

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education is committed to providing transportation services to students: 1) who do not live within walking distance of their home school; 2) who live within walking distance of their home school, but for whom a walking route meeting a reasonable level of safety is not available; or 3) for whom accommodation or assistance is required by an IEP or 504 plan. The Board is further committed to providing transportation services to other students with needs of accommodation or services, or who participate in special programs, when space and funding permit.

The Board of Education's responsibility for the safety of students who ride buses to school shall begin when the student enters the bus. Conversely, its responsibility shall end when the student exits the bus at the designated bus stop at the end of the school day. The Board of Education's responsibility for students walking to and from school shall begin when the student enters upon, and end when the student exits from, school property.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which transportation services for students are provided.

III. Definitions

- A. 504 Plan – A plan to provide accommodation for an individual student to comply with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- B. Adequate Sight Distance - Sight distance required to allow a student to safely use roadways or road shoulders as a walking route to school or a bus stop. This determination may be made in conjunction with a County or State Traffic Engineer.
- C. Alternate Bus Service – A program for students in grade Pre-K through 8 who are eligible for transportation services and need to ride two different buses on a regular basis due to individual parental needs.
- D. Bona fide Residence – The actual residence of a student, maintained in good faith by his/her parent. Bona fide residence does not include a temporary residence or a superficial residence established for the purpose of free school attendance in the

Howard County public schools. Determination of a bona fide residence is a factual one made on an individual basis. Although an intent to reside indefinitely or permanently at the present place of residence is not necessarily required, the following factors may be pertinent in determining one's bona fide residence:

1. Ownership of property
 2. Address at which one receives mail regularly
 3. Address on driver's license and/or automobile registration
 4. Payment of taxes and statements on tax returns
 5. Statements as to residence contained on contracts and other documents
 6. Address of voter registration
 7. Location of furniture and other personal belongings
 8. Any other factors that may be indicative of residence
- E. Bus Route – A set of scheduled bus stops and planned roadways traveled by a school bus as developed by the Pupil Transportation Office.
- F. Day-Care Provider - An individual or center chosen by a parent to care for or supervise their child(ren) in their absence.
- G. Distance Eligibility - The distance from the home school a child must live to receive transportation services.
- H. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written description of a program for a student with a disability who receives special education and related services. It is developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1414.
- I. Kindergarten Transportation - Mid-day school bus transportation for half-day kindergarten students at the end of the morning kindergarten session or the transportation of students to the afternoon kindergarten session.
- J. Needs of Accommodation and Assistance – Refers to any student who requires transportation service to comply with an IEP, 504 Plan, or other unforeseen mandates or needs.
- K. Parent - any one of the following is recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
1. Biological parent - Natural begetter of the student; mother or father.
 2. Adoptive parent – Person who has legally adopted the student.
 3. Custodial Parent - Person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and privileges.
 4. Guardian - Person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and privileges.

5. Caretaker – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody or control over the student, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian of the minor.
- L. Problem Solving Team – Refers to a school-based team of people that includes, but not limited to, administrators, teaching staff, and a representative(s) from Student Services.
- M. Resident Student - Qualified student of school-age whose parent has an established, bona fide residence in Howard County.
- N. School Bus Stop - A designated location where students board and are discharged from a school bus.
- O. Service Area - The geographical area within each school attendance area, as defined by the Board of Education, within which transportation services are provided.
- P. Space Available School Bus Service Program - A program for students in grades Pre-K through 8 whose residence is located outside the service area. Student participation in this program is predicated on the need for day-care services on a daily basis and meeting all eligibility requirements. Bus service will be provided only if school bus seating space is available.
- Q. Student Walking Route Committee - Committee composed of representatives from the Howard County Police Department and Traffic Engineering Office, and one (1) or more citizens of Howard County. The member(s) shall be appointed by the Superintendent/designee. Persons with a pending pupil transportation appeal shall be temporarily prohibited from participating in related activities of the Student Walking Route Committee.
- R. Suitable Crossings
1. Where adequate sight distance, line striping, and crosswalk signing exists when warranted.
 2. Where pupils are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels, or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
 3. Where adequate safety provisions can be made for crossing roadways.
 4. Where pupils are not required to cross certain roadways unless a grade separated crossing is available.
 5. Where pupils are not required to cross a proliferation of business/commercial district entrances when utilizing the road shoulders or right-of-way as a walkway.

- S. Suitable Pathways and Walking Routes - Road shoulder, pathway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface which pupils can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:
 - 1. Residential streets in a community with little or no transient traffic.
 - 2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 30 miles per hour or less.
- T. Transportation Eligibility Map/Chart - A pictorial representation of those geographic locations within a school service area for which school bus transportation is provided.

