



Transportation for Students with Disabilities

This fact sheet talks about students with disabilities and the rules around transportation to school.

My child has a disability. Does the school have to provide transportation?

In Minnesota, there is no law saying a school district has to provide transportation to all its students. But there are laws about certain situations. And there are laws that may cover transportation for some students with disabilities. The laws say that students with disabilities must be kept in their least restrictive environment. When it comes to transportation services, this means a school district should make sure that a student with a disability gets the same transportation services as non-disabled students to the greatest extent as possible. But some students with disabilities may need more.



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that covers the educational needs of students with disabilities.¹ The IDEA says that transportation can be part of the services a school gives to a student with a disability. If your child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), they *may* have the right to get transportation services as a “related service.”

To get special transportation as a related service, the IEP team must decide that the student needs special transportation to access their education. This includes non-academic and extracurricular activities.²

The IEP team makes the decision by looking at the disability and educational needs of the student.³ If the IEP team decides that special transportation is necessary they add that to the child’s IEP. Then the school must provide the transportation for free.⁴

Transportation as a related service within an IEP may include:

- travel to and from school
- travel between schools
- in and around school buildings
- access to specialized equipment on the bus. This might be something like a wheelchair lift or five-point seatbelt harness.⁵

How do I ask for special transportation?

If you think your child needs special transportation as a related service, ask the school to talk about it at an IEP meeting. This could be during their annual review. You also have the right to ask for a meeting with the team any time during the year. See our fact sheet [IEP Team Meetings](#) for more information on asking for an IEP meeting.

How does the IEP team decide if special transportation is needed?

When deciding if a student needs special transportation as a related service, the IEP team should talk about the student's:⁶

1. Age
2. Physical and mobility needs
3. Behavioral, social, and emotional needs
4. Communication needs and their ability to follow instructions



They should also talk about how long the trip takes and how far it is. They should also talk about any community safety concerns.

The decision should be specific to your student's needs. There is no exact rule saying who can get special transportation. The decision must be based on the student's needs, not what the family prefers or if the school can provide a bus driver.

The IEP team does not have to consider a parent's work schedule, convenience, or the child's siblings' bus schedule when making their decision.

These are examples of times when a student with a disability may need special transportation:

- A student with severe asthma who lives in the school's walking zone. Their asthma is triggered by environmental factors. They may need to be bused because the walk is too much for their asthma.
- A student with diabetes may need a trained bus aide to help give them insulin injections if needed.
- A student with a wheelchair may need a bus with a wheelchair lift.

What can special transportation look like?

Any special transportation services need to be clearly described in the IEP. The description should be specific enough that everyone understands what services are provided. The IEP team must decide how to best meet your student's needs. Some examples are:

1. Door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation.⁷

Instead of your student going to a school bus stop with other children, the school bus comes directly to your house. Depending on what your student needs, a school staff person might meet

them at the curb, in the driveway, or at the front door. This is called “door-to-door” or “curb-to-curb” transportation. It doesn’t have a specific legal definition, so the IEP team must be clear about where the “drop off” and “pick up” point is. Door-to-door does not go further than the front door of the student’s home. School staff cannot be required to go into the home to get the student.⁸

2. Last-on, first-off.

If your child’s needs are affected by how long they’re on the bus, they may be able to be the last one picked up or the first one dropped off the bus route.⁹

3. Specialized equipment

If your child has a physical disability, they may need equipment like an adapted bus, wheelchair lift, ramp, etc. Your child may also need a specialized seatbelt or harness to make sure they stay in their seat.

4. Presence of support staff¹⁰

The school may provide an adult to ride along with your child, like a paraprofessional. They help your student with their needs. Ways they might help include:

- communication support
- visual help
- behavior management
- medical services
- help with mobility
- and any other safety needs.

Help may also be things like supervision at the bus stop, escorting the student from their front door to the bus stop, helping the student get on the bus, or getting from class to class.¹¹

5. Reimbursement for parent transportation¹²

In some cases, the best or only option for a student may be to have a parent or caregiver drive them. If the parent agrees to drive their student, the district must pay back the parent.¹³ In general the parent is paid back the [standard IRS business mileage rate](#). This rate changes every year.



What if I disagree with the IEP team's decision?

If you disagree with the school's decision about transportation, you still have options. You can ask the IEP team to collect data supporting their decision and schedule another meeting to talk about the results. You may also ask for a “Prior Written Notice” documenting and explaining their decision. See our fact sheets [Filing a Special Education Complaint](#) and [The School is Not Helping My Child with Disabilities](#) for more dispute resolution options.

My child with a disability needs special transportation, but their siblings do not. Can all of my children ride the same special bus?

The school district is only required to provide special transportation if the IEP team decides that special transportation is necessary for FAPE. Their brothers and sisters have no legal right to ride the same bus.

Some school districts let siblings ride the bus with their siblings if it is convenient and if the school has enough bus drivers and space to make that work. But it is not required, so this benefit could end at any time.

My child is open enrolled in a school outside of our home district. Do the same rules apply?

Minnesota has a law commonly called “open enrollment,” which means that a family can choose to go to a different public school than the one closest to their home. The school district closest to the family’s home is called the “home school” or “resident school.” The school district of the school the family chooses is called the “choice school” or “open enrollment school.”

