

GENERAL

These are some of the most common general questions relative to pupil transportation in Ohio.

- Q1 What are the state laws for transporting children in my district?**
A1 Laws for pupil transportation in Ohio may be located in both Ohio Administrative Code and Ohio Revised Code. Because this question is very broad, it might be helpful to know what your specific concern relates to so we can direct you to a specific section or resource.
- Q2 What does it mean if my district intends to go to ‘state minimum’ transportation?**
A2 State minimum transportation means a district intends to only transport those students in grades K-8 who reside more than 2.0 miles from school. With state minimum transportation, high school transportation does not have to be provided; however, a shuttle from the high school to a member vocational school is required. In addition, districts would still have an obligation to transport those students with special needs as identified in those students’ IEPs.
- Q3 If our district reduces service to “state minimum” levels, are we still obligated to provide transportation service to a vocational school site?**
A3 Districts are obligated by Ohio law to provide a shuttle from the public high school to the site of the vocational school, regardless of what transportation service levels are provided for other students in the district.
- Q4 If my children are not eligible for school bus transportation, may I pay the district to transport them to and from school?**
A4 No. Ohio law does not permit school districts to charge pupils for transportation service to and from school.
- Q5 Is a violation of the *Ohio Pupil Transportation Operation and Safety Rules* also a violation of Ohio law? If yes, what is the penalty?**
A5 Yes. The penalty for violation of the *Ohio Pupil Transportation Operation and Safety Rules* is a Minor Misdemeanor but may be escalated to a Misdemeanor of the 4th Degree. Any law enforcement agency in Ohio has the power to enforce the operation and safety rules.
- Q6 What is the maximum time a student may ride the school bus in Ohio?**
A6 There is no identified target number that districts are obligated to meet. It is up to each school district to manage the length of time students ride the bus. Ride times vary by traffic; locality and numerous other criteria—each school district’s ride times can be different.
- Q7 I do not like the length of time my child rides the bus. How can I be paid to transport my child to school instead?**
A7 If a school district offers transportation service, but the service is not to the liking of a parent or legal guardian, the law does not permit the district to offer a choice of payment-in-lieu of transportation. Payment-in-lieu of transportation is only offered to a parent for an instance where the district’s Board of Education declares transportation to be impractical.

BUS STOPS

Typically, questions relating to bus stops, placement, a student's assignment to a particular bus stop must be directed to the transportation department at a school district.

Q1 I cannot see my child's bus stop from the house. Are there state laws that set the standards for bus stop location?

A1 No law requires a parent to see the bus stop from home. Students in Ohio may be assigned to a bus stop up to one-half mile from their home and we encourage parents to accompany their child to the bus stop whenever possible. This teaches the child safe habits of walking to and from the bus stop and may give the parent peace of mind. Bus stop locations are determined by each district's board of education.

Q2 Are sidewalks required for my child to get to his/her bus stop?

A2 Many students walk alongside of roadways to reach their bus stop and in some instances no sidewalks exist. While we understand this may be of concern in some situations, the Department of Education does not promulgate bus stop placement. Issues relating to where a child's bus stop is located and safety concerns along the way to the bus stop must be addressed with the district in which you reside.

Q3 I make my child wait inside of my house until the bus is at the stop. I have heard this is not allowed - is this true?

A3 Ohio law requires children to be waiting at the bus stop prior to its arrival. Bus drivers count the students at the bus stop before they load and as they get on the bus to ensure all children are safely on board. If students are not waiting at the bus stop the bus driver cannot count them and cannot be certain the students are all safely on board. Waiting at the bus stop before the bus arrives further ensures that no one chases after the bus - this is a very dangerous thing to do. Many districts also instruct their buses to not stop at locations where no students are waiting

SPECIAL EDUCATION

In nearly every situation, a student's IEP dictates what type of transportation service the student will receive—if any. Parents are strongly encouraged to work with the student's IEP team to identify special transportation needs.

Q1 My child has an IEP but transportation is not being provided. Why is this?

A1 A child who has an IEP does not automatically receive transportation unless the IEP team writes this into the related services. If transportation is not included on the IEP your child will be transported similarly to regular education students in your district

VEHICLES OTHER THAN SCHOOL BUSES

In certain circumstances, students may be transported in vehicles other than school buses. For most, this is done in a van.