IV. Standards

- A. The provisions of this policy apply to all students, public and non-public, for whom bus transportation is provided by the Howard County Public School System. This includes transportation to and from school, field/activity trips, athletic events, and other school system sponsored events.
- B. Transportation will be provided to all students with needs of accommodations or assistance to public and non-public schools designated and approved by the Maryland State Department of Education and/or the Howard County Public School System subject to the availability of funding.
- C. Transportation services provided to a student with an IEP/504 plan will be provided in accordance with that plan, as well as federal, state, and local laws/regulations.
- D. When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff shall consider:
 - 1. Reasonable levels of safety.
 - 2. Program efficiency.
 - 3. Economy of operations.
 - 4. Equity of service.
 - 5. IEP or 504 plan requirements.

Providing a reasonable level of safety shall be the major staff consideration.

- E. Eligibility for transportation
 - 1. Transportation services will be provided to students when the distance between their home and the home school is greater than the following:
 - a. Half-day Pre-Kindergarten morning, noontime and afternoon: 0.5 mile

- b. Half-day Kindergarten, morning and afternoon: 1.0 mile
 - c. Half-day Kindergarten noontime: 0.5 mile
 - d. Full-day Kindergarten through Grade 8: 1.0 mile
 - e. Grades 9 through 12: 1.5 miles
2. The bona fide residence of the parent/guardian will be used to determine eligibility for transportation services. Distances will be calculated as follows:
- a. Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Elementary and combined K-8 School students:
 - i. Detached homes and townhouses – Measurement will be from the residence property line to the door(s) identified as the entrance to the school.
 - ii. Apartment complexes and condominiums – Measurement will be from the entrance to the building to the door(s) identified as the entrance to the school.
 - b. Middle and High School Students:
 - i. Detached homes and townhouses – Measurements will be from the residence property line to the property line of the school.
 - ii. Apartment complexes and condominiums – Measurement will be from the entrance to the building to the property line of the school.
 - c. Other transportation service:
 - i. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, who is eligible for transportation services, may request alternate bus service.
 - ii. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, who is not eligible for transportation service, may request space available bus service to or from a daycare provider.
 - iii. Temporary transportation service may be provided when the presence of unsafe walkways or pathways exists, or when a student’s medical condition warrants.

F. Bus Stops

- 1. Students may be expected to walk up to four-tenths of a mile to and from a bus stop.
- 2. Students may be required to walk more than four-tenths of a mile where it is unsafe or not feasible to establish a bus stop within four-tenths of a mile of a student’s bona fide residence.

3. Students are expected to board and exit the bus from the same bus stop location that is closest to their residence unless otherwise directed or permitted to do so by a school system official.
4. Bus stops for students with needs of accommodation or assistance will be determined consistent with the needs identified in the IEP and/or 504 Plan.

G. Walking Route Appeals

1. Requests for re-evaluation of a walking route may be made to the Pupil Transportation Office.
2. Appeals of the decisions made by the staff of the Pupil Transportation Office may be directed, in writing, to the Student Walking Route Committee.
 - a. The Student Walking Route Committee will submit its findings and recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools.
 - b. The Superintendent of Schools will review the committee's findings and recommendations, as well as those of the Pupil Transportation Office, and render a decision that will be communicated to the appropriate persons.
 - c. If the person(s) is not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision, a final written appeal may be made to the Board of Education.

V. Compliance

- A. The Superintendent/designee is responsible for the safe design of all bus routes that serve public and non-public schools.
- B. School principals will ensure that information is available to any parent as to whether or not their child(ren) is eligible for transportation services. If a student is not eligible for transportation services, it is the parents' responsibility to determine their child's walking route to and from school.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VII. References

- A. **Legal**
COMAR 13A.06.07, Pupil Transportation
COMAR 13A.05.01
Section 5-203, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland
Section 7-606, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland
Section 9-100, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland

Section 9-101, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland
Section 22-228, Maryland Motor Vehicle Law Annotated
Louisa E. Baker v. Carroll County Board of Education, Maryland State Board of
Education, Opinion No. 99-25
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 20 U.S. Code 1414

B. Other Board Policies

Policy 9000, Enrollment, Residency, Student Assignment and Admission to Pre-K
and K

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I. Eligibility

- A. Distance criteria will be adhered to concerning walking to a bus stop or when determining eligibility for school bus service provided that traffic and/or walking conditions meet a reasonable level of safety and/or conditions permit safe bus operations. Some students may be required to walk to a bus stop or to school in excess of the stated distance if a reasonable level of safety cannot be achieved.
- B. In order to assist parents in determining if their child(ren) is eligible for bus transportation, the school administration shall post and maintain in an accessible location a Transportation Eligibility Map/Chart supplied by the Pupil Transportation Office.
- C. Where applicable, the Pupil Transportation Office will identify geographic areas where exceptions are made to the eligibility criteria because of safety reasons. When this occurs, the Pupil Transportation Office will notify the appropriate school administration of the exception.
- D. When identified by the Pupil Transportation Office, the school administration shall notify the parent(s) and student(s) that the student(s) is ineligible for bus transportation services.

