



OSSE   
PARENT  **PORTAL**

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION
FAMILY HANDBOOK:
2025-26 School Year**

Revised January 2026



Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

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WELCOME

TO THE

2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Student Transportation (OSSE-DOT), works collaboratively with families and schools to provide safe, reliable and efficient transportation to and from school for eligible students with disabilities.

osse.dc.gov/page/osse-parent-portal



WHAT SHOULD FAMILIES KNOW ABOUT RIDING THE BUS?

OSSE-DOT provides transportation services to and from an eligible student's residence and school. OSSE-DOT employs drivers and attendants ("bus staff") who ride student transportation vehicles. Drivers are responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle. Bus attendants are responsible for safely onboarding and offboarding students. OSSE-DOT aims to drop students off at school 10 to 30 minutes before the school bell rings. OSSE-DOT may help with a student's transition to/from the bus through the utilization of select accommodations based on the student's individualized education program (IEP), e.g., wheelchair lift, ramps, hand-to-hand support and transport chair.

For transportation accommodation questions, please contact your local education agency (LEA) or school's IEP team, as accommodations provided on the bus by OSSE-DOT are determined through the IEP process and documented accordingly.

In general, bus staff cannot do the following:

- Enter a student's residence under any circumstance;
- Enter apartment buildings, lobbies, entryways or alleys;
- Transport excess baggage, additional equipment or medicines;
- Assume responsibility for personal items left on a bus;
- Physically restrain a student;
- Administer medicine;
- Provide food or drinks;
- Accept gifts;
- Repair wheelchair or securement devices;
- Give out safety vests or buckle guards; these are distributed by the OSSE safety team as required by the IEP;
- Physically pick up/lift students (except in case of emergency);
- Change diapers, pull-ups, or clothing;
- Share student data with other guardians or external stakeholders;
- Leave students on a bus unattended;
- Drop-off or leave any student at an unauthorized location.



Who is Eligible for OSSE-DOT Transportation?

OSSE-DOT only provides transportation services for students with disabilities whose IEP or Section 504 plan specifies that the student requires transportation services to access special education and related services. OSSE-DOT does not determine who is eligible for student transportation. If you have a student with disabilities who you believe is wrongfully denied student transportation services, please reach out to your student's school or LEA.

What Updated Information Can Families Provide Throughout the School Year?

- Primary Guardians of eligible students enjoy access to the [OSSE Parent Portal](#) to submit transportation preferences. Please make sure that you provide your student’s school with your up-to-date contact, authorized receiver and emergency contact information. Parents must be designated as a Primary Guardian to access the OSSE Parent Portal.
 - To update Primary Guardian information, please contact your student’s school.
- If your student becomes eligible for transportation services during the middle of a school year or if you would like to update your transportation preference at any point in the year, please access the OSSE Parent Portal to select your desired transportation option as soon as possible.
 - **Will Not Need Transportation:** My student will not use any OSSE Transportation services.
 - **Parent Stipend Program:** I will transport my student to/from school and receive a monthly stipend.
 - **DOT Transportation:** OSSE-DOT will transport my student to/from their enrolled school (via yellow school bus or other OSSE-designated vehicle).
- Please call the [Parent Resource Center](#) (PRC) at (202) 576-5000 if your student, at any time, requires a temporary pause of transportation services. This will help OSSE-DOT provide efficient transportation services to students who need them. For long-term changes to transportation preferences, please update your preference in the OSSE Parent Portal. A standard processing of 3-5 business days will apply.
 - If a student is a no-show¹ for five consecutive school days without notifying the PRC, special education transportation may be discontinued by OSSE-DOT; schools will be notified in advance and are responsible for communicating with parents/guardians to resolve student rider absence issues.

¹ A no-show means OSSE-DOT transportation arrived within the scheduled pick-up window and waited the allotted time, but the student did not ride.

What Should Families Do to Prepare for Pick Up Each Morning?

OSSE-DOT will provide each family with a scheduled pick-up time. Please note that this time may change throughout the year as OSSE-DOT optimizes routes. Families should be prepared to have their student picked up 15 minutes before or after the scheduled time. For example, if your student’s pick-up time is 8 a.m., the student should be available outside and ready to enter the bus between 7:45 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. Students will be picked up from the outermost door of your residence. Please note that delays can occur due to weather, traffic conditions and other unforeseen circumstances. Please visit osse.dc.gov/page/daily-dot-updates or call the PRC at (202) 576-5000 to see whether your student(s) is experiencing a delayed departure.

What Should Families Do to Prepare for Afterschool Drop Off?

Unless a student has been authorized for “independent student drop-off” on their IEP or 504 Plan, an authorized receiver must be present at the designated afternoon drop off address. Therefore, parents/guardians must ensure an authorized receiver is available for drop-off every day. An authorized receiver is established by sending the information to your LEA. LEAs carry the responsibility of maintaining accurate parent contact information in the LEA Student Information System (SIS).

Only students older than age 12 and eligible under the “accessing a specialized program” transportation category on their IEP and Section 504 plans may be designated for independent student drop-off. To designate your student as “independent student drop-off,” please complete and submit a consent form to your school.

