

# First Student

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## STUDENT/PARENT TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES.....	2
PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES.....	3
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES.....	6
ILLNESS AND HEALTH POLICY.....	7
ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT APPROVAL.....	7
DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES.....	9
SAMPLE OF REQUEST FOR NEW PICK UP/DROP OFF LOCATION.....	10

## INTRODUCTION

First Student has developed a transportation system in order to provide school transportation for the classroom programs operated by Berrien Regional Education Service Agency (Berrien RESA) on behalf of the local school districts. This program is operated as a cooperative service for students in the local school districts.

To assure communication regarding the safe transportation of students, First Student transportation developed this Pupil Transportation Handbook. Included are sections on **The Basic Rules for Bus Riding Safety, Basic Rules for Bus Stop Conduct, Responsibility of Parents/Providers, Student Behavior Reference Manual, and Disciplinary Procedures.** The goal is to have parents, classroom and transportation personnel work together to provide safe and efficient transportation.

Any reference to “Bus(es)” and “Bus Stops” in this handbook also includes the following types of vehicles: all sizes of yellow and black school buses, vans, passenger cars, county transit systems, private contractors and commercial carriers.

First Student transportation is provided as a service for eligible students. Therefore, it is necessary to operate with the following conditions in mind:

1. Appropriate student conduct must be maintained in order to assure safe transportation for all students. (See further sections for this information.)
2. Designated pick up and drop off points defined by the District must be adhered to in order to continue an efficient transportation system. The District cannot accommodate a “personalized service” for each student/family due to the complexity of the system and the effects multiple changes can make on each run/schedule. Each student will be picked up and dropped off at their legal residence and the parents/guardians/providers will supply the school with one alternate drop off location which is located **on the same route the student takes to and from school.**

Please contact the First Student Transportation Office at (269)-471-9308 for further clarification. **If your student is ill or not attending school, please call (269)471-9308 and leave a message in the dispatchers (Trudy Grob) ext. 10 voicemail. Our office hours are 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily.** We hope this information is helpful to our parents / guardians / caregivers.

## AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

First Student Services shall:

A. Develop the bus routes and schedules encompassing the entire Berrien RESA service area.

1. Buses will not travel on **non-public roads or roads not maintained by a public body.**
2. Buses **will not travel on roads determined to be unsafe for vehicles and passengers.**

B. Assignment to specific buses.

1. Each eligible student will be assigned to use a specific bus and bus stop and **shall not be permitted to use any other without prior permission** from the Transportation Supervisor.
2. In order for us to maintain the safest, most efficient and economical system possible, **only students assigned may ride school-bound and home-bound buses.** In addition, students may ride only their bus, getting on and off only at their designated stop.
3. The Transportation Supervisor may grant permission for a student to ride a different bus or use a different stop. **Such permission may be granted only upon receipt of a written request of a parent/provider or guardian for a specified period of time subject to the following conditions and limitations:**

The requested change may not result in the overcrowding of any bus, alteration of any regular bus route, bus stop or time schedule, or in any way interfere with the regular operation of the transportation system. Examples for a requested change may include the following:

- a) To relieve a temporary situation which would otherwise create a severe hardship on a pupil getting to and from school.
- b) For other emergency or unusual reason and shall be approved by the Transportation Supervisor.
- c) To assure no overloads, **we do not allow students to bring home friends (either from another bus run or a non-bussing area)** for parties, homework, etc. We also do not allow students to get off buses at any other than their designated stop.

- C. Provide each driver with a roster of each student on his/her bus, which shall include: Name, address, pick-up and drop-off times and the service center to which the student is to be transported. Also, any pertinent medical information will be provided if known (e.g., seizures, diabetes, and/or heart conditions).
- D. Provide vehicles, which meet the requirements of state laws pertaining to vehicles utilized for the transportation of school students.