II. Other Transportation Services

- A. Alternate Bus Service
 - 1. Alternate bus service must be requested using the appropriate form, which can be obtained from the school office.
 - 2. The completed form will be forwarded to the Pupil Transportation Office for consideration.
 - 3. The Pupil Transportation Office will consider approval of requests on a space available basis when:
 - a. The requested service remains consistent throughout the school year.
 - b. Both the home address and the alternate address are located in the same school attendance area and within the service area for the school.
 - c. No more than one alternate bus is requested.
 - 4. The school administration will notify the parent of the decision of the Pupil Transportation Office.

5. Alternate bus service may be terminated on short notice if space is no longer available on the alternate bus.

B. Space Available Bus Service

1. Space available bus service must be requested using the appropriate form, which can be obtained from the school office.
2. The completed form will be forwarded to the Pupil Transportation Office for consideration.
3. The Pupil Transportation Office will consider approval of requests on a space available basis when the daycare provider is located in the service area of the student's home school.
4. Priority will be given to requests for in-district students.
5. The school administration will notify the parent of the decision of the Pupil Transportation Office.
6. In the event that there is a change in the location of the day-care facility that may change the student's eligibility status, the parent must notify the school administration of the new location. Following the receipt of that information, a decision will be made in conjunction with the Pupil Transportation Office as to whether or not transportation is to be continued. The parent will be notified of that decision by the school administration.
7. Space available bus service may be terminated on short notice if space is no longer available. Service provided to out-of-district students will be terminated before that of in-district students.

C. Temporary Bus Service

1. Unsafe Walking Conditions
 - a. Temporary school bus transportation may be authorized by the Superintendent/designee if conditions render walking to and from school unsafe.
 - b. Parents will be notified 48 hours prior to the termination of temporary bus service by the school administration.
2. Medical Condition
 - a. A student not eligible for regular transportation services may be granted temporary service using an existing bus stop if the service is necessitated by a medical condition.
 - b. Requests for temporary transportation services for medical reasons shall be submitted to the Pupil Transportation Office.
 - c. The Pupil Transportation Office will forward the request to the school administration to be reviewed by the school's Problem Solving Team, which will review the student's health record (i.e. for diagnosis, number

- and kinds of health room visits, hospitalizations, and absences) and provide a recommendation to the Director of Pupil Transportation.
- d. The Pupil Transportation Office will inform the parent of the decision.

III. Establishing Bus Stops and Routes

- A. School bus stops will be established in compliance with COMAR 13A.06.07 with consideration given to, but not limited to, safety, efficiency, economics, equity, and IEP or 504 Plan requirements.
- B. Bus stops will generally be at least 1/4 mile apart.
- C. Stops may be established on both sides of a roadway when sight distance and/or traffic conditions warrant.
- D. Off-road school bus stops (loading and unloading zones) shall be established whenever possible, consistent with Maryland Vehicle Laws and COMAR 13A.06.07 Regulations.
- E. School bus routes will be developed using industry accepted standards, including, but not limited to, string routes, circular routes, feeder routes, shuttle routes and double coverage routes.
- F. Prior to the start of each school year, bus stop time and location information will be available to parents and students at each school. Information may also be available through local newspapers, the school system's website, and other avenues deemed appropriate.

IV. Resources and Reviews

- A. The following resources will be used, as necessary, to help determine suitable pathways, walkways, bus stops, crossings, bus turnarounds, bus routes, etc.
1. Howard County Police Department
 2. Howard County Department of Public Works Traffic Engineering Division
 3. Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks
 4. Columbia Association
 5. Other State or County agencies
- B. Upon request, the Pupil Transportation Office shall review any conditions for which transportation services are not currently provided due to distance eligibility requirements. Recommendations shall be submitted to the Superintendent as necessary.

V. Other

- A. The Pupil Transportation Office, County Police, and County Traffic Engineering Office and/or any other State or County agency will make recommendations to the Superintendent on safety-related matters not delineated within Policy 5200.
- B. When school bus transportation is provided, the Pupil Transportation Office may consult with the State and/or County Traffic Engineers to obtain any recommendations concerning bus stops, walking conditions, and/or any other safety related matters.

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