Q1 Are larger vans legal for use in Ohio? We wish to buy a 12 passenger van but the dealership tells me he cannot sell anything larger than a vehicle designed at the factory for nine persons or less, excluding the driver.

A1 It is not legal for anyone to transport students in a vehicle designed at the factory for more than nine passengers excluding the driver. Dealers are not permitted to sell these 'larger' vans to educating agencies.

Q2 Which students may be transported in vans or vehicles other than school buses?

A2 Only students in preschool; those having special needs; and those enrolled in alternative schools may be transported by van or vehicles other than school buses. Regular education students may only be transported by this method for athletic and extracurricular trips.

NONROUTINE USE OF SCHOOL BUSES

School buses are often used to transport students to events other than school.

Q1 Where can I find the rules on legal nonroutine uses of school buses?

A1 OAC 3301-83-16

Q2 Do the out-of-state travel rules for school buses also apply to other district-owned vehicles used to transport students?

A2 Yes. Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-16(E) states that "Any (emphasis added) out-of-state travel shall remain within two hundred forty miles round-trip distance from the point of exit from the state to the point of entry to the state." There are no exceptions to this rule.

If a district wishes to take students to a destination that is further than what is permissible by this rule, they must seek an alternative method of travel to ensure compliance with the law. For example, a district might use a motor coach company to transport students to the destination and then rent a van once they have arrived at the destination. Commercial carrier is the only legal mode of travel to a destination that is further than two hundred forty miles round-trip from the physical boundaries of Ohio.

NONPUBLIC & COMMUNITY SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ohio law requires districts to transport eligible nonpublic and community school students to and from school. Regulations are very specific.

Q1 I transport my child to a nonpublic/community school each day and just learned a program exists for reimbursement. How can I be reimbursed for transporting my child?

A1 As a parent, you should contact your public school district and request transportation. If it is not practical for them to do so, they will work with you to initiate a process to establish payment-in-lieu of transportation. It is possible a student is not eligible for transportation service; in these instances, the district has no legal obligation to transport or make payment-in-lieu of transportation. Additionally, parents are not afforded the option of being paid for transporting their own child in cases where the service is provided by the district but is not the service parents prefer.

Q2 When am I reimbursed for transporting my child if I have been offered and agreed to accept payment-in-lieu of transportation?

A2 Typically, the district's treasurer will issue a check to parents at the end of the fiscal year. In most school districts, the fiscal year ends on June 30. To obtain a more specific answer, it is best to work directly with your district's treasurer or business manager.

Q3 Why is the payment-in-lieu of transportation amount so low?

A3 The amount is based upon a number obtained through a mathematical formula that identifies a number of elements reported by districts to the Department of Education. The amount paid to parents may be no less than the amount identified by the Department of Education and no more than the amount determined by the department as the average cost of pupil transportation for the previous school year. Payment may be prorated if the time period involved is less than the entire school year.

Q4 Who do I contact for assistance with conducting a supervised eligibility timing for a nonpublic or community school?

A4 These questions must be directed to your regional area coordinator's office. Your area coordinator can assist in setting up a supervised timing, or in explaining the process. To determine which area coordinator's office to contact, please call 877.644.6338 or visit www.ode.state.oh.us

Q5 How do you determine if a nonpublic or community school has been approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE)?

A5 A nonpublic or community school must have an IRN number in order to be approved by the SBOE. This information may be obtained by going into OEDS and searching for the school. If you are able to locate the school in OEDS, and it has an assigned IRN number, it has been approved by the SBOE.

Q6 Is my district required to transport to a nonpublic or community school on days when the public school is not in session?

A6 Yes. The Ohio Attorney General has opined on this issue (OAG 83-096) and districts are required to provide service on days when they are not in session. This does not obligate the district to run a full set of routes. Times may differ, and routes may be consolidated in the interest of efficiency. Communication with nonpublic and community school parents is important on days when routes may be run differently, and when times may vary.

DRIVER TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

Drivers of pupil transportation vehicles in Ohio must complete a certification process. Additionally, bus drivers must complete a recertification process every six years.

Q1 Who do I call for assistance with driver training and certification issues?

