

# Ohio School Bus Drivers

## *Carrying Our Most Precious Cargo*



School bus drivers are the backbone of the school transportation system. Nearly 16,000 bus drivers provide safe daily transportation for 65 percent of Ohio's school children.

Children are our most precious cargo and the most important reason to employ competent individuals to drive Ohio's school buses. The guidelines established by federal rule, state laws and regulations and local board of education policies ensure bus drivers not only have an understanding of the role of pupil transportation in the educational program, but meet physical, mental and moral requirements as well.

Bus drivers are an integral part of the school transportation teams including school administrators, mechanics, secretaries, teachers, students and parents. The cooperation and coordination of these team members, along with staff at the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), combine to make pupil transportation a success story in Ohio.

For more information on any of the services ODE's Pupil Transportation Office provides, please call (614) 466-4230 or visit ODE's website at [education.ohio.gov](http://education.ohio.gov).

### ✓ **Qualifications and Characteristics**

Qualifications to be a bus driver include:

- At least two years of driving experience or meet local board policy age requirements;
- Annual physical examination and a drug and alcohol test;
- Semi-annual driver record check;
- Commercial Driver License (CDL);
- School bus driver certification by the district;
- Criminal background check;
- Preservice and inservice training resulting in certification by ODE;
- Drug and alcohol testing.

In addition to tests, trainings and certifications, a bus driver must uphold certain mental and moral standards. Characteristics of a good bus driver are:

- Good moral character and reputation;
- Ability to cope with stressful situations;
- Ability to control temper and maintain poise;
- Professionalism.

## ✓ **Preservice Training**

ODE administers a school bus driver training program, including:

- 12 hours of on-the-bus instruction covering topics such as:
  - \* Bus operation and safety practices;
  - \* Pupil loading and unloading;
  - \* Emergency procedures;
  - \* Railroad crossing safety;
  - \* Driving using a detailed route sheet;
  - \* Route observations with an experienced driver.
- 15 hours of classroom instruction, including topics such as:
  - \* School bus and commercial license requirements;
  - \* Pupil management;
  - \* First aid;
  - \* Public relations;
  - \* Transporting preschool and special needs children;
  - \* Radio/cellular phone communications;
  - \* Motor vehicle laws and Ohio pupil transportation operation and safety rules;
  - \* Drug and alcohol requirements.
- Additional training for drivers who transport preschool and special needs students.



## ✓ **Inservice Training**

Each driver annually is required a minimum of four hours inservice training to reinforce and update preservice training. Many districts have local programs that provide significantly more inservice on a regular basis.

## ✓ **Certification**

Each driver must be certified every six years. Certification requires:

- Completion of preservice training;
- Driving performance evaluation and review;
- Criminal background check;
- Review of pupil transportation management policies.

School bus drivers have more responsibilities than just driving. They must also ensure the safety and well-being of each student.

## ✓ **Pupil Instruction**

Bus drivers teach students safe practices when on or around the bus. This is accomplished through leadership and instruction on the bus. In many districts, drivers also participate in classroom “safe-rider” presentations.

## ✓ **Evacuation**

Bus drivers conduct three emergency drills per year for all students who ride to and from school. The drills and evacuation instruction help the children to be prepared in the event the driver is incapacitated.

## ✓ **Route Hazards Survey**

Bus drivers regularly report any pedestrian or vehicular concerns such as construction sites or heavy traffic. They participate with district staff to plan safe and efficient routes.

## ✓ **Bus Stop Procedures**

The bus driver’s biggest responsibility occurs when picking up and dropping off students. During these stops, drivers must remain alert to their passengers, pedestrians around the bus and other traffic around the bus. Bus drivers will not leave a bus stop until children have reached a place of safety on their residence side of the road.

While at bus stops, it is critical for motorists, students on and off the bus and parents at the stop to remain alert and assist the driver in keeping our children safe.

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