

Overview

School Transportation

In this section of the Education Toolkit, you will find helpful information and resources concerning school transportation for both special education and general education students in the District of Columbia and in Maryland. You will discover how students typically get to and from school and how to get additional transportation services if the typical routes are not appropriate for your student. In addition to the Children's Law Center Tip Sheet on Transportation, you will also find links to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and Prince George's County Public Schools transportation policies. Additionally, the Tip Sheet in this section provides specific information on transportation for youth in care, and details about the transportation services offered through CFSA as of July 2018.

This section also references students who may qualify for transportation under the McKinney-Vento, Fostering Connections, and Every Student Succeeds Acts. If you have specific questions about these Acts and their effect on your student, please see the School Stability section of this Education Toolkit.

CLC Tip Sheet

School Transportation

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

How Do Children Get to Public Schools and Charter Schools in DC?

- Walk—generally there are no school buses provided for students attending school in DC.
- Public Transportation—students in DC are eligible for the Kids Ride Free (KRF) program, administered through the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the school systems. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, students will use KRF SmarTrip cards to access public transportation. The KRF SmarTrip cards will replace DC One Cards for transportation. Students can use their KRF SmarTrip cards on Metrorail, Metrobus, and DC Circulator to get to school and school-related activities. Information about this program can be found at: https://ddot.dc.gov/page/school-transit-subsidy-program?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery (last checked July 3, 2018).
- School Buses—students who are in special education AND the IEP team determines that the child needs transportation, either because of the child’s particular disability or because the child attends a school other than their neighborhood school, will receive school bus transportation, provided by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education Department of Transportation (OSSE DOT).

If A Child is Unable to Walk or Take Public Transportation to School, What Can You Do?

If the child is eligible for special education:

- First, determine if the child’s IEP includes transportation services.
- If the IEP does not include transportation, you can request an IEP meeting to amend the IEP.
- NOTE: Children in special education can be bused to public schools, charter schools, or non-public schools.

If the child is not eligible for special education or the IEP team has determined that transportation services should not be included in the IEP:

- Determine if the child qualifies under the McKinney-Vento Act and seek transportation services via that entitlement.
- Consider whether transportation is needed to support school stability. When children in foster care need transportation to remain in their school of origin, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) collaborate with the State or CFSA to ensure that transportation for children in foster care is provided, arranged, and funded. This transportation must be available for the duration of the time the child is in foster care. ESEA section 1112(c)(5)(B).
- Work with the child’s family to identify other transportation resources (*e.g.*, neighbors, other family members, etc.)

If a Child Needs to Have DCPS Special Education Transportation Services Set Up for the First Time, or Needs to Have a Bus Route Changed, What Can You Do?

- Contact the local education agency (LEA) representative at the child’s school to request the change.
- Follow up with the OSSE DOT office to ensure the child is routed on a bus and find out the child’s pick-up and drop-off time (call the Parent Resource Center at 202-576-5000).

What Do I Do if I Run Into Problems with Transportation in DC?

- Call the Parent Call Center: (202) 576-5000. They can tell you what bus route a child is on and the times and addresses for pick-up and drop-off. They can also tell you the status of a particular bus route, where it is, if it's on time, etc. on a particular day.
- Complaints: Call the Office of Investigations at (202) 576-6860.
- Transportation Handbook for Parents and Guardians of Special Education Students: <http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Transportation%20PolicyV07292014.pdf> (last checked July 3, 2018).

MARYLAND

How Do Children Get to Public School in Maryland?

- School Buses—each county in Maryland provides school buses for students to ride to and from their neighborhood school unless the student lives within walking distance of the school.
- Walk—students may walk to their school, if they live within walking distance.
- Public Transportation—students may ride public transportation if they choose; however, the school does not provide funding for this type of transportation.

What if The Student is Not Attending His Neighborhood School?

If the child is placed in another school due to their special education needs:

- The county will provide transportation to the student; contact the special education coordinator at the child's school to set up bus transportation.

If the child is attending another school under the McKinney-Vento Act:

- The county will provide transportation to the student; contact the Homeless Education Office in the child's county to set up bus transportation.

If the child is attending another school under COMAR 07.02.11.12:

- The student may ride any county school bus which is routed to their current school; however, the county will not route a bus specifically for the student.

What Can I Do if I Run Into Problems with Transportation in Maryland?

- Contact the transportation office for the child's county of attendance.
 - Prince George's County: 301-952-6570

TRANSPORTATION THROUGH CFSA FOR YOUTH IN CARE*

How Do Children in CFSA's Care Get to School?

CFSA offers transportation for children in the care and custody of CFSA to maintain a child's school stability when it is determined to be in the youth's best interest and no other means of transportation is available. Transportation through CFSA is a social worker-driven process, and the provision of transportation is based on a best interest analysis. Often, a child's resource parent is tasked with transporting a child to-and-from school. However, CFSA contracts with a vendor to provide transportation services, as well.

