

Religious Release Time Transportation

Organizations may provide transportation for students from their school to a nearby location to provide religious instruction and return students to their schools. This type of a program is allowable by law ([released time courses in religious education](#)) but must be held off school property, privately funded, and parent permitted.

Under this law, a school district board of education is required to adopt a policy that authorizes a student to be excused from school to attend a released time course in religious instruction for at least one period per week. The law establishes requirements for release time including but not limited to the following:

- (1) The student's parent or guardian gives written consent.
- (2) The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them available to the school district the student attends.
- (3) Transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation for students with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent, guardian, or student.
- (4) The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for the student.

Because religious instruction off-premises under this statute is not a school-related event, the transportation provided is not subject to OAC 3301-83-16 (non-routine transportation). It is a private arrangement between the parents and the religious organization. Organization drivers are not required to hold a School Bus (S) endorsement or a Pre-Service Training Certificate, provided the vehicle and driver comply with standard commercial passenger regulations, including a Passenger (P) endorsement.

Organization commercial vehicles used for religious instruction are to be inspected annually by the Ohio State Highway Patrol Motor Carrier Enforcement typically as motorcoaches, not as school buses. These vehicles are prohibited from having stop arms or flashing red school lights. In addition, the motorcoach drivers must not stop traffic on a public road to load or unload; they must do so in parking lots or designated curb-side zones.