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. General Responsibilities:

The parent/guardian shall:

1. Have student ready at least one half hour (30 minutes) prior to pick-up time. This will avoid delays at individual stops. **The bus will wait three (3) minutes before it continues on its run.** It is the parent's responsibility to deliver the student to the door of the bus in the morning and to receive the student at the door of the bus in the afternoon; to provide necessary protection for the student going to and from the bus or bus stop. **DO NOT** ask the driver to wait as they have been directed to wait only three (3) minutes and then to continue on their run. This will avoid the route being late at other stops and to school.
2. Call the transportation department in advance, if the student will not be riding the bus due to illness or other reasons. **If after three (3) school days we have not heard from you, we will not stop until we are called.** This will save time and shorten the ride for some students.
3. Notify the transportation department to assure that their student is picked up for the return bus run if the student is to be transported by the parent to the school.
4. Give a written authorization if the student is not returning on the bus or is to be dropped off at the alternative drop off point. If you find you will not be home in time to see your student on a rare occasion, **please call the transportation office before 1:00 p.m.** and request the alternate drop off location. We will try to accommodate your request; however, it may not always be possible. First Student requires that the alternate drop off information be completed. First Student will accept two (2) drop off or pick up locations beside the home. **The alternate locations must be kept up to date with working phone numbers. We will not accept calls to drop a student off at a location not listed on the alternate information form. Alternate locations must be on the same route that the student is assigned. We also request you give a list of responsible ADULTS you give permission to receive your child.** This system will be adhered to at all times in order to maintain effective schedules for all students. (See form attached)
5. Make arrangements to **have someone at home to receive the student at least thirty (30) minutes prior to their normal drop off time.** If no one is at home during time of delivery, the student will then remain on the bus and the student will ride to the end of the route. The student will then be returned to the First Student office and the student will be turned over to a responsible agency (i.e., Sheriff's Department, Department of Social Services, etc.). It will be the parent's responsibility to pick up their student as soon as possible. A student will not be kept overnight. If the parent desires the student to be dropped off at home with no one home to receive him/her. A written authorization must be received by the transportation supervisor and approved by the school administration prior to the student being dropped off.
6. Take their student home should he/she become ill after arriving at school.

7. **Give medicines** that are to be delivered to the office staff directly to **the driver or monitor**.
8. Accept joint responsibility with the transportation staff to maintain control of student behavior. In the event that a student misbehaves on the bus, the District will call the parent requesting their cooperation to help improve behavior. (See attached Transportation Incident / Report). A student's misbehavior can result in an accident. Any willful property damage done by a student will be charged back to the student/parent at actual cost of parts and labor as performed at the First Student Bus Garage.
9. Keep animals away from the loading areas. If an animal causes any damage to the staff or his/her clothing, etc., the parent will be responsible for payment.
10. Call the transportation supervisor when there are problems or questions. The drivers and monitors **are not allowed** to make route or stop changes without the authorization of the transportation supervisor. The drivers and monitors may not accept/give authorization to drop a student at the alternate location without the parent/guardian giving prior written consent or by the **parent / guardian calling the transportation office** to make the arrangements prior to 1:00 p.m. The parent/guardian must contact the school and/or transportation office to make any changes in transportation.
11. Send students on buses without extra paraphernalia, (i.e., radios, toys, etc.), as First Student **will not** be responsible for them. The exception to this may be items, which are cleared in advance with the transportation supervisor, for classroom activities.
12. Label student's outer clothing (coats, hats, mittens) so if they are lost on the bus they can be returned.
13. Due to Insurance Policy, parents / guardians are not allowed to board the bus during loading or unloading. Should you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate in calling First Student.

B. Pupil Status (Health Responsibilities):

Parents/providers:

1. Will withhold students from boarding the bus when their student exhibits any of the following conditions:
  - a. Temporary health problems
    - (1) Nausea or diarrhea
    - (2) High temperature
    - (3) Infections or contagious conditions (lice, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.)
  - b. An extreme emotional condition
    - (1) Violent behaviors
    - (2) Screaming
    - (3) Hyperventilation
    - (4) Has soiled himself/herself while waiting for the bus

C. Transportation Duties

Parent/Provider:

