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NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO TRANSPORT

Community schools may provide transportation directly to their students rather than receiving transportation services through the student’s resident school district (ORC §3314.091). In order to assume full responsibility for transportation and receive funding, a community school (and/or governing authority) must take the following course of action:

1. Open and have students enrolled.
2. Provide written notification to the resident school districts that it accepts the responsibility to provide appropriate pupil transportation services for native students to and from the community school for the subsequent school year.
   a. For existing community schools, notification must be sent to the resident school districts by Jan. 31 that they intend to transport students in the following school year.
   b. For a community school planning to open in the current school year, notification must be sent to the resident school districts by April 15 that they intend to transport students in the following school year.
3. Send written notification to the resident district of any and all students enrolled in the community school. If students from additional districts enroll after this deadline, the community school notifies that district in writing that it assumes the responsibility for transportation.
4. The community school (and/or governing authority) must provide to the Ohio Department of Education an exact copy of each written notification it sent to the public school districts:

   OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
   PUPIL TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
   25 S. FRONT ST., MS 308
   COLUMBUS, OH 43215-4183

5. The community school (and/or governing authority) must provide transportation to any and all students required to be transported by law (ORC §3327.01) or who would otherwise be transported by the public school districts under district policy. Students covered under this requirement must be provided transportation free of charge;
6. The community school’s (and/or governing authority’s) acceptance of responsibility for transportation shall cover an entire school year and shall remain in effect for subsequent school years; and
7. The community school (and/or governing authority) will be required to make reports to the Ohio Department of Education about its transportation activity and costs.
8. Transportation services provided are subject to Ohio law (ORC 3314.091(A)(3)).
RELINQUISHING TRANSPORTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Once approved to provide transportation services, a community school (and/or governing authority) must provide transportation for all eligible students in subsequent school years, in their entirety.

Circumstances may change and a community school may relinquish its responsibility to provide the transportation services in subsequent school years. In such instances, the governing authority of the community school must notify the public school district, in writing, prior to Jan. 31 if the community school wishes to relinquish its responsibility to transport.

NOTE: If the community school relinquishes the responsibility to transport it will still be responsible for transporting eligible students throughout the remainder of the current school year.

The governing authority submits a written copy of its intent to relinquish responsibility for transportation services to:

    OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
    PUPIL TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
    25 S. FRONT ST., MS 308
    COLUMBUS, OH  43215-4183

If a governing authority fails to notify the public school and the Ohio Department of Education at the address identified above, the community school remains responsible for providing transportation services for eligible students for the following school year. In subsequent years, the community school must notify the public school of any plans to reassume transportation services in the same manner as described previously. The public school district must agree with the request for a community school to reassume transportation services.
OBLIGATION TO ADHERE TO RULES AND REGULATIONS

The governing authority accepting responsibility for transporting students enrolled in its respective community schools must comply with all portions of Ohio law. Contracting with a third party for provision of pupil transportation services does not relieve the community school from the responsibility of ensuring compliance with all rules and codes.

This may include, but is not limited to:

1. Purchasing and maintaining appropriate yellow school buses, or purchasing appropriate contracted services;
2. Presenting school buses to the Ohio State Highway Patrol for annual and “spot” inspections;
3. Obtaining and maintaining a private pupil transportation license from the Office of Licensing and Commercial Standards of the Ohio State Highway Patrol;
4. Employing appropriately licensed, certified and qualified drivers; and
5. Reporting transportation information to as required.

All records pertaining to pupil transportation are subject to review by state agencies not limited to the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Public Safety/Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Auditor of State.

Failure to adhere to Ohio Revised Code and all rules (Ohio Administrative Code) adopted under the Revised Code pertaining to pupil transportation will result in a loss of funding for the community school.

The Office of Licensing and Commercial Standards at the Ohio State Highway Patrol will address questions about private pupil transportation licensure. Contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol at 614-466-4056.

The Ohio Department of Education Pupil Transportation Office will address questions about pupil transportation operations and safety rules. Contact this office at 614-466-4230 with any questions.
STUDENT COUNT AND REPORTING PROCESS

Once the Pupil Transportation Office receives appropriate notification from a community school (and/or governing authority) that the school wishes to assume the responsibility for providing transportation services, the community school will be required to comply with ridership and expenditure data report requests in order to receive funding.