A1 Questions regarding driver training and certification should be directed to your regional preservice instructor. If you are a person looking to begin driving a school bus or school van, the preservice instructors can answer questions about the certification process.

Q2 Who is responsible for monitoring bus driver certification to ensure a certificate does not expire?

A2 Each bus driver is the person solely responsible for maintaining a current certificate. If a certificate expires, that person is not eligible to operate a school bus in Ohio, and ODE will not override a driver's lapsed certification.

Q3 In Ohio, who is required to have a certificate issued by a superintendent to drive a school bus? (This is a different certificate from the one issued by the preservice program.)

A3 First, it is important to note this certificate is different than the one issued by the preservice program. School bus driver certification is required for those driving a school bus for a city, exempted village or local school district. In addition, those driving for a board of MRDD, head start program or nonpublic school must be issued a certificate.

Drivers for city, exempted village and MRDD schools will have a certificate issued by the district superintendent, where drivers for local schools will have a certificate issued by their ESC superintendent.

Head start and nonpublic drivers will have a certificate issued by the executive director, or person whose title is equal to that of superintendent.

SFPS & WEB REPORTING

The most frequently asked questions relating to the system districts use to file pupil transportation reports with the Ohio Department of Education.

Q1. Why are the bus drivers listed as "inactive?"

A1. Inactive drivers are caused by an unsigned T8 report, a missing preservice certificate and/or an incomplete or un-submitted T9 report. Be certain to sign all T8 reports. If a driver's preservice certificate is not listed in the system call your preservice instructor's office. If you have forgotten to sign/submit a T9 report, you must do so within 12 months of the preservice class. The certificate will not be issued without a signed/submitted T9 report.

Each evening, the system "reads" the driver's T8 and T9 to determine if a driver should be listed as active or inactive and make the appropriate changes to each driver record. If a driver status is listed as inactive, but the T8 is signed and the T9 has been approved, and you do not wish to wait the system to automatically change the driver's status to active, you may click the SAVE button to change the driver to active status.

Q2. How do I delete a driver who no longer works for me?

A2. There is no delete button in SFPS. You must open the driver's maintenance record and screen down to the place on the right that says "No Longer Driving for District Date." Enter the appropriate date in this box and click SAVE. The date may be a resignation, BOE action, or the last date a driver drove for the district.

The record will be removed from your district's inventory, but will remain in the state-wide system and could later be added to a different district's inventory.

Q3. Why can't I enter a preservice date on the driver maintenance screen?

A3. Preservice dates and certificate numbers are system-generated when a preservice instructor approves a T9 report. You cannot change this information.

If a date is incorrect, you must contact your preservice instructor's office to correct it.

Q4. What do I do about missing OBIs in my driver inventory?

A4. Open the driver's maintenance screen and ensure a checkmark appears in the box labeled "On Board Instructor." If no checkmark appears in the box, you must contact your preservice instructor's office. That office will verify the driver is a certified OBI and then check the box.

If the checkmark is missing from the driver maintenance screen, it will prevent the OBI from appearing on the drop-down list of OBIs on a T9 report.

Q5. If my driver's preservice certificate number and date are missing, should I create a new T9 report?

A5. NO. New T9 reports are only designated for those who are (1) a new driver without a certificate or (2) a returning driver who must go through the recertification process. If you have already begun a T9 report because you thought this would fix the problem, call Carol Brandel at the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Pupil Transportation to have this report deleted.

If your driver's certificate number and date are missing and you have not begun a new T9 report, first have the hard copy of their preservice certificate handy, call your preservice instructor's office and ask them to enter this data for you.

Q6. I am entering a T9 for a new driver and have received an error message reminding me to input a maximum of 12 training hours. I have already entered more than 12 hours. What am I doing wrong?

A6. Review the items in your list of required training. You will see a series of checkboxes numbered one through twenty-six in addition to the list you have created toward the bottom of the page. Review the items in the list at the bottom to ensure that all required training items are in the list. The only items in the list that are optional are where one must select from numbers 4a, 4b, 4c and 5a, 5b.

Q7. May I allow a driver to transport students prior to receiving the preservice certificate?

A7. A driver may not drive without a valid certificate on file with the school district.

Q8. When may I use the temporary certificates from my preservice instructor?

