
School Bus Driver and Aide Training for Interacting with Students with Special Needs

N.J.S.A.18A:39-19.2

Prepared in collaboration with the New Jersey Joint Council of County Special Services School Districts
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Training Overview

- The goal of this presentation is to provide information which will ensure the safe transport of students with disabilities. Specific topics include:
 - Appropriate behavior management;
 - Effective communication;
 - Use and operation of adaptive equipment; and
 - Understanding behaviors that may be related to specific disabilities.

Everyone is Different

- Disabilities affect each person differently.
- Some people have severe impairments while other people have impairments which are so mild it can be hard to tell they have a disability.
- All students need to learn what is expected of them.
- Students with disabilities have good days and bad days like everyone else.
- Students with disabilities may also be impacted by cultural/language barriers.



Accommodations

- Students with disabilities often need help and support from adults.
- Some supports are mandated by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is a legal document that must be followed at all times.
- Some requirements include the use of physical equipment.
- Other supports may include behavior management procedures.



Physical Accommodations

- Mobility aids
 - Wheelchairs, walkers, crutches
- Protective equipment
 - Helmets, harness/safety vests, seat belt locks or covers
- Environmental conditions
 - Temperature control, noise level, lighting



Student Securement Systems

- Wheelchair
 - Multi-point tie-down
 - Straptape tie-down system
 - Docking Systems
- Occupant Safety Restraints
 - 3-point seat belts
 - Harness/safety vest
 - Car seat



Communication Aides and Accommodations

- Not all students communicate the same way.
- Some students can speak very well while others may not be able to talk at all.
- Students who have trouble using words may use other forms of communication such as:
 - Sign language or gestures;
 - Picture cards;
 - Devices that speak (iPad, smartphone, buttons with recorded messages, etc); or
 - Use of social stories (picture cues with words to help the student understand what you are saying and what is expected).

Some Examples of Communication Devices for Non-Verbal Students



Communication Device



Communication Cards

Some Examples of Communication Devices for Non-Verbal Students (continued)



Communication Book



Talker

Special Needs May Include:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD);
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD);
- Emotional or Behavior Disorders;
- Multiple Disabilities.



Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) exhibit the following behaviors:

- May not seem to listen when spoken to;
- Can be very impatient and/or stubborn;
- Struggles to follow directions;
- May blurt out inappropriate comments, show their emotions without restraint, and act without regard for consequences;
- May fidget in their seat or be “in motion”;
- Will often interrupt other people.



Behavior Management Strategies for Students with ADHD

- Repeat and restate directions as needed and model appropriate behavior as needed.
- Understand the student may forget what you said.
- Be patient and redirect the student as many times as needed.
- Keep your emotions in check: remain calm and neutral.
- Yelling is not effective.
- Use visuals as needed.
 - Rule cards



Students with Autism may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Difficulty making eye contact;
- May not respond to verbal directions;
- May act as though they do not hear you (they do!);
- May make noises (humming sounds or loud pitched sounds) and may be sensitive to noise;
- May say or talk about the same thing repetitively;
- May engage in challenging behavior (hitting, kicking, scratching, yelling, crying, disrobing).



Behavior Management Strategies for Students with Autism

- Use clear and concise language.
 - Less is more, for example: “Please sit down” or “Please take your seat”
- Use positive language to reinforce proper behavior.
 - Example: “I like how you’re sitting”.
- Avoid yelling and getting physically upset.
- Remove items that can be thrown or broken.
- Give space to a student who is upset.
- Give students a “heads up” if there is a change in routine.
- Use visual cues (a quiet sign or a sit down sign) or “First” “Then” visual.



Students with Emotional Disorders may exhibit the following behaviors:

- May argue frequently with adults;
- May lose his/her temper easily;
- May refuse to follow rules;
- May blame others for his/her own mistakes;
- May deliberately annoy others;
- May curse or be disrespectful.



Behavior Strategies for Students with Emotional Disorders

- Maintain a positive relationship with the student.
 - For instance, by speaking calmly, listening, rephrasing what the student has said.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Redirect the student back to original direction.
 - Example: “The direction was to sit down”. Say this calmly and neutrally without emotion or anger.
- Talk in a calm, neutral tone, avoid yelling.
- Give space to a student that is upset.
- **Remember: observe and report the situation. You do not discipline.**

Students with Multiple Disabilities may exhibit the following behaviors:

- An intellectual disability: mild to severe;
- Difficulty with muscle coordination;
- Difficulty communicating (may not be able to speak);
- May use a communication device ;
- May also have inappropriate behaviors;
- May have Autism, ADHD, Behavior Disorder, Genetic Disorder, and/or a Physical Disability;
- Every student is different and will have different needs.

Behavioral Strategies for Students with Multiple Disabilities

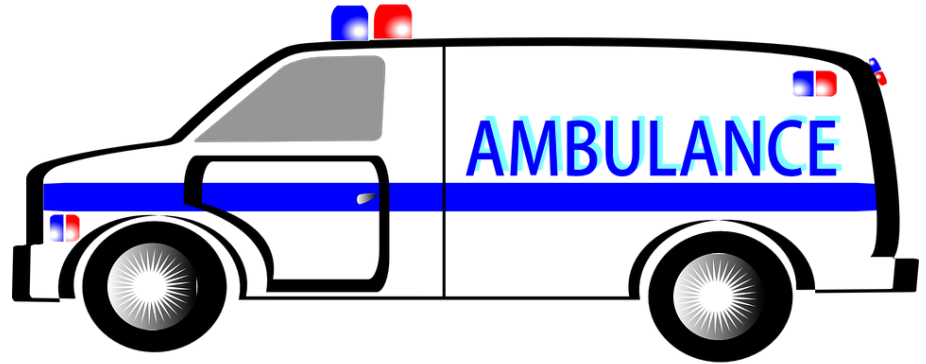
- Have students repeat your directions back to you, if possible.
 - Example: “I need you to sit down”, “What are you going to do?”
- Speak calmly.
 - Point to the seat and say “please sit down” at the same time.
- Redirect students back to the original direction.
- Use pointing cues as needed to assist with following directions:
 - Point to the seat and do not say anything to the student.
- Give the students positive attention by making conversation or complimenting them when appropriate.

Students may have Behavior Plans in their IEPs

- Some students will have specific procedures that need to be followed due to their behavior.
- These protocols need to be followed consistently by every staff member on the vehicle.
- Examples of some of these procedures include the following:
 - Positioning their seats away from other students as needed (seating charts);
 - Having a staff member sit next to them and watch them closely;
 - Preventing and/or blocking the student from harming themselves or other students; and/or
 - Giving frequent positive attention and praise to the student.

Student Medical Emergencies

- **Pull over and call 911;**
- Stay calm and track time;
- Check for medical bracelet;
- Protect student from possible hazards (sharp objects, etc.);
- Stay with the student during the emergency;
- Provide emotional support; and
- Document the incident.



Interactions between students on the bus

- Be aware of any unusual interactions between students.
- If you have reason to suspect a child is being bullied you are required to report it to the principal of the child's school (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15).



Source: Pupil Transportation Safety Institute

Confidentiality



- Students with disabilities are protected under several laws and regulations (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*).
- These laws require that bus drivers and aides refrain from:
 - Discussing students with anyone other than the student's parent/guardian or school staff
 - Talking about problems in front of the student
 - Gossiping or complaining about a student or situation
- Report any issues in writing to your company and/or school district.
- At NO TIME may a school bus team member share information about a student with anyone other than a parent/guardian or school personnel The only exception would be in the event of an **emergency**.

Remember!

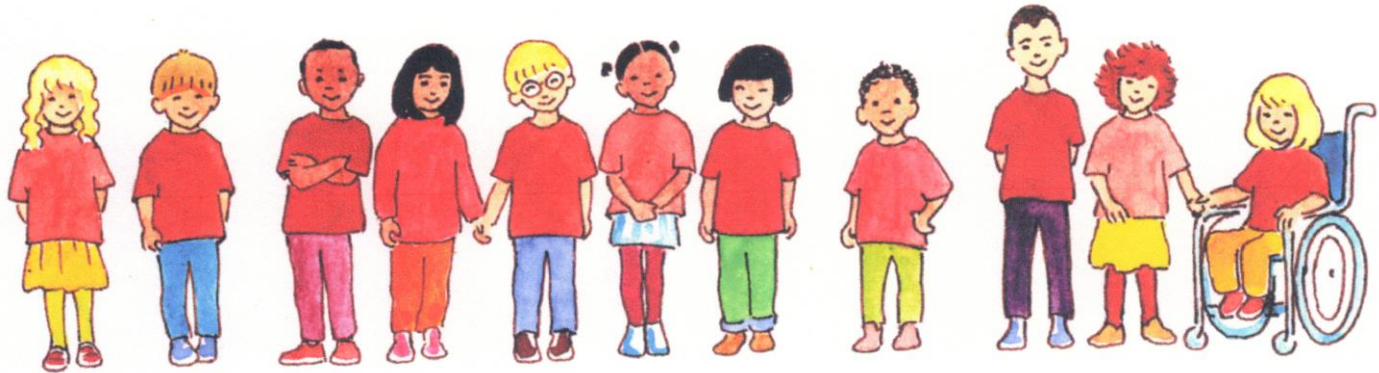
- Assume each and every student understands what you are saying about them.
- All students need to learn appropriate social and behavioral skills; it is our job to support them.
- You play an important role in keeping our students safe and supported.
- **Contact the school principal and alert them of any behavioral issues on the bus in order to assist and work as a team. (N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2)**
- **Be sure to write an incident report to alert the school principal of the issue. (N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2)**

In Conclusion

- Don't take it personally!
- Sometimes you should not respond to the student when he or she is acting out or verbally saying things that are inappropriate.
- Be consistent.
- Be sure the rules and consequences are simply stated.
- Be positive and supportive.



Thank you for your dedication to the children of New Jersey



Resources

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