Counting

The number of eligible students the community school transports to school each day during the first full week of October determines transportation funding. Count students daily. The count should only include students who ride the bus. Schools should submit a request if it does not have normal attendance during the first full week of October.

Enrolled students in grades kindergarten through 12 who ride the bus during count week are eligible. Community schools receive funding for students who live more than one mile from the community school they attend.

Reporting

The community school is responsible for reporting the ridership of each of their students as counted above through the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Through EMIS, community schools report:

1. If the community school provided transportation for the student during the first full week of October that school was in session by checking the appropriate box;
2. Which day(s) of the week the student was transported by checking the appropriate box(es); and
3. The distance the student was transported (less than one mile/greater than one mile)

Community schools must complete data entry by Nov. 1 of each year. Community schools must also complete form T1-CS and submit the signed document to the Pupil Transportation Office by Nov. 1 of each year. This report collects required data including the type of transportation provided, grade level and distance from school for each student. It should match the data reported in EMIS.

Record retention

Bus count records must be kept for a minimum of five years for auditing purposes.
FLAGGING CAPABILITY OF TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

On Nov. 1, the data entry period for community schools closes and the public school districts affected will begin a review of the information for agreement. During this review the public school district may place a flag on a student record for one of several reasons.

The flags, as identified in the Student Cross Reference System, include:

1. DISTANCE INCORRECT DUE TO INCORRECT ADDRESS
   *The distance entered by the community school is incorrect because the student's address is incorrect.*

2. DISTANCE INCORRECT
   *The distance is incorrect.*

3. STUDENT GUARANTEED TRANSPORTATION VIA IEP/RELATED SERVICE
   *Student transportation is provided via IEP/related service and paid under that service.*

Each traditional public school has two weeks following the reporting deadline to review student ridership data and enter flags into the transportation records.

Community school staff can view transportation flags on a student record and should work with public school district staff to reconcile problems with flags.

Funding for transportation will not be provided for students with a flag on their record until the issues are reconciled.

Following the two-week period for public school districts to flag a student, the staff from the community school and the traditional public school has an additional two weeks to resolve any disputes on flagged students.

The Pupil Transportation Office will address questions about transportation-specific flags. The Office of School Funding and Fiscal Support will address flags in the school options enrollment system. Contact both offices at 877-644-6338 with any questions.
PROCESS FOR DATA VALIDATION

The Pupil Transportation Office will review transportation data entered into EMIS. The review occurs before the data is processed for payment.

In an effort to share the process and promote fiscal responsibility, the Ohio Department of Education may request supporting documentation from public school districts and community schools (and/or governing authorities) when necessary.

For instances where a problem exists in the data or in the data collection, the department will work with public school districts and community schools to correct the problem.

CALCULATION OF PAYMENT AND FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

The Ohio Department of Education will calculate payment. The average number of actual bus riders as counted and reported during count week determine the calculation for payment. This excludes students who have transportation flags or fatal flags.

Transportation funding will be calculated on a formula basis. Students reported as transported by the community school will be included the resident district count of transported students for calculating the resident district’s transportation aid; funds attributable to the associated community school students will then be deducted from the resident district and paid directly to the community school. The community school will receive the same calculated per-student rate that the public school district would have received if the public school district would have provided transportation.

Transportation payments are included in the monthly community school payment. For the first year a community school provides transportation, payments will not begin until transportation data has been finalized in EMIS. In subsequent years, funding will continue as an estimated payment based on prior year data until the current year data is made available.

Problems with data or service audits may delay transportation payments. Additionally, transportation provided in vehicles that do not meet standards for pupil transportation is prohibited and will not be funded. Funding will not be paid unless all requirements are met, including provision of legal pupil transportation service. If it is determined that legal transportation service has not been provided, funding may be reduced or prorated.
YEAR-END REPORTING AND RECONCILIATION

By Aug. 1 following the end of a school year, the community school is required to report actual pupil transportation expenditures to the Pupil Transportation Office through the T2-CS report.

All transportation funding paid to the community school is required by law to be used for the transportation provided. Any funds paid that are not documented in the report will be recovered from the community school.