If OSSE-DOT cannot reach an authorized receiver, the bus driver must deliver the student to DC’s Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). CFSA will follow protocols to provide the student a safe environment. The student’s family will be responsible for picking the student up from CFSA at 200 I St. SE, Washington, DC 20003. Parents/guardians should call (202) 442-6100 to contact CFSA for additional information on their policies and procedures regarding child supervision and release.

On What Dates Does OSSE-DOT Provide Transportation Services?

OSSE-DOT provides transportation services for the duration of the school year and for extended school year services to eligible students. However, OSSE-DOT does not transport students on the following DC Government legal holidays for the 2025-26 school year (listed below). If your student's school remains open on these holidays, parents/guardians may receive reimbursement for self-transporting their student(s) to school by submitting a request for self-transport form found at osse.dc.gov/node/719832.

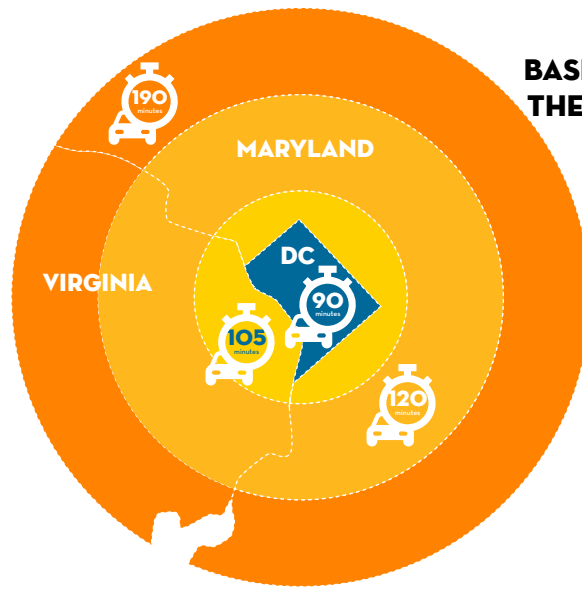
- **Labor Day:** Monday, Sept. 1, 2025
- **Indigenous Peoples' Day:** Monday, Oct. 13, 2025
- **Veterans Day:** Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2025
- **Thanksgiving Day:** Thursday, Nov. 27, 2025
- **Christmas Day:** Thursday, Dec. 25, 2025
- **New Year's Day:** Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026
- **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday:** Monday, Jan. 19, 2026
- **Washington's Birthday:** Monday, Feb. 16, 2026
- **DC Emancipation Day:** Thursday, April 16, 2026
- **Memorial Day:** Monday, May 25, 2026
- **Juneteenth National Independence Day:** Friday, June 19, 2026
- **Independence Day:** Friday, July 3, 2026

* 2026 holidays are subject to confirmation by DCHR, Legal Public Holidays 2026



How Long Will My Student Be on the Bus?

A student's anticipated ride time is based on various factors, including school instruction time, the number of students on each bus, residence location, distance from school and the loading time for each student on the route. Students who walk on to the bus are allotted 3 minutes to load/drop off. Students using wheelchairs are allotted 5 minutes. Traffic and weather conditions may also impact ride times. Throughout the school year, OSSE-DOT monitors and adjusts routes as needed.



BASED ON PROGRAM LOCATION, THE ANTICIPATED RIDE TIME IS...

- Within DC (90 minutes)
- 6 miles from DC (105 minutes)
- 6 and 15 miles from DC (120 minutes)
- Greater than 15 miles from DC (190 minutes)

What Should I Do If My Student Experiences a Student Safety Issue?

Student safety is of the utmost concern to OSSE-DOT. OSSE-DOT promotes student safety by training drivers and attendants in disability awareness, behavioral support, safe de-escalation, First Aid, and CPR so that the school bus team is prepared for an emergency while the bus is in transport. In the event of an emergency, drivers and attendants will first attend to the students' safety and then contact our Dispatch Team and establish communication with emergency personnel.

If your student experiences a safety issue during the commute to or from school caused by an OSSE-DOT employee or by a fellow student, please contact the PRC at (202) 576-5000 to report the incident.

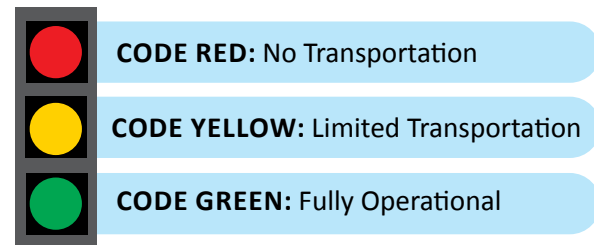
Incident reports are sent to the student's LEA for review and delivery to parents. OSSE-DOT understands that on-the-road emergencies happen and parents may elect to pick up their student from the scene of an accident or emergency. For situations where several families want to carpool other students from the route, please ensure that the desired receiver is authorized for every student receiving transportation services.

What Happens If the Bus is Involved in an Accident?

If your student is involved in a collision during the commute to or from school, you will receive a notification call from a PRC representative and EMS will be contacted.

What is OSSE's Inclement Weather Protocol?