1. Will provide an **unobstructed loading area and maintain that area so as to be clear at the level that is required for vehicle and pedestrian movement. This includes the driveway by the road during winter months, where the bus will stop to load the student.**
2. Shall be responsible for the supervision of getting the student to and from the bus.
3. Shall inform the **Transportation office** of expected student absence and anticipated date of return. Parents are advised and also need to contact the school, relating any absences.
4. Shall allow at least three (3) working days for the transportation office to make needed adjustments for transportation services (e.g., change of address for pick-up and/or drop-off).
5. Shall not send student to school prior to filing the following information at the School Office:
  - a. Medical Emergency Information and Permission Form
  - b. Transportation Sign-Off Sheet/Alternate Drop-Off Information
  - c. Immunization Form (as requested)
6. It is the parent's responsibility to provide student supplies and other necessities, such as boxes of formula or diapers, which may be required over the course of a school day. While First Student is willing to assist with transportation of these needed school supplies, items that are not able to fit in your child's backpack requires First Student notification to ensure safe transport. **You must contact First Student to make these arrangements prior to the day of transport.**

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### PASSENGER BEHAVIOR CODE- GENERAL:

Student shall maintain appropriate behaviors on the bus / van by abiding by the following guidelines:

1. Shall keep hands to one self; no scuffles or fighting.
2. Shall talk softly.
3. Shall not stand or change seats while the bus / van is in motion.
4. Shall not yell out windows, avoid being noisy and rowdy.
5. Shall load and unload in an orderly fashion; NO pushing.
6. Shall wear lap belts at all times, if available.
7. Shall be courteous to each other and the driver and monitor.
8. Shall not use obscene language or gestures.
9. Shall not distract the driver.
10. Shall wait in seat until the bus / van stops at their destination.
11. Shall not open doors/windows unless the driver authorizes the action.
12. Shall keep hands and body inside the vehicle.
13. Shall follow directions from the driver and monitor at all times.
14. Shall not carry any weapons on the bus / van.
15. Shall not carry any alcohol or drugs on the bus/ van.
16. Shall not bring headphones, toys, extra paraphernalia, etc.
17. Shall not eat or drink on the bus.
18. Shall not damage or deface the bus / van in any manner.
19. Shall not smoke on the bus / van.
20. Shall be prompt to board the bus / van.

## ILLNESS AND HEALTH POLICY

A driver **may refuse to transport** a student for the following reasons:

1. Vomiting
2. Diarrhea
3. Violent Behaviors
4. Rashes
5. Lice
6. Pink Eye

However, the **driver must radio** the supervisor and request authorization for refusal of transportation services prior to leaving the student's home.

### ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT APPROVAL

All adaptive equipment (mobile seating devices, car seats, etc.) must have prior approval from the Transportation Department and the District. This must occur prior to starting transportation services to ensure safety for the student.

### ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT POLICY

A student requiring any adaptive equipment while in route to or from school must be transported with all such equipment in proper functioning order (e.g.: if a student needs a chest protector while riding in a wheelchair or bus, it must be in good repair). **All wheelchairs must be in good repair with all brakes operable, foot rests in place, and any other necessary aides present and functioning properly.** It is unsafe to transport students in adaptive equipment, which is in ill repair, and therefore the First Student bus driver will not board a student with equipment not functioning properly. The **driver must radio** the transportation supervisor for permission for said refusal of transportation services.

### ADDITIONAL ADAPTIVE AND ASSISTIVE EQUIPMENT

#### Assistive Devices

Walkers, canes, crutches, trays, etc., must be in proper operating condition with no rough edges and must be able to be secured while in transit. If any of the above mentioned equipment or any other equipment, including electronic items to be transported, must be able to be firmly secured within the vehicle or **it will not be transported.**

#### Wheelchairs and Placement

The Michigan Department of Education has issued the following guidelines for wheelchair placement.

1. Wheelchairs should be in a forward facing position.
2. Four point anchored straps securement system is preferable with the addition of a lap/upper torso restraint in the chair as well as a lap restraint around the student/chair to the floor.
3. Three wheeled mobile devices should not be transported on the school bus, as they cannot be safely secured.
4. Electric wheelchairs must use jell batteries rather than using liquid acid. Battery acid is extremely potent and can cause severe burns and blindness as well as doing physical damage to the wheelchair itself and to the bus. Parents are encouraged to replace liquid acid battery with jell batteries for safety of their student, other students, and staff.

