

Student Transportation Contractors

The Ohio Department of Education & Workforce does not issue licenses or authorizations for pupil transportation contractors to do business in the state. For a starting point on doing business in Ohio, see [Businesses - Ohio Secretary of State](#). This document provides a high-level overview of considerations and requirements specific to student transportation.

Vehicle and Driver Requirements

- [ORC Section 4511.76](#) and [OAC 3301-83-19 Authorized vehicles for the transportation of pupils to and from school and school-related events](#) set forth the types of vehicles authorized for student transportation. In addition to yellow school buses, alternative vehicles (for example, passenger vans) may be used depending on the passenger capacity.
- Before transporting students, school bus and van drivers must meet requirements including but not limited to meeting physical qualifications, completing pre-service training, criminal records checks, and “Rapback” enrollment. More information is available at [Bus Drivers | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#); [Van Drivers | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#); and [Rapback](#).

IRNs, OEDS, and Electronic Driver Database

Ohio law ([ORC 3327.10](#)) prohibits schools and districts from employing or contracting with unqualified bus or motor van drivers. The Department maintains a centralized electronic database (SFPS) so that districts and schools can access driver records to confirm a contractor’s drivers are qualified. In order for drivers to be entered in SFPS, several steps must be completed:

- Obtain a IRN from the Department by emailing Schoolbus@ohio.education.gov.
- Set up an OEDS account
 - Enter each driver’s information AND associate the driver with the school district and/or school that is contracting for the pupil transportation service.
 - Identify the school district or community school’s transportation supervisor as a “data reviewer” in OEDS.

More detailed information is available here [Ensuring Proper Reporting of Driver Qualifications](#); [Ohio Educational Directory System \(OEDS\)](#)

Ohio Private Pupil Transportation License

Community schools, nonpublic schools, and private contractors who own and operate a yellow school bus with flashing red and amber lights, as defined in [ORC 4511.01](#), must have a private pupil transportation license (PPTL). They must meet all the requirements listed above and have at least one active certified bus driver in the SFPS system. Schools or contractors must contact the Ohio State Patrol to apply for a PPTL. (OSP Contact number: 614-466-3682).

Ohio PUCO Registration

Ohio also requires registration of for-hire, intrastate (in-state) motor carriers, but provides an exception for the transportation of pupils in school buses operating to or from school sessions or school event. [ORC 4921.01](#); [OAC 4901:2-21-03](#). "For-hire motor carrier" means a person engaged in the business of transporting persons or property by motor vehicle for compensation, except when engaged in any of the following in intrastate commerce: The transportation of pupils in school buses operating to or from school sessions or school events.

For more information, contact Motor Carrier Registration MCRegistration@puco.ohio.gov (800) 686-8277.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Regulations for Motor Carriers

Many organizations, contractors, and schools use vans and buses to transport students for a variety of reasons. There are many criteria that determine whether a van or bus used to transport students or passengers for an educational purpose is subject to commercial or safety regulations.

- **What Determines if a Passenger Vehicle is Regulated?** Generally, Federal safety regulations apply when you operate a "commercial motor vehicle" in interstate commerce. To determine whether your bus or van is a commercial motor vehicle, it is necessary to consider vehicle size, passenger capacity, and in some cases whether the operations are for-hire. If you are transporting passengers in any size vehicle interstate and for-hire, the operating authority registration and other commercial regulations also generally apply. There are specific exemptions, however, for certain operations.
- **Am I Conducting For-Hire Passenger Transportation?** If you transport passengers across a state line, even occasionally, and you accept any type of payment for the transportation, you are for-hire and operating in interstate commerce. Unless exempted, "for-hire" motor carriers transporting passengers in interstate commerce must comply with FMCSA's commercial regulations including operating authority registration (USDOT number).

USDOT NUMBER

The USDOT Number serves as a unique identifier when collecting and monitoring a company's safety information acquired during audits, compliance reviews, crash investigations, and inspections.

Unless an exception applies, a USDOT number would be required for vehicles that are “commercial motor vehicles” (CMVs). A Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) is:

- A vehicle designed or used to transport more than 8 passengers (including the driver) for compensation;
- A vehicle designed or used to transport more than 15 passengers (including the driver), and is not used to transport passengers for compensation; or
- A vehicle having a gross vehicle weight rating or gross weight of more than 10,000 pounds.

Refer to [49 CFR Section 390.5](#) for a complete CMV definition.

For more information go to [Do I Need a USDOT Number? | FMCSA](#).

SCHOOL BUSES

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) apply to school buses that are CMVs in certain situations. The FMCSRs are applicable when a school bus provides for-hire interstate transportation other than home to school and school to home and is **not** operated by a State or local government. For more information go to [Information for School Bus Operators | FMCSA](#).

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

[49 CFR Part 387](#) requires for-hire motor carriers operating **in interstate** commerce to have minimum levels of public liability insurance in the amounts below:

- Any vehicle with a seating capacity of **16 passengers or more** (including driver): **\$5,000,000**
- Any vehicle with a seating capacity of **15 passengers or fewer** (including driver): **\$1,500,000**

EXCEPTIONS

- The financial responsibility requirements do not apply to a motor vehicle transporting only school children and teachers to or from school.
- The financial responsibility requirements do not apply to a motor vehicle operated by a motor carrier under contract to provide transportation of pre-primary, primary, and secondary students for extracurricular trips organized, sponsored, and paid for by a school district.