Transportation for Students with Disabilities

Transportation (Part B) includes—
(i) Travel to and from school and between schools,
(ii) Travel in and around school buildings, and
(iii) Specialized equipment (such as special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps), if required to provide special transportation for a child with a disability (§ 600.34 (c)(5)). (Note 1)

Transportation is a related service on the IEP (special needs bus or approved alternative vehicle) in accordance with COMAR 3.04.06.07 Student Transportation Requirements.

The steps below are predicated on the availability of transportation service in the local school district (LSS), using the same special needs school buses or approved alternative delivery service vehicles prior to COVID-19.

Review the current IEP to assure the related service transportation can be implemented, as stated on the IEP. If not, conduct an IEP meeting, to change or modify the related service transportation, as appropriate in accordance with IDEA requirements.

Ensure the IEP addresses the IDEA provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) prior to addressing and/or modifying the provision of the related service transportation.

Review if Travel Training (Note 2) should be added to the IEP services, to ensure safe transportation with all LSS policies and procedures, based on disability, student age, cognitive functioning and required physical interventions, on the regular bus.

The IEP team, including appropriate membership, should address the need to provide a more restrictive mode of transportation, under COVID-19 requirements in order to provide FAPE. (Example: Student with Autism unable to judge distance requirement for riding the regular route, now requiring a bus attendant, to be compliant with LSS policies and procedures for riding on the regular bus.)

Discuss student’s with IEP’s, receiving the related service transportation, in need of Travel Training in order to prevent the need for a more restrictive transportation mode of service delivery. (Example: Special Needs Bus.)

The requirement to follow LSS policies and procedures at a school bus stop are an essential to access transportation.

Travel training, a key special education service to reinforce the ability to benefit from the IDEA related service transportation, in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Transportation is not a related service on the IEP.

The steps below are predicated on the need for the IEP related service transportation, required as a result of the impact of COVID-19, to access FAPE.

It is essential for the LSS IEP team determine if any student with a disability currently riding on the regular bus will require the related service transportation and or travel training to fully understand and comply with LSS regular bus transportation policies and procedures.

Students with disabilities, ability to comply with LSS policies and procedures, should be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the LSS IEP teams, including appropriate membership, to assure safe transportation.

Transportation/Departments, should not be permitted to make unilateral decisions, regarding any change in the provision of the IEP or Section 504 related service transportation. All changes are required to be made by the IEP team with appropriate representation to assure safe transportation.

Additional and revised driver and attendant training, will be required, to assure safe transportation, for all students with disabilities on regular buses, special need buses and alternative vehicles, to assure safe transportation in compliance with LSS transportation policies and procedures post COVID-19.

Parent information will be necessary to be developed, implemented and disseminated, to assure an understanding of new LSS transportation policies and procedures, impacting the provision of safe transportation and FAPE.

Specific students with disabilities, will provide extraordinary challenges. Multidisciplinary, qualified LSS personnel, will be vital to assuring ability to address safe transportation and protection for transportation drivers and attendees, alike. (Example child that bites, spits, snarls, non-compliant with bus rules or does not have the cognitive capacity to understand bus rules.)

Recommends that a task force of highly qualified personnel be identified and assigned to communicate weekly to address unique special needs circumstances. This committee should be chaired jointly by special education and transportation personnel.

Note 1: Definition of IDEA Related Service Transportation.

Note 2: Definition of Travel Training: Sec. 300.200(h)

Travel training means providing instruction, as appropriate, to children with significant cognitive disabilities, and any other children with disabilities who require this instruction, to enable them to (a) Develop an awareness of the environment in which they live, and (b) Learn the skills necessary to move effectively and safely from place to place within that environment (e.g., in school, in the home, at work, and in the community).