When a child is removed and enters care, CFSA's Clinical Supports Contracts Liaison typically reaches out to a child's CFSA Child Protective Services worker upon removal and provides them with a referral. The social worker must then complete a referral, which consists of questions to discern whether transportation is needed and in the child's best interests to facilitate continuation at the school of origin. This assessment is conducted

with CFSA's Behavioral Health Unit to assess the child's needs, including schedules and aftercare.

Every 90 days, CFSA will conduct a review of services to determine whether transportation remains necessary and warranted. Typically, these conversations occur between a child's resource parent, social worker, and social work supervisor. GALs may not be automatically included in these conversations, but are encouraged to participate in these conversations where appropriate.

A child's social worker must submit a new transportation referral every time a child's placement changes. Typically, transportation services will take effect or be reinstated three days after a referral is submitted by a child's social worker.

Specific details about CFSA's Transportation program:

- ➔ Children receiving CFSA Transportation must leave aftercare by 5:00 pm, and must be off of transportation by 6:00 pm.
- ➔ CFSA's transportation will not provide transportation to afterschool extracurricular activities or medical services/appointments occurring after school.
- ➔ School transportation occurs from the child's placement to school, and from school or aftercare to the placement. A child can have different pick-up and drop-off locales, so long as the changes occur on a set weekly schedule. All other variations in transportation should be handled by the social worker or resource parent.
- ➔ To ensure pick-up and drop-off occurs as scheduled, a child's resource parent must sign at the time a child is picked-up for school, and the transportation attendant will escort the child into school and sign the child in within the school's office. At the end of the day, the transportation attendant will pick up the child from the school's office, and the resource parent must sign when the child is returned to his/her placement at the end of the day unless the child is of an age where the child and resource parent have decided the child can be dropped off without the resource parent being present.
- ➔ CFSA will strive to ensure a child has the same transportation attendant on a daily basis. Attendants and drivers receive a two-day training in Trauma-Systems Therapy and child development.
- ➔ Transportation services may be available for students attending Pre-K programs; transportation for children under the age of 5 will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

As of July 2018, Tracey Talbert serves as CFSA's Clinical Supports Contracts Liaison. Ms. Talbert can be reached at tracey.talbert@dc.gov, (202) 727-4679, or (202) 489-2962. General information about CFSA's Education and Child Care Resources are available at: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/page/educationresources>.

* Information regarding CFSA's transportation services is based on a presentation delivered by CFSA for Children's Law Center staff in August 2017. Please contact CFSA's Office of Well-Being for current details regarding CFSA's transportation services.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FOR CFSA STUDENTS

FROM THE EDUCATION TEAM IN
THE OFFICE OF WELL BEING AT
THE DC CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES AGENCY



The resource parent or other caregiver must make arrangements to ensure a child gets to and from school each day if school transportation is not provided by the school district or educational program. CFSA will provide time-limited transportation assistance in some scenarios.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. Children five (5) years of age and older;
2. A Best-Interest Decision is made at initial removal or placement changes for the child to remain in the current school; and
3. All alternative means of transportation (e.g., resource parents, other family members, special education transportation, public transportation, and/or day care providers) or supports to get a child to and from school have been fully explored and found unavailable.

BEFORE REFERRING A CHILD FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:

At removal or upon replacement, ensure the resource parent has a plan in place to transport the child to/from school, and ensure they have considered all available transportation options (e.g., family members, caregiver, public transportation, and day care provider).

- ▶ If a child receives special education services, s/he may be eligible for transportation services through the child's IEP. The social worker should help the family fully explore that option before seeking transportation assistance from the agency. For more information on this process, see the Children's Law Center Tip Sheet (link on page 2).
- ▶ For children enrolled in public schools outside of the District of Columbia, the local public school system typically provides transportation to and from the neighborhood school. The social worker should contact the child's school to address any questions or concerns regarding school transportation.
- ▶ CFSA supports using public transportation to get to and from school if it is found to be a safe and appropriate means of transportation for a youth.

School stability is critical for the permanency and educational success for children in CFSA custody. Resolving transportation issues can often be the #1 strategy to ensuring school stability.

Here are some key tips to support good transportation decisions.

The Office of Well Being staff is here to help. Contact us with questions:

Grades K-5: Timothy Fitzgerald
(202) 727-8028
timothy.fitzgerald@dc.gov

Grades 6-8: Charlotte Williams
(202) 715-7787
charlotte.williams2@dc.gov

Grades 9-12: Cortni Mitchell-Colston
(202) 727-4951
cortni.mitchell-colston2@dc.gov

Contracts Liaison: Tracey Talbert
(202) 727-4679
tracey.talbert@dc.gov

General Questions: Megan Dho
Education Supervisor
(202) 727-1303
megan.dho@dc.gov



Once it is confirmed that all other transportation options have been exhausted:

- ▶ Submit a referral for transportation assistance using the OWB Universal eReferral form.
- ▶ All referrals must be approved by the OWB before services will be authorized. Final approval will not be given until the OWB has detailed information about the child's transportation needs (i.e., specific pick-up and drop-off times and locations). Approval of transportation requests are made within 3 business days after the complete referral is submitted, unless exigent circumstances exist or there is a need to expedite.
- ▶ When reviewing a referral, the OWB will consider the following factors:
 1. Other available transportation options (i.e., resource parent or caregiver, community resources, public transportation, whether special education transportation may be available, etc.);
 2. Child or youth's safety and best interests; and
 3. The length and distance of the child's commute.
- ▶ If the transportation request is approved, the contract vendor will notify the resource parent of the date services will be initiated and the specific pick-up and drop-off times.

