

Q. How do I arrange transportation for a student?

- A. To arrange transportation, the student must first be enrolled at the school. If you have moved and are still living within the boundary for the same school, your new address must be given to the school and proof of residence is also required. The school will then contact the Transportation Department with the student's information. At that time a bus stop will be assigned and the school will be given the bus number, the approximate bus stop time, and the stop location.

Q. Why is it important to change a student's address at the school?

- A. The address that a student leaves from in the morning to ride the bus is maintained at the school level. That information is provided to the transportation department electronically by the school database and is the basis of student assignment to bus stops; therefore, any information that has changed for the student must be changed at the school. The student's school is the primary record keeper for ALL student information.

Q. How is a bus stop established?

- A. Bus stops are established by using several factors, which include walking conditions, walking distance to the stop, and road type (public or private). We anticipate that under acceptable walking conditions or lightly traveled roads, new stops are ¼ mile apart. On rural county roads we expect a student to be able to access a stop at a neighbor's driveway.

Q. Why do students have to walk to a bus stop when the bus drives past the house?

- A. In areas where walk conditions are acceptable, students are required to be picked up at centralized stops for cost and time efficiency. Two students can be loaded at one stop faster and cheaper than the bus stopping at two separate stops. We encourage parent supervision at the bus stop

Q. What are acceptable Walking Conditions?

- A. Walking on the roadway of a dead end road, private road, an interior development road, or lightly traveled county road or city street.
- B. Walking on the shoulder of a road with a minimum width of 5½ feet when the posted speed limit is 40 or below and the distance is less than ¼ of a mile.
- C. Walking on a sidewalk or other walking path.
- D. Walking on school property or across your yard or neighbors yard.
- E. Not having to cross railroad tracks or a bridge that has frequent traffic or does not have a pedestrian walkway.

Q. What are the criteria to have a bus come into a development?

- A. The development must meet all five of the basic requirements:
1. Are ten (10) or more students are using the bus on a daily basis?
 2. Are the development roads public roads? (State, County, or Town owned and maintained)?
 3. Can the bus can enter and exit the development without backing up? (loop road or 100 ft minimum diameter cul-de-sac)
 4. Is the distance that the furthest student has to walk exceeds one mile?
 5. Is the sight distance adequate for the bus to exit the development without undue risk to the passengers?

We also consider if we can safely load on the main road considering sight distance of traffic approaching the bus, traffic volume, posted speed limit, and the number of students to be loaded.

Q. I have been told that I live in the walking area and no bus service is available. Why do some students have to walk to school?

- A. Every school has an area that transportation is not provided and that is called the “Walk Zone”. Based on acceptable walking conditions that distance is determined by school type. For elementary schools, the walk zone is extended to one mile except Pre-K and K students at Midday only, which is 1/2 mile. For middle schools, the walk zone is one mile, and for high schools the distance is one and ½ miles.

Q. Who do I call if I don't like where the bus stop is located?

- A. You can contact the transportation department and the placement of the stop will be reviewed. Stops are used by multiple students and are not always ideal to everyone. We expect that students will have to walk to stops and the stop may not be in direct line of sight from your residence. Sometimes there are numerous issues to be considered in relocating a stop and we may not be successful in meeting everyone's expectations. We encourage parental supervision at the bus stop

Q. Who do I contact when there is a problem at the bus stop?

- A. Cecil County Public Schools is not responsible for student behavior at the bus stop. We assume responsibility when the students board the bus and it ends when they exit the bus. If there is a problem at the bus stop then you should contact your local law enforcement agency.

Q. My student is having a problem with the bus driver, should I go to the bus stop to talk with the driver?

A. NO, we recommend that anytime you have a concern with something that happens on the bus that you call or talk with your student's school administrators. Going to the bus stop puts everyone in a defensive position without all the information and it can easily turn into a confrontation, which is inappropriate for the students to witness. Drivers are trained to try and avoid those confrontations to the point of closing the door and driving away. Federal law prohibits blocking the doorway or interfering with the buses operation.

Q. Why did the driver not stop at my stop when my student was running late or did not wait for my student to get to the bus stop?

A. We make a concerted effort to be consistent on the time we start the route. After the first stop, many things can effect the arrival time at subsequent stops, so even the most conscientious driver will vary by no more than a few minutes. Students are told to be at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to normal arrival of the bus to allow for those variances, and to be waiting where they are visible to the bus driver as the bus approaches the stop. Drivers are required by law to activate their yellow lights a minimum of 100 feet prior to stopping and turning on their red lights. If drivers do not see any students present they are not required to stop. They are also not required to wait for tardy students. Usually, drivers will not leave students if they are close to the stop and making an effort to get there as fast as they can. The loading and unloading process is the most dangerous part of the bus ride and students are the safest when they are at the stop before the bus arrives and not running for it after it shows up.