If the child stayed in their home school, the home school would be responsible for transportation. But Minnesota law says when a student enrolls in an open enrollment school, the home school district is no longer responsible for transportation to the new open enrollment school. See [Minnesota Statute 123B.92](#). In most situations, families taking part in open enrollment figure out transportation for their student on their own.

Note: If you can drive your child to the boundaries of the open enrollment school district, the open enrollment school must provide transportation the rest of the way.¹⁴ This rule applies to special transportation services as well.¹⁵

For example: Your family lives in the boundaries of School A. You open enroll your children in School B, which is 20 miles away from your house. You have a sister who lives in the boundaries of School B and her children take the school bus to School B. If you can get your children to your sister’s house in the morning, School B must transport your children to School B too. But School B **does not** have to pick up your children at their home 20 miles away.



If your student has special transportation in their IEP, and you drive them to school, you may be able to get some travel money back. The district usually reimburses only for the miles that are inside the school attendance area. So, if you live outside the area you only get to count part of the trip. Ask your child’s IEP team about travel cost reimbursement.

My child is homeless but still goes to their original home school. Do the same rules apply?

The McKinney-Vento Act is a law that protects the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness.¹⁶ The definition of homeless under this law includes children who are:

- living in temporary housing
- “couch surfing” at a friend or relative’s house
- living in a public or private location that is not meant for sleeping
- living in a car, park, or similar space, or
- any other non-permanent situation

Students who qualify under this law may stay in their original home school, even if they now live outside of the district’s boundaries.

For example: Your family lives in the boundaries of School A and your children love School A. You are evicted from your apartment and have to temporarily stay at your sister’s house, which is 20 miles away from the apartment. Your sister’s house is in the boundaries of School B. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, your children qualify as homeless and have the right to stay enrolled in School A. School A must transport the children between your sister’s house and School A. You also have the right to enroll in School B. If you decide to switch to School B, School B must provide transportation.

If your child is homeless and qualifies under this law, the school must help get your child to school. This is true even if you are staying somewhere outside the district. This responsibility includes special transportation services if the child’s IEP has special transportation.

If you are experiencing homelessness, ask to talk with the school district’s McKinney-Vento Coordinator. Each school district must have a school official that is a McKinney-Vento Coordinator. They can help you get services for your child during a period of homelessness.

My child with disabilities was suspended from the school bus, but I can’t drive them. What now?

School officials may suspend a student from the school bus but still let them go to school during the school day.¹⁷ This usually happens when the student has misbehaved on the bus, but their behavior in the school building is fine.

If your student gets special transportation as a related service in their IEP, being suspended from the bus may have legal complications. If the school does not give them another way for them to get to school, the school bus suspension counts as a day of removal from school.

Under IDEA, if a child has 10+ days of removal in one school year, extra protections apply. If your child has an IEP and has been suspended from the bus for 11 or more days in one school year, the IEP team must meet and do a [manifestation determination](#). A manifestation determination is an IEP team meeting that looks at the child's behavior and if it is related to their disability.



For bus suspensions of 9 days or less, districts generally do not have to provide transportation unless they do that for nondisabled students in the same situation.

See our fact sheet [Student Suspensions](#) for more information if your student has been suspended.

Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.

Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old. Ask us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.

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Laws, Statutes, Rules and Regulations

Note: Some of these citations are for special education administrative hearings. There are not always links you can use. The best way to see them is to bring this fact sheet to a meeting with a school official. The school official usually can access the Special Education database.

Does the school have to provide transportation to my child with a disability?

1. [34 CFR § 300 et. seq](#)
2. *Troy Sch. Dist.*, [76 IDELR 142](#) (SEA MI 2019)
3. [Minn. R. 7470.1600, subp. 1. \(2025\)](#)
4. Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, [71 Fed. Reg. 46540 \(Oct. 13, 2006\)](#) (to be codified [34 C.F.R pts. 300, 301](#)).
5. [34 CFR § 300 et. seq](#)

How does the IEP team decide if special transportation is needed?

6. *Aspire Pub. Schs.*, [124 LRP 45949](#) (SEA CA 11/18/19)
7. See, e.g., *Los Angeles Unified Sch. Dist.*, [51 IDELR 292](#) (SEA CA 2009)
8. See, e.g., *J.L. v. New York City Dep't of Educ.*, [124 LRP 16389](#) (S.D.N.Y. 05/24/24)
9. See, e.g., *Maine Reg'l Sch. Unit No. 51*, [58 IDELR 117](#) (SEA ME 2011)
10. See, e.g., *DeLeon v. Susquehanna Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, [556 IDELR 260](#) (3d Cir. 1984)
11. *In re: Sara S.*, [507 IDELR 308](#) (SEA MA 1985).
12. See *Washoe County (NV) School District*, [55 IDELR 234](#) (OCR 2010)
13. *A.S. v. Harrison Twp. Bd. of Educ.*, [67 IDELR 207](#) (D.N.J. 2016)

My child attends a choice school outside of our home district. Do the same rules apply?

14. [Minn. § 124D.03 \(2025\)](#)
15. *Osseo Area Schs. v. M.N.B.*, [970 F.3d 917](#) (8th Cir. 2020). This case determined that the IDEA does not require a school to cover transportation expenses when a student's travel is the result of a parent's unilateral choice under an open enrollment program.
16. [42 USC § 11431 et seq](#)

My child with disabilities was suspended from the school bus, and I can't drive them to school.

What now?

17. [34 CFR 300.530](#)