Note: The authorized start date of service is three (3) business days from the date OWB approves transportation services. In the interim, the social worker or designee should work with the caregivers and other team members to ensure the child still gets to/from school.

CHANGING OR CANCELING SERVICES

- ▶ Transportation is a time-limited service that will be reevaluated every 90 days and does not exceed the duration of the current school year. If the need for transportation changes during the authorized period, the social workers should notify the OWB.
- ▶ Any requests to change transportation (i.e., pick-up or drop-off locations or times) must be submitted to the OWB at least 24 hours before the requested change to ensure the transportation provider can accommodate the request.
- ▶ If there is a need to cancel a transportation pick-up or drop-off for any reason, including illness, appointments, one-time change in the child's schedule, a child's absence, etc., the resource parent must contact the transportation vendor directly to request the cancellation.
- ▶ Transportation services may be suspended or discontinued if either of the following occurs on more than three occasions without prior notification to the transportation vendor:
 - a. The child is not ready or is unavailable for pick-up.
 - b. The caregiver is not available to receive the child at drop-off. Before the transportation services are terminated or suspended, CFSA will attempt to resolve the issues of concern.
- ▶ Any child who poses an immediate danger to self or others while on private transportation may be suspended from services to allow time for the social worker to address the issue.
 - a. The social worker may request a team meeting with the child, caregiver, and/or other relevant team members.
 - b. Transportation services may be discontinued if the behavior re-occurs or cannot be resolved.

If either of these situations occurs, social workers should arrange alternative transportation to and from school for the child.

General

Transportation

Information: How Do Children Get to School?

DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

- ▶ WALK: THERE ARE GENERALLY NO SCHOOL BUSES IN THE DISTRICT
- ▶ PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: STUDENTS IN DC ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SCHOOL TRANSIT SUBSIDY PROGRAM
- ▶ BUSES: WHEN A CHILD IS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE IEP EXPLICITLY INCLUDES TRANSPORTATION

MARYLAND SCHOOLS:

- ▶ WALK: STUDENTS MAY WALK TO SCHOOL IF THEY LIVE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE
- ▶ PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: STUDENTS CAN RIDE, BUT SCHOOL DOES NOT PROVIDE FUNDING
- ▶ BUSES: THE COUNTY PROVIDES BUSES FOR STUDENTS TO RIDE TO THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

Transportation

Resources and Links

- ◆ **OSSE: Special Education Transportation Policy (updated 2014)**
 - <https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Transportation%20PolicyV07292014.pdf>
 - This policy seeks to establish a uniform system of standards and procedures for special education transportation services in D.C. that is consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirement to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students with disabilities. It is the expectation of OSSE that all LEAs adhere to this policy. OSSE DOT shall provide special education transportation services to students with disabilities when transportation is appropriately identified and documented on an IEP as a related service under the IDEA. This policy outlines the eligibility categories IEP Teams shall use in making special education transportation eligibility determinations and supporting related services designations.

- ◆ **OSSE: Division of Student Transportation (OSSE DOT)**
 - <https://osse.dc.gov/service/student-transportation-osse-dot>
 - This website provides key contact information and links to OSSE's DOT published resources.

- ◆ **OSSE: Transportation Handbook for Parents and Guardians of Special Education Students (updated 2014)**
 - https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Parent%20HandBook_Interactive_03.11.14_10AM.pdf
 - This handbook is a resource for parents and guardians outlining OSSE's provision of transportation to-and-from school for eligible special education students. It provides a clear understanding of expectations, roles, and responsibilities for both OSSE DOT and parents/guardians.

- ◆ **PGCPS Frequently Asked Questions: Transportation**
 - <http://www1.pgcps.org/page.aspx?Pageid=234147&id=235060>
 - This link outlines frequently asked questions about PGCPS Transportation Services. This website also provides a column with links to other facets of PGCPS's transportation services.

- ◆ **PGCPS Transportation Staff Contact List (last updated: 6/7/18)**
 - <http://www1.pgcps.org/transportation/index.aspx?id=5712>
 - Please see link above for PGCPS's transportation contact list. This website also provides a column with links to other facets of PGCPS's transportation services.

- ◆ **CFSA: Transportation Tip Sheet**
 - https://cfsa.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cfsa/page_content/attachments/Transportation_1.pdf
 - This tip sheet was developed by CFSA for social workers in 2015. The document includes information about CFSA's school stability transportation services, the eligibility standards for those services, and CFSA's internal referral process. NOTE: CFSA's specific transportation vendor changed in 2017, but the business process for service connection has not changed.