

GUIDELINES

TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Responsibility of: School Support Services
Effective Date: October 2014
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Target Audience: Staff/Parents/Community/ Department of
Transport/Transport Service Providers

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This document should be read in conjunction with [Transport for Students with Special Needs policy](#).

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines aim to provide clear advice to parents, students, schools and departmental staff in respect to the eligibility and procedures for all parties associated with transport for students with special needs.

The aim is to support eligible students who are unable to access travel independently and who may not otherwise be able to access education without the provision of special needs transport to school. Not all students with a disability require transport assistance; therefore not all students with a disability will be eligible for assistance under this program.

2. DEFINITIONS

Daily care and control of a child (in regards to the definition of parent) refers to a person who is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the day-to-day care and control of the child.

Disability, in relation to a person, means:

- (a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
 - (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
 - (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
 - (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
 - (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
 - (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
 - (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;
- and includes a disability that:
- (h) presently exists; or
 - (i) previously existed but no longer exists; or
 - (j) may exist in the future; or
 - (k) is imputed to a person.

(Extract from section 4(1) of the [Disability Discrimination Act](#))

Parent signifies the child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

Parental responsibility (in regards to the definition of parent) refers to a person who has:

- (a) daily care and control of the child, or
 - (b) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the long-term care and development of the child, or
 - (c) has daily care and control of the child and the entitlement and responsibilities at (b)
- and includes a person who has been given the above responsibilities under another state or territory law.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Refer to [Transport for Students with Special Needs policy](#).

4. GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

For a student with an identified disability to be eligible to access special needs transport, parents and carers are required to clearly demonstrate that they are **unable** to provide or arrange transport for the student either fully or in part.

Each application is assessed using the eligibility criteria. The assessments are based on the needs of the student, circumstances surrounding the ability of the parents/carers to provide or arrange transport to get their child to and from school and the availability and capacity of transport.

Should the needs of the students or the family circumstances change over time, applications for access to transport assistance can be reassessed in the accordance with eligibility criteria.

Travel is only available when it is undertaken during standard school days and hours as per the Department of Education school calendar. Students can travel one forward and one return trip each day as a maximum.

Travel services provided may be one or a combination of the following:

- door to door (from home to school); and/or
- designated group pick up points.

All travel services will depend on accessibility of the home, individual student needs, resources, capacity and timing constraints.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

5.1 Students

To be eligible to apply for access to special needs transport services, a student must:

- a) be a permanent resident of the Northern Territory; and
- b) be assessed as having an identified disability and enrolled in a Special School or Centre consistent with the [Enrolment of Students with a Disability in Special Schools and Special Centres guidelines](#); and/or

- c) require high level assistance for mobility purposes and require assisted travel (for example, use of wheelchair or other form of mobility aid); and
- d) be enrolled in the closest appropriate primary, middle, or secondary government school to their home, following consideration of:
 - the impact of travelling distance and time on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes;
 - the impact of travelling distance/time on the student's health, wellbeing and safety;
 - the availability and location of special education services that meet the student's specific educational needs; and
 - whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that could be made at a school nearer to the student's home that would be less disruptive and no less beneficial for the students as an alternative to travel assistance; and
- e) not already travelling to/from school independently, or has the capacity to do so.

The Departments understand that there may be mitigating circumstances that fall outside of the eligibility criteria that impact on the ability to transport a student to/from school and such situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.2 Distance criteria

Transport will only be provided to those students who live:

- a) within the identified catchment area; and
- b) more than 500m from the school.

The transport catchment area is defined by Gazette No G35 (dated 31 August 2005 and is the Northern Territory Government's common sub-regional statistical boundaries) and is based on standardised statistical boundaries which are geographically consistent and in compliance with the Australian Bureau of Statistics classification rules. Catchment area maps and information are provided on the Department of Transport, Public Transport website:

<http://www.transport.nt.gov.au/public/school-bus-service/special-needs>

5.3 Time criteria

A maximum travel time of 60 minutes on each one way trip is necessary to ensure the well-being and safety of students.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEW FOR SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORT REQUEST

- 6.1 The Principal is best placed to manage parent and carer expectations before an application is complete by providing advice on whether the student meets the eligibility criteria to access transport support.

The school principal/delegate are required to complete the **New Request for Special Needs Transport Form** with due regard given to the eligibility criteria.

- 6.2 New applications require parts A and B of the **Request for Special Needs Transport Form** to be completed.
- Part A is to be completed by the parent/carer
 - Part B is to be completed by the school enrolling the student.

- 6.3 The Department of Education confirms student eligibility in accordance with the student criteria and progresses successful applications to the Department of Transport.
- 6.4 The Department of Transport liaise with the transport provider and confirms the distance and time criteria.
- 6.5 The transport provider gives confirmation of transport arrangements to the Department of Transport with commencement details. Eligible students may need to go on a 'wait list' if transport is not immediately available due to resource and timing criteria limitations.
- 6.6 The Department of Transport notifies both the school and the Department of Education of details via email.
- 6.7 The school advises parents of the outcome including travel times and pick up and drop off locations. If the applicant is not approved, the parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school in the first instance to discuss eligibility and the reasons for non-approval (where possible applications will be processed within 7 working days).

A summary of the full application process is contained in Appendix A.

