TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), transportation is considered a “related service.” Related services are those services which may be needed in order for a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Transportation is considered to be one of the most fundamental prerequisites for a student to benefit from special education; indeed, it is the very first related service mentioned in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student needs to get to a school or other location to receive the IEP, the student needs to be transported to that program.

Transportation includes travel to and from school and between schools (or another location where services are delivered) and travel in and around school buildings. Additionally, supports a student needs, such as an aide, positive behavior support plan, and/or bus stop monitors, must be provided. Transportation must be provided to allow the student to take part in nonacademic and extracurricular activities in the manner necessary to afford the student an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate, and it must be provided during Extended School Year (ESY) as well. The IEP must set forth when transportation is needed and how transportation services will be executed.

The mode of transportation does not necessarily need to be different than what other students without disabilities receive. The principle of least restrictive environment (LRE) applies to transportation as well as educational placement. Thus many students will ride on the same bus as their typical peers, with whatever additional supports are appropriate. In fact, the United States Department of Education has suggested that schools consider expanding the ridership of “small buses” so that children with disabilities are integrated with their typical peers, particularly when the students with disabilities are in the same location and have the same schedule as children without disabilities.

If the student is in a special placement, such as an approved private school (APS),
the student may need to travel a great distance or for a longer period of time than other student do. The IDEA sets no time or distance limit and instead leaves the decision to the IEP team to determine what is appropriate. Some states have guidelines related to travel time, however.

If a student receives a transportation suspension (for example, is suspended from taking the bus due to inappropriate behavior while on the bus), the transportation suspension is treated as a school suspension, and the discipline procedures applicable to students with disabilities will apply. These procedures are described in detail in the “School Discipline” article within the CAR Autism Roadmap™. In general, a school district is not required to provide alternative transportation to a student with a disability who has been suspended from transportation for 10 school days or less, unless the district provides alternative transportation to children without disabilities who have been similarly suspended from bus service. If a student with a disability who is entitled to transportation as part of his or her IEP is suspended from transportation for more than 10 consecutive school days, or is repeatedly suspended, and such suspensions constitute a pattern, the suspension may be considered a change in placement if the district provides no other form of transportation. In such a situation, IDEA requires a functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention services (or a reevaluation of an existing plan if one already exists), and a Manifestation Determination to determine whether the student’s conduct was a manifestation of his or her disability.

Related Articles:

- **School Discipline**
- **Functional Behavioral Assessment: What is it?**
- **Behavior Intervention Plan**
- **Extended School Year in Pennsylvania**
- **Placement Options for School-age Students Receiving Special Education Services**
- **Placement Options for Preschool Students Receiving Special Education Services**
- **The Big I-D-E-A**
- **What Kinds of Special Education Services are Available?**

Additional Resources:
Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation

Pennsylvania School Bus Driver’s Manual on Transportation of Students with Disabilities

The Center for Autism Research and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment. The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap & trade; and CAR Resource Directory & trade; should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available. Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual’s and family’s particular circumstances.