

Westside Community Schools

Special Education

Transportation Handbook

- Procedures, Rules, & Regulations -

Important Contact Information:

- To report an absence, call Chief at: **402-392-2144**
- To change a transportation schedule or pick-up/drop-off address, contact your child's IEP manager: _____
- For all other transportation questions, contact the Special Services Department at: **402-390-2122**

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Westside Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, color, age, national origin or disability.



Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s):

The Westside Community School District provides transportation for students as determined by their IEP team when they attend school at a center other than their home school or when their disability warrants. Transportation is based on enrollment status and is typically provided only to and from homes or day care facilities within the school district boundaries. This transportation can only be provided with the cooperation of parents and students. This handbook has been developed with the intent of providing you with the important transportation information you need. Please read the enclosed information thoroughly and keep handy as your reference guide.

We have contracted with Chief Transportation Company to provide transportation for your child this year. Before transportation for your child begins, you will be contacted and notified of routing details including pick-up and drop-off times. Please discuss with your child's IEP manager anything you think will help your child's transportation go smoothly.

If your child is ill or cannot go to school on a particular day, please call Chief directly at 402-392-2144 prior to 7:30 am or 30 minutes before pick-up time, whichever comes first. When transportation is not needed for the afternoon pick-up time, Chief must be notified by 10:00 am. You do not need to wait until the day the student will be absent before calling. As soon as you know that there will be a change in transportation, please notify Chief.

Student schedules may be subject to change with the discharge or addition of new student(s) to their assigned route. Please be aware that traffic or weather related conditions may affect pick-up and drop-off schedules significantly.

Students are expected to maintain appropriate behavior when using district transportation. Please refer to this handbook for other behavior/discipline policies.

At the back of this handbook is an Acknowledgement of Procedures & Permission Form. Please read carefully, sign, and return to your child's IEP manager. This form must be signed and received by the appropriate Westside staff before transportation services can begin.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kami Jessop". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kami Jessop,
Director of Special Services

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For the purpose of this document, the term “parent” refers to a biological or adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian authorized to make educational decisions for the child, or an individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, other relative, or designee) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare.

ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Who is Eligible for Transportation as a Related Service?

Decisions about a student's need for transportation as a related service are made by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team on at least an *annual* basis. For students receiving special education services, the IEP Team, including parents, will determine if a child needs transportation as a related service. The specific needs of the student must be the primary consideration when an IEP team is determining any transportation services.

Inability to pay and inconvenience are not considerations for special education transportation services. Siblings will not be provided special education transportation services, unless they receive transportation as a related service through their own IEP.

Annual Eligibility Considerations:

1. **Safety** - If a student's medical needs warrant consideration of:
 - a. Duration of time on vehicle
 - b. Need for temperature regulation
 - c. Need for health services while on vehicle
 - d. High probability of health-related emergencies
 - e. General ability and/or strength to ambulate

2. **Accessibility** - If a student's physical needs warrant consideration of his/her ability to access the physical school environment including curbs, sidewalks, streets, and non-specialized transportation.

3. **Behavior** - If a student's behavior warrants consideration of his/her need for:
 - a. Smaller student-to-adult ratio
 - b. Behavior support while on the vehicle
 - c. Separation from specified peer(s)

4. **Program Location** - If a student's educational placement has been changed as a result of an IEP team decision, and the program location is somewhere other than the home school (i.e., i66, Brook Valley, Boys Town, etc.).

Please Note: Some parents may choose to transport their own child to and from school. If the child meets eligibility standards through the IEP for transportation as a related service, parent MAY be eligible for mileage reimbursement. For further information, contact Kami Jessop, Director of Special Services, at 402-390-2110.

PICK-UP/DROP-OFF PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS

The Westside Community School District provides transportation for students **as determined by their IEP team** when they attend school at a center other than their home school or when their disability warrants. Transportation is based on enrollment status and is typically provided **only** from homes or daycare facilities within the school district boundaries. Students will not be dropped off or picked up anywhere except the predetermined location(s) unless other arrangements have been made and approved in advance. This transportation can only be provided with the cooperation of parents and students.

The following procedures will be followed in providing these services:

PARENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent will be present at designated pick-up/drop-off location each day unless the location is the school site. • Preschool students and those students needing assistance must be accompanied to and from the vehicle and secured into the seat by a parent, or an adult designated by the parent, at pick-up and drop-off times. • Parent must sign the permission form (located at the back of this handbook) and return it to the student's IEP manager before a student is dropped off at the home without an adult present. Students will only be left alone if it has been determined that a student is able to get into the home alone. • If the pick-up/drop-off location is a childcare provider, the parent is responsible for informing the childcare provider of transportation procedures. • If a student does not board the vehicle before it leaves the pick-up location, parents are responsible for transporting their student to school.
STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student must be at the designated pick-up location 5 minutes before scheduled arrival time. • Student must remain at the designated pick-up location until vehicle arrives.
SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff will be present to receive students upon arrival to school and escort and assist students in boarding the vehicle after school.

DRIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At pick-up, the driver will wait no longer than 3 minutes beyond the scheduled arrival time for the student to board. After 3 minutes, the vehicle will leave and will NOT return to pick up the student.• Upon drop-off, the driver will wait no longer than 5 minutes for an adult to receive the student.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If the parental permission form does not indicate the student can be left alone at the home and there is no one at home to receive the student, the following actions will be taken:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The driver will contact his/her supervisor and the supervisor will call the emergency numbers provided by the parent.▪ If no contact is made at the emergency numbers, the student will be delivered back to the school location from which they were picked up. If a parent has not arrived to pick up their child within 30 minutes after the student is delivered to their school, the Omaha Police Department may be notified that the parents cannot be located.▪ The parents or their designee will be required to pick up the student.• Drivers are not allowed to leave the vehicle.• Drivers will not make unauthorized stops and will stay on designated route with the exception of having to bring a child back to school if a parent was not present at time of drop-off.
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CHANGE OF SCHEDULE/DELAYS/ABSENCES

PARENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent must notify Chief (402-392-2144) and the school if a student will be absent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Notification must occur a minimum of 30 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time or 7:30 am for morning programs/activities and 10:00 am for afternoon pick-ups. ○ Parents are strongly encouraged to notify Chief <u>as soon as they become aware</u> of upcoming absences. • Parent must notify their child's IEP manager at least FIVE school days before any change of address (pick-up or drop-off) to assure continuation of service. There will be NO exceptions to this policy. Drivers cannot make changes in routing.
SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff will notify the parent as soon as possible of any unforeseen changes or delays that should occur during school hours (i.e. last-minute substitute drivers, traffic, inclement weather). • If Westside Community Schools cancels school because of weather, we WILL NOT transport our <u>contracted</u> students to neighboring districts or other out-of-district locations.
DRIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver will notify their Chief supervisor if a student does not ride for 3 days without proper notification. • Drivers are not allowed to make changes in routing without proper authorization.

Please Note: Inclement weather and/or traffic issues may cause minor delays to pick-up and drop-off times.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

PARENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent will secure their child into a car seat /seat belt before vehicle leaves the pick-up location.
STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are required to wear seat belts at all times if the vehicle is so equipped.• Students must wait until the vehicle has come to a complete stop before unbuckling their seat belts and attempting to leave the vehicle.• Students will never approach the vehicle until it has stopped completely.
SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School staff will ensure that car seats and seat belts are securely fastened before the vehicle leaves the school location.• School staff will periodically review rules and regulations of passenger safety with students.
DRIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation staff will be responsible to see that every child is correctly fastened into their seat belt or car seat, and that every wheelchair is correctly fastened in place before the vehicle is put in motion.• Transportation staff will not leave students unattended. When stopping to load or unload students, drivers will secure the vehicle in park, secure emergency brake, and follow proper boarding regulations.• Driver will not leave the vehicle.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

PARENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are responsible for supporting the behavioral expectations of their child while being transported.
STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must follow the rules for transportation and be respectful toward the transportation staff. Students are required to occupy their assigned seat, with seat belt fastened, until the vehicle comes to a complete stop. Students must wait until the vehicle comes to a complete stop before attempting to board or depart. Orderly entry and departure through the authorized entrance and exit is required. Students must respect the property and privacy of people living near pick-up/drop-off locations. Students must act in an acceptable manner while waiting for or departing from the vehicle. Students may not transport living animals (with the exception of allowable service animals), reptiles, or insects. Students will not transport sharp objects, weapons of any kind, or any illegal substances on the vehicle. Students will not hang out windows and must keep their feet on the floor. Students are forbidden from throwing anything in, at, or from the vehicle. Students will avoid fighting or acting aggressively in any way. Students will not use profanity, threats, make obscene gestures and/or remarks, or make excessive noise. Students are obliged to help keep the vehicle clean; in particular, by not eating, drinking, smoking, spitting, or littering. Damaging or defacing the vehicle is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to writing on, scratching/carving, or burning any part of the vehicle. Students are asked to immediately report any damage they see to the driver. Students who purposely damage a vehicle are responsible for the cost of repair to the vehicle. Students must refrain from tampering with the vehicle's doors, windows, emergency exits, radio, or vehicle controls. Students are permitted to ride on their assigned or authorized vehicle only. Students who must cross the road after departing the vehicle should pass in front of the vehicle, never behind it.

SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff should feel free to work with transportation staff on possible solutions to behavior problems. • School staff will communicate with transportation staff regarding individualized behavior plans impacting transportation.
DRIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver will enforce transportation regulations and maintain discipline for the safety of all aboard. • Driver will report any major violation of these rules in writing to their supervisor who will notify the Special Education office and/or the school, identifying the student and the nature of the infraction. The Special Education Director or Student Services Director will notify parents by a follow-up letter as to the inappropriate behavior if warranted.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Appropriate student behavior is important. In order to maintain safety in the vehicles, students are expected to maintain appropriate behavior at all times. If safety is jeopardized because of inappropriate behavior, disciplinary action will be taken.

Situations of inappropriate behavior will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Transportation can be discontinued if inappropriate behaviors continue.

PARENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are responsible for supporting the behavioral expectations of their child while being transported. • If a student becomes a threat to the safety of the driver or other passengers, parents or school staff will be called to remove the student from the vehicle. If necessary, emergency services will be called for assistance.
STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If assigned to a specific seat by the driver or school staff, the student must sit in that seat. • Unassigned seating privileges may be earned back as a result of appropriate behavior.
SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff should feel free to work with transportation staff on possible solutions to behavior problems. • School staff will communicate with transportation staff regarding individualized behavior plans impacting transportation.
DRIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver will handle any <u>minor</u> infractions through discussion with the student(s). The driver may wish to speak with a parent. • Driver will report any major violation of established rules in writing to their supervisor who will notify the Special Education office and/or the school, identifying the student and the nature of the infraction. The Special Education Director or Student Services Director will notify parents by a follow-up letter as to the inappropriate behavior.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What happens if a student is absent for just one day?

A: The parent should call Chief and the school directly as soon as they know the student will be absent.

Q: What if the student does not need a ride home for just one day?

A: The parent should call Chief and the school directly as soon as they know the student will not need a ride home.

Q: What if the student gets sick at school and needs a ride home?

A: School staff will call the parent and the parent or designee will be responsible to pick up the student from school.

Q: Can the driver drop off a student at a different location or a friend's house if they receive written permission from the parent?

A: No. Short-term or daily changes to the drop-off or pick-up locations will not be accepted. The driver will only pick up or drop off students at designated locations as approved by the Transportation Coordinator. For permanent changes, parents must contact Chief to make change requests at least 5 school days prior to the needed change.

Q: Can students get dropped off at home alone?

A: Students will only be left alone at home if:

- a parent has signed the permission form and has returned it to the student's IEP manager (last page of handbook) **and**
- it has been determined that the student is able to get into the home alone.

Q: Will my child always be eligible to receive special education transportation?

A: Not necessarily. Transportation is an IEP related service. Decisions regarding transportation services are made on an annual basis by the student's IEP team.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROCEDURES & PERMISSION FORM

By signing below, I acknowledge that I understand and will adhere to the policies and procedures described in this handbook.

Student Signature (if applicable) Date

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Children will **only** be left at a drop-off location alone if:

- the parent has indicated on this permission form that the child may be left alone,
- the child is **at least 13 years of age** AND
- is able to enter the home independently.

The child will be returned to their school if:

- there is no adult present at the drop-off location and the signed permission form was not received, OR
- if the child cannot enter the home independently.

If a student needs to be returned to school, the parent will be contacted and will need to pick up their child.

I give Westside Community Schools/Chief Transport permission to leave my child (13 years of age or older) at home without an adult present. I accept full responsibility for my child's safety once he/she enters the home.

_____ **YES**

_____ **NO**

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Further, I give Westside School District authorization to release pertinent information to Chief Transport regarding my child's special needs.

_____ **YES**

_____ **NO**

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROCEDURES & PERMISSION FORM

By signing below, I acknowledge that I understand and will adhere to the policies and procedures described in this handbook.

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The child will be returned to their school if:

- there is no adult present at the drop-off location and the signed permission form was not received, OR
- if the child cannot enter the home independently.

If a student needs to be returned to school, the parent will be contacted and will need to pick up their child.

I give Westside Community Schools/Chief Transport permission to leave my child (13 years of age or older) at home without an adult present. I accept full responsibility for my child's safety once he/she enters the home.

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_____ **NO**

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

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