## **Lifting**

**First Student personnel should not physically place or remove students from their wheelchair, except in the case of an emergency.**

Wheelchair Recommendation: from the Handicapped Seating Study

1. Forward-face all wheelchairs and other adaptive seating during transit.
2. Wheelchairs for school transportation should be limited in maximum size to 30" wide and 53" long and weigh no more than 150 pounds.
3. Three wheeled cart type units are not to be transported.
4. Stroller type wheeled devices are not recommended for transit.

**Please contact the school for input when planning to update equipment to clarify whether it can be transported.**

### **Responsibility of the Parent/Provider (as provided by MDE)**

**Parents are responsible** to ensure that their children have all the personal items for school. This includes safe wheelchairs and other accommodating devices for pupils with physical impairments. Parents are responsible to purchase wheelchairs and other equipment designed to maximize the child's health, safety and welfare. Prior to a final purchase of a wheelchair or other transportation device, the parents should consult with the school district's special education and transportation experts to determine whether or not this equipment can be transported on a school bus and to seek their advice regarding the safety of the specific type of equipment being purchased. At the present time, wheelchairs manufactured in the United States are not required to meet any safety standards for transportation. Studies that have been done on many wheelchairs show that most of the time they will not withstand the impact of a vehicle crash. Some wheelchairs are not suitable for transportation at all. These include wheelchairs designed for racing and other recreational activities. These are generally made to be as light as possible and have been structurally modified for speed rather than for safety and stability. While this type of equipment may be beneficial for recreational purposes; it is not suitable for transportation on school buses.

The State Board of Education supports the PAM Assistance Center, 601 West Maple, Lansing, Michigan 48906. Telephone numbers are (517) 371-5897, toll free number (800) 274-7426. Staff at the PAM Assistance Center are available to work with parents of the handicapped to provide information on manufacturers of various types of wheelchairs and other accommodational equipment. The PAM Assistance Center will also provide consultation on available options to persons responsible for the prescription, design and modification of wheelchairs for special education pupils. Parents and caregivers who have questions regarding the best type of available equipment to enhance their child's mobility both at home and at school should feel free to use the services of the PAM Assistance Center. The Center also has information on baby seats and child seats, including a list of those that have been recalled for not meeting minimum safety standards.

## **DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES**

First Student Transportation Services Transportation Department has established the following procedures to follow regarding appropriate school bus riding behaviors. In-service is conducted annually for the transportation staff in regard to these procedures. Areas covered include:

1. Suggestions for handling surface behaviors
2. Student Behavior Management and Adjustment Program Reference
3. Transportation Incident Report (Sample page 11)
4. Transportation Student Behavior/Discipline Report
5. Passenger Behavior Code

If the above program is not appropriate, First Student will work with the BLC / LEC staff to come up with a workable solution for all involved. Occasionally First Student may find it necessary to limit pupil movement with appropriate restraint for their own personal safety. This precaution will be taken to keep students from standing or moving about the bus, to physically support the student or to restrain students so that the possibility of self-abuse or aggravated behavior directed at other students is minimized. The intent of such restraints is to continue transportation services rather than to exclude students from transportation.

### **RESTRAINTS AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

1. Regular lap belts will be available to all students and will be used by those who need them for safety.
2. Sometimes it is necessary to restrain students while they ride First Student buses. Restraints may be used for the physical support of a student or to help insure his/her safety, the safety of other students and the First Student staff.
3. Students who leave their seats or become abusive to themselves or others will have temporary special restraints designed with written approval of parent/providers. The parent/provider will be invited to a staffing with district staff within ten (10) school days of notice to determine the most appropriate transportation method.
4. In addition to regular lap belts, individualized restraints may include approved occupant positioning devices, trunk support devices, car seats, Velcro strap limb restraints, movement restrictive jackets, etc.
5. When a student's behavior is unmanageable in spite of restraints and behavior management techniques, it may be necessary to implement the suspension procedure as outlined in the First Student Transportation Incident Report or to review alternative modes of transportation.

### **Inclement Weather**

Please refer to your child's individual School's Parent/ Student Handbook for Inclement Weather policy.