A8. Temporary certificates may be issued for only new drivers when the district has completed all requirements for certification except the preservice class. Temporary certificates may not be used in the recertification process.

Q9. My van drivers are all listed as inactive. How can I make them appear as active?

A9. At this time, van driver physical examinations and certification are not entered online. T8V forms must be retained at the school district and certification paperwork should be submitted to the preservice instructor via the paper forms. Van drivers will always appear as inactive until T8V and T9V are done online.

Q10. I was told to sign my T8 reports but cannot find the sign button.

A10. T8 reports may only be signed by a transportation supervisor or a district's superintendent. After entering the T8 data, click the "next" button to proceed to the completion page. Here, you will select those drivers for whom you must sign the T8 report by placing a checkmark next to their name. Then simply click the sign button. If you do not see the sign button on the completion page, the possibility exists that you do not have signing privileges and should check your role in OEDS.

Q11. There are buses missing from my inventory or T1 report. How do I find them?

A11. When searching for vehicles in the bus inventory, look to the right of the search screen. You must enter a checkmark in those boxes to search for buses that have been sold, transferred or placed out-of-service. When the buses show up in the next screen, you must adjust their usage code to either assigned or spare. This will permit the bus to appear in your inventory and/or on a T1 report.

Q12. Why don't drivers with insulin waivers appear on the T8 completion page?

A12. Drivers will only appear on the T8 completion page after the waiver has been approved and recorded in the system. After this happens you will be able to sign the driver's T8 report.

Q13. When I enter the IRN number for a JVS on the T1S report, the system does not accept it. How do I know if the IRN number is correct?

A13. Be certain that you are using the building IRN code which is the IRN of the site you transported students to and not the IRN number of the entire JVS itself. To look up an IRN number, go to the Ohio Department of Education's website (www.ode.state.oh.us) and access OEDS. Once you enter into OEDS you may search for the agency you need an IRN number for by entering the agency name and clicking search.

Q14. On several reports, the system will not accept the date I have entered. How should dates be entered on reports?

A14. Be certain to use the format the report asks for. The T1S report, for example, uses the MM/DD format. Failure to use the format will force the system to not accept your entry.

Q15. The number of days transported on the T1S report is not calculating.

A15. If no errors exist in the data entered, the number of days will calculate after you click the save button.

Q16. Where do I find the worksheets for the T2 report?

A16. Worksheets are accessed by clicking the "edit" link at the beginning of each row in the T2 report service type detail page. You may also find an MS Excel version of the worksheet on the ODE Pupil Transportation webpage. This might be handy to make all necessary notes prior to entering the data into the web based system.

Q17. I am not clear on how to answer numbers 5, 6 and 7 on the Miscellaneous Data section of the T2 report.

A17. #5 Enter the number of special education students transported during the school year.

#6 Enter the number of days those students were transported to school. (Districts are only reimbursed for a maximum of 180 days.)

#7 Total all days that students were transported. Typically this can be done by multiplying the number in line 5 by the number in line 6; however, you may need to verify attendance for students before reporting this information to avoid incorrect information being reported.

Q18. I need to recertify a veteran driver and have opened up a T9 report. I am getting the "T9 Report New Driver Requirements" report. Is this correct?

A18. No. Earlier in this list of questions we discussed what to do if a driver's preservice certificate number of date is missing from the system. In order to obtain the returning driver's T9 report, you must first ensure the original certificate number and date are in the system.

Because the new driver and returning driver T9 reports are different, it is important to ensure you are completing the correct report.

Contact your preservice instructor to get the original certificate number into the system.

Q19. How do I access the T9 report section? I cannot click on T9.

A19. In order to create a T9 report we must first do a driver search. Look at the menu beneath T9. Click driver search, enter the driver's last name, first name or CDL number and click search. Once the driver's name appears in the list, click their name - you will then be in the T9 module.

Q20. Why are my drivers disappearing from the T8 report when I enter their data?

A20. They are not disappearing but rather moving to the end of the list in the report as data is entered and/or signed. Look further down the list to find their name.

The list is separated into three sections:

- 1) First, you will see those drivers for whom no T8 data has been entered.
- 2) Next, you will see those drivers for whom data has been entered but not signed.
- 3) Then, you will see those drivers for whom data has been entered and signed.