school if transportation is included as a related service on the IEP/504 Plan</p>		

Behavior on the School Bus

Riding the school bus is a privilege. This privilege may be temporarily denied or permanently revoked if misconduct jeopardizes the safe operation of the school bus or the safety of students riding the bus. School suspension is a possible sanction.

Behavior or activity jeopardizing the safe operation of the school bus or interfering with the welfare of other vehicle occupants is prohibited. The school bus operator will report promptly and in writing to appropriate administrative staff any conduct appearing to require disciplinary action. After administrative staff evaluation, appropriate disciplinary action will follow. A copy of the disposition will be returned to the school bus operator.

Video/Digital Cameras and Audio Recording Devices

School buses are equipped with video/digital cameras and audio recording devices. These tools monitor the passenger area of the bus. As such, you are subject to audio and video surveillance. The objective is to provide an important additional tool to assist the driver and administration in managing student conduct on school buses, an important safety consideration that benefits all.

Contact Baltimore County Public Schools' Office of Transportation at 443-809-4321 or Transportation_ContactUs@bcps.org with specific questions relating to student transportation.

Additional resources about student transportation can be found at the following:

Baltimore County Public Schools' Office of Transportation
http://businessservices.bcps.org/departments/business_services_operations/transportation

National Association for Pupil Transportation
www.napt.org

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Maryland State Department of Education
www.marylandpublicschools.org

Pupil Transportation Safety Institute
www.ptsi.org

School Transportation News
www.stnonline.com

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