7. VARIATIONS TO APPROVED TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS (TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT CHANGE VARIATIONS)

- 7.1 In the case of one day absences the parent/carer or school can contact the transport service provider directly to notify that transport is not required.
- 7.2 All requests for temporary and permanent changes of more than one day to approved transport arrangements must be submitted by schools to the Department of Transport for assessment. This is facilitated through the **Change Request Form**. All variations are subject to a 5 working day processing time. The school will be notified in writing of the outcome within 7 working days.
- 7.3 Request for variations to approved travel arrangement will only be approved where the variation can be incorporated into an existing transport service with reference to distance travelled and time spent in transit.
- 7.4 Eligible students must use the transport service provided regularly in order to maintain their eligibility. A break in attendance for more than 5 days without notification will result in cancellation of transport for that student.

8. REVIEW OF STUDENT TRAVEL SUPPORT NEEDS/ELIGIBILITY

- 8.1 Where the family circumstances have changed, impacting on the transport arrangements for the student, the school must advise the Department of Transport as soon as possible, e.g. the student no longer attends the school.
- 8.2 A review of student travel support needs/eligibility may also take place following any incident which has the potential to impact on the health, well-being and safety of any individual on the transport service. This may require a review of the student's behaviour management plan or health care plan as appropriate.

See Appendix A for summary of the full Application and Assessment Process.

9. STUDENT MANAGEMENT

For students to travel safely, service providers require information about the students' disabilities, medical needs, allergies and behavioural needs. This information is provided through the application process and where risks are identified an appropriate plan is to be developed.

Where incidents do occur the following processes will be enacted.

9.1 Minor Incident/s

A Minor incident is a definite and separate occurrence; an event that is subordinate to another that interrupts normal procedure or may precipitate a major incident.

The following behaviours are considered minor incidents, but are not limited to:

- verbal abuse towards students, transit carers or drivers
- distracting the driver by persistent noise or yelling and shouting
- removing articles of clothing
- exposing genitalia
- annoying other passengers
- continually refusing to get in or out of provider transport
- unbuckling restraining devices including seatbelts and harnesses.

These types of behaviours, if persistent, will result in:

- a) An incident report being completed and a copy provided to the school to forward to the parents/carers.
- b) Discussions to be held with schools, parents/carers, students (where appropriate) and transport service providers.
- c) Where appropriate, a behavioural plan to be implemented.

9.2 Major Incident/s

A major incident is an occurrence for which the degree of impact on the business/organisation/people involved is extreme.

The following behaviours could include, but are not limited to:

- moving around the vehicle in a dangerous manner
- violent behaviour towards others including punching, kicking, biting or hair pulling
- aggressive behaviour, including spitting
- inappropriate sexual behaviour
- intimidating and offensive acts.

These types of behaviours will result in:

- a) An incident report being completed and provided to the school to forward to the parents/carers.
- b) Temporary withdrawal of services until appropriate action has been taken to resolve the issue/s (an assessment will be made on what other type of transport, if any, can be provided during this time).
- c) Discussions to be held with schools, parents/carers, students (where appropriate) and transport service providers and Department of Transport.

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As a result of the discussions around major incidents, it may also result in:

- a) Reassessment of the eligibility of the student.
- b) Appropriate behavioural plan to be implemented; or
- c) Withdrawal of transport services (a letter will be provided to the parents/carers advising of the withdrawal of the transport services).

All parties have an obligation to ensure that natural justice principles are followed and all circumstances considered. Decisions will be made in a timely manner and parents will be notified in writing.

9.3 Appeal Process

If parents/carers are dissatisfied with a decision to withdraw transport, they may contact the school and request a review of the decision.

The relevant Directors of the Department of Education and the Department of Transport will conduct an internal review of the decision and enter into further discussions with the parents/carers.

10. MONITORING

The Department of Transport and the Department of Education will undertake regular monitoring of individual school travel services and contractor performance.

Regular review of services will ensure operational efficiency and that the changing needs and circumstance of students are met within the budgetary and resource limitations of the program. This process may result in changes to transport arrangements at any time throughout the year.

11. CONTACTS

Transport Service Providers

Darwin

Buslink Operations Manager 8944 2444

Katherine

Katherine Taxi Manager 8972 1777

Alice Springs

Australian Transport Group Manager 8952 5688

Schools

Darwin

Henbury School Principal 8927 5088

Humpty Doo School Principal 8988 1255

Nemarluk School Principal 8985 0400

Palmerston Special Education Centre Principal 8935 0229

Taminmin College Principal 8988 0000

Woodroffe Primary School Principal 8932 3788

Katherine

Kintore Street Special School Principal 8971 0060

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Alice Springs

Acacia Hill School	Principal	8952 6277
Centralian Middle School	Principal	8950 2500

Department of Transport - Public Transport Division

Special Needs Coordinator		8924 7852
Director, Public Transport		8924 7845
Generic Email Account - specialneeds.transport@nt.gov.au		

Department of Education – School Support Services

Manager Disability Services		8944 9347
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APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS SUMMARY

New Requests for Special Needs Transport

- Parents/carers and principal complete New Request for Special Needs Transport Form if school deems student eligible (6.1 & 6.2)
- School emails request to School Support Services
- School Support Services assess student eligibility against criteria and progress application to the Department of Transport (6.3)
- Department of Transport liaise with transport provider and assess time and distance criteria (6.4)
- