



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION FAMILY HANDBOOK:

2023-24 School Year



Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

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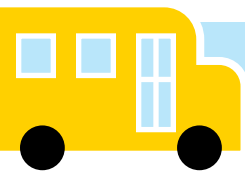
WELCOME

————— TO THE —————

2023-24 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.





WHAT SHOULD FAMILIES KNOW ABOUT RIDING THE BUS?

OSSE-DOT provides school bus transportation services to and from an eligible student's residence and school. The student's address provided to OSSE-DOT must match the address used to establish District of Columbia residency.¹ 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 students, providing communication updates and supporting students in safely exiting the vehicle. 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.

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 or administer medicine;
- Provide food or drinks;
- Accept gifts from anyone;
- 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 to board or unload the bus (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; or
- Carry students for any reason.

¹ Accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis to account for students in exceptional circumstances.

Who is Eligible to Ride OSSE-DOT Buses?

OSSE-DOT only provides daily 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.

What Updated Information Can Families Provide Throughout the School Year?

- Please make sure that you provide your student's school with your up-to-date contact information, authorized receiver information and emergency contact information every time there is a change.
 - OSSE's system only receives this information from your student's school. The system does not accept this information directly from families.
- If your student becomes eligible for transportation services during the middle of a school year and you want your student to ride the bus, please ask your school to submit your student's Transportation Request Form to OSSE as soon as possible.
- Please call the [Parent Resource Center](#) at (202) 576-5000 if your student at any time no longer needs transportation services. This will help OSSE-DOT provide efficient transportation services to students who need them.
 - If a student does not ride the bus for five consecutive school days, 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.

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 Parent Resource Center 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 duly authorized for "independent student drop-off," 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. 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 in receiving transportation services. An authorized receiver is established by sending the information to your local education agency (LEA). They will complete a Transportation Request Form to add your list of authorized receivers to your student's file.

Only students older than age 12 and eligible under the "accessing a specialized program" transportation category on their IEP and 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?

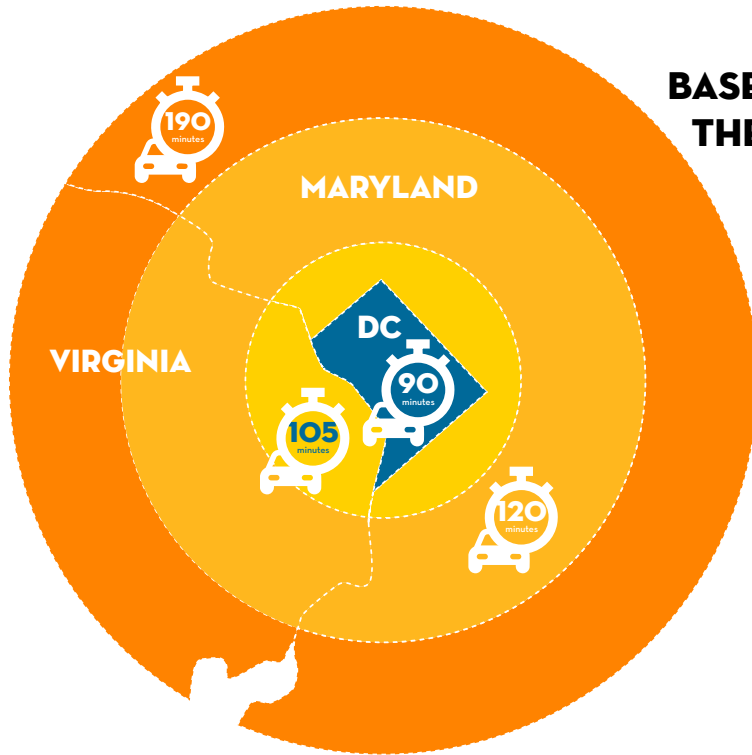
OSSE-DOT provides transportation services for the duration of the school year and for extended school year services to eligible students. However, OSSE-DOT does not transport students on the following DC Government legal holidays for the 2023-24 school year (listed below). If your student's school remains 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. 4, 2023
- **Indigenous Peoples' Day:** Monday, Oct. 9, 2023
- **Veterans Day:** Friday, Nov. 10, 2023
- **Thanksgiving Day:** Thursday, Nov. 23, 2023
- **Christmas Day:** Monday, Dec. 25, 2023
- **New Year's Day:** Monday, Jan. 1, 2024
- **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday:** Monday, Jan. 15, 2024
- **Washington's Birthday:** Monday, Feb. 19, 2024
- **DC Emancipation Day:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024
- **Memorial Day:** Monday, May 27, 2024
- **Juneteenth National Independence Day:** Wednesday, June 19, 2024
- **Independence Day:** Thursday, July 4, 2024



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 three minutes to load/drop off. Wheelchair students are allotted five minutes to load/drop off at each stop. 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 ESTIMATED 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.² OSSE-DOT promotes student safety by training drivers and attendants in 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 emergency personnel (911).

If your student experiences a student safety issue during the commute to or from school caused by an OSSE-DOT employee or by a fellow student, please contact the Parent Resource Center at (202) 576-5000 to report the incident. Once reported, OSSE will investigate to resolve the issue and impose consequences to the employee as appropriate.

If you believe that a safety incident has resulted from a lack of proper accommodations (e.g., a lack of a ramp), please contact your school's IEP team, as accommodations provided on the bus by OSSE-DOT are determined through the IEP process and documented accordingly.

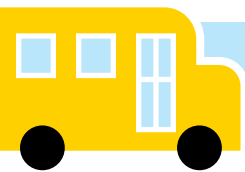
² Transportation is a related service that is provided contingent upon OSSE-DOT's ability to safely transport each student in our care.

What is OSSE's Inclement Weather Protocol?

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

- **CODE RED:** No Transportation
- **CODE YELLOW:** Limited Transportation
- **CODE GREEN:** Fully Operational

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 Parent Resource Center (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. 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 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.

The Parent Resource Center can provide families with the following services:

- **Bus status information:** A PRC representative can track the bus the student is riding to determine an estimated time of arrival to school and/or home.
- **Intake and follow-up of complaints:** After three consecutive instances of transportation issues within 10 days, an authorized person may request for a PRC representative to enter a complaint.
- **Route deviation request:** Any time prior to a scheduled departure, an authorized individual may request for a PRC representative to submit a request to cancel morning and/or afternoon transportation service for a particular day.
- **Route confirmation:** A PRC representative can confirm route number, pick up and drop off times to an authorized individual(s).
- **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.

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) bus(es). To maintain students' privacy, OSSE-DOT cannot list when each bus will arrive at each student's home. Rather, the webpage provides families with on time departure information for every bus. While a bus 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 Twitter

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



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Having various modes or alternatives 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.

Kids Ride Free Program



The Kids Ride Free program allows students to ride free on the Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail within the District to get to school and school-related activities. Please scan the QR code to find out more about this program and eligibility.

Alternative Transportation Providers

OSSE-DOT contracts with multiple transportation vendors through DC Government 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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