OSSE-DOT uses the following service codes during bad weather:



Inclement weather codes and procedures are posted on osse.dc.gov/page/student-transportation-inclement-weather-plan. Families are responsible for arranging alternative transportation if their student's school remains open when OSSE-DOT is not providing services due to inclement weather. Under Code Yellow conditions, please visit osse.dc.gov/page/daily-dot-updates or call the Parent Resource Center at (202) 576-5000 to find information on your student's route.



WHO SHOULD I CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING OSSE-DOT STUDENT TRANSPORTATION?

The Parent Resource Center

The PRC serves as the primary communication link between OSSE-DOT, families and schools. You can reach the PRC at (202) 576-5000 from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday (excluding DC Government holidays). The PRC provides quality customer service and addresses student transportation matters, communicating via voice and text messages on:

- Specific route information for the school year.
- Route changes.
- Late and early routes.
- Inclement weather delays and/or cancellations.

It is imperative to keep your contact information up to date with your student's school to ensure you receive information, including text messages, from OSSE-DOT. During the beginning of the school year and poor weather, please expect higher than average wait times. Thank you in advance for your patience.

A PRC representative can provide the following services for designated contacts²:

- **Bus status information:** Determine an estimated arrival time to school and/or home.
- **Complaints intake:** Enter a formal complaint related to OSSE-DOT services.
- **Route deviation request:** Submit a request to cancel morning and/or afternoon transportation service for a particular day.
- **Route confirmation:** Confirm route number, pick-up times, and drop off times.
- **Route change notification:** The PRC provides notifications of route changes (i.e., pick-up/drop-off times, route number change) at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled start date of the route.
- **Route delay notification:** The PRC sends phone and text messaging to families when the route is early or late by 30 minutes of its scheduled arrival time.

All information utilized by the PRC is provided by the student's LEA to OSSE. Therefore, PRC cannot update, add, or alter any information, including but not limited to, contact details, accommodation information, or routing details. If there is a need to make updates to the student's information, please contact the student's school/LEA coordinator.

² A designated contact is anyone listed by the LEA as a primary or secondary contact for the student, or a designee authorized by the primary or secondary contact.

Commonly Asked Questions:

How many days before the start of school does PRC contact parents? At least 48 hours prior to the scheduled start date of the route.

What are the methods of communication?

Our text messaging system is used to send route status information to families. Depending on whether a family provides a land line phone number or cell phone number, they will receive text messaging and/or voice call with information regarding route status.

Can you send emails with route information updates?

OSSE does not receive parent email contact from LEAs. Therefore, our current messaging system is limited to text messaging and voice calls only.

Why can't PRC make updates to my student's information?

(e.g., changes to home address, parent phone number, etc.) OSSE-DOT and LEAs must ensure student information is accurate and up to date across all government entities. Therefore, all student information is maintained by the LEA and any changes are provided to OSSE daily.

Daily OSSE-DOT Update Webpage

In response to families' requests, in 2023, OSSE-DOT created a publicly accessible [webpage](#) that provides families with daily information about the on-time status of their student(s) route(s). To maintain students' privacy, OSSE-DOT cannot list when each route will arrive at each student's home. Rather, the webpage provides families with on time terminal departure information for every route. While a route may be able to make up time or encounter unexpected delays due to road conditions on route, on-time departure provides a generally reliable indicator for families making morning transportation decisions. The webpage, which is updated at least daily, highlights which bus routes are "late," "down," or have "no service":

- **Late Route:** Guaranteed coverage, but students will experience late school pick-up and/or late drop-off (up to 90 minutes).
- **Down Route:** Due to staffing challenges, OSSE-DOT is attempting to assign the route to a driver once they complete another route. Students on the route will experience service delay.
- **No Service:** OSSE-DOT will be unable to service the route.

OSSE X's Account

OSSE-DOT shares daily updates, inclement weather notices and other real-time updates on [OSSE's X account](#).



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Having various modes of transportation is crucial to the success of OSSE-DOT's responsibility to provide safe, reliable and efficient transportation to eligible District students.

Parent Transportation Reimbursement Program



OSSE DOT will reimburse parents and caregivers who transport eligible students with disabilities to and from school. Please scan the QR code to find additional information related to the Parent Transportation Reimbursement Program.

Monthly Parent Stipend Program

The Monthly Parent Stipend Program provides a monthly stipend to eligible parents/guardians that choose to opt out of OSSE-DOT provided vehicle or bus service and self-transport their student to and from school daily. This also includes drop off and pick up for special services the student receives that are related to their education. Eligible families who are approved to participate will receive \$400 per month to support self-transportation of students.

Kids Ride Free Program



The Kids Ride Free program allows students to ride free on the Metrobus and Metrorail within the District to get to school and school-related activities. Please scan the QR code or visit [DDOT's website](#) to find out more about this program and eligibility.

Alternative Transportation Providers

OSSE-DOT contracts with multiple transportation vendors through DC's Office of Contracts and Procurement. Students are objectively assigned to alternative vendors at the discretion of OSSE-DOT. If your student is assigned to a vendor, OSSE-DOT will send notification to you regarding pick up and drop off times, vendor company name, vehicle type and color.



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