Q. What are the procedures for suspending a student's riding privilege?

A. Each bus has safety rules posted and is also provided to parents each year in a dated pamphlet, "Parent Guide to Student Transportation", that is distributed to students at the beginning of the school year. Student violation of these safety rules can result in verbal warnings, seat reassignment, or a loss of riding privilege. If the student has been previously warned or the violation is serious, the student's riding privileges can be revoked at the end of the afternoon run. There is a "Bus Suspension" form that the driver must complete and that form must be turned in to the school administration by 9:30 a.m. the following school day. The driver should provide that form to the student when they are dropped off, depending on circumstances, but the student may be verbally told that afternoon that they are suspended from the bus for the following day. Some elementary schools have a local school procedure that the bus suspension is delayed one school day to make sure the parents are aware and can make arrangements. The "Bus Suspension" form that was used last year is being replaced with a "Bus Disciplinary Referral". This redesigned form will be used with the start of the 2005-2006 school year. The intent is to provide better communication by documenting action taken by the driver and administration. We ask all parents to support safe bus behavior by providing consequences to support safety when the students riding privilege has been suspended. While at our website please review "Student Conduct" for more detailed information.

Q. My student has been suspended from the bus and I have some questions about why he was suspended. Who do I contact?

A. The school administration is responsible for overseeing student bus behavior issues. The driver's authority to suspend a student's riding privilege is limited to **ONE DAY**. Additional consequences, including additional days of bus suspension, are handled by the school administration. Drivers report directly to school administrators and the school administration is responsible for investigating the incident by talking with other students on the bus. The Transportation Department is involved when the driver does not follow procedures.

Q. How safe is bus transportation when the school bus doesn't have seat belts?

A. School bus transportation is the safest form of travel in the United States with over 24 million students transported daily nationwide on 450,000 buses traveling over 4.3 billion miles per year. Over a 10-year period, only 1/3 of 1 percent of all fatal crashes involved a student on a school bus. School bus safety is based on closely spaced and padded seats on a large farmed vehicle that is mandated by Federal Law. The State of Maryland has additional requirements including a limit on the life of the vehicle. The National Traffic Highway Safety Administration tests have shown that lap belts only (which is what New York, New Jersey, and Florida have on their buses) would kill or injure more than they would save. Usually, when a fatality occurs on a school bus, it is when another large vehicle (dump truck, tractor trailer, or train) collides with a school bus and the victim was sitting at the point of impact. Nationwide statistics indicate that your child is 63 times safer inside the school bus than going to school in your car.

Q. What kind of screening process do drivers go through to make sure they are qualified to be around children?

A. You can look at "Employment Opportunities" to see all of the steps that a bus driver goes through before they are allowed to drive. Briefly, they are fingerprinted, a criminal background check is initiated, their driver's license is reviewed, references are checked, a drug test is conducted (including pre-employment and random testing), a DOT Physical is obtained, and new drivers are required to go through 30-plus hours of training.

Q. How is inclement weather delay or cancellation of school determined?

A. Cecil County has a contract with AccuWeather to provide a forecasting service for winter weather events that can be accessed 24 hours a day for up-to-the minute updates. We also temper that with forecasts from the National Weather Service. Based on the forecast and the timing of the inclement weather event we make a recommendation to the Superintendent about 5:00 AM. We have to make the decision at that time to allow communication to TV and radio stations for the information to be on the air before 6:00 a.m. That recommendation is based on actual observation of road conditions by Transportation Department staff, communication with State Highway Administration, County Roads, Maryland State Police, and Cecil County Sheriff's office. Decisions to close or delay the school day can also be

determined by the forecasted start time and anticipated precipitation of the event. We cannot drive every road in the county, but we try and travel roads that we feel are a good indicator of county road conditions. The easiest decisions are made when the inclement weather event has occurred or is occurring. When there is snow on the roads at 3:00 a.m. and it is still snowing, we have better data than AccuWeather telling us it is scheduled to start snowing between 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and we should see 2 to 4 inches by 5:00 p.m. Although we feel that AccuWeather is doing a better job than other forecasters it is still an imperfect science.

Q. How do we find out about an inclement weather delay, early dismissal, or cancellation of school?

A. In the student calendar there is a list of TV and radio stations that we contact after the Superintendent makes the decision at 5:00 a.m. to close or delay the school day. After the Superintendent makes that decision, radio and TV stations are contacted for announcements to be made by 6 a.m. Other radio stations pick up that information off the national wire service. We also communicate with an organization called www.schools-out.com on the Internet. You can logon and sign up for e-mail notification of any delay, closure, or unscheduled early dismissal.

Q. I have some other transportation questions, how do I contact transportation?

A. On the Home Page, below the Supervisor's message is an email link. You can click on the link and send an email or you can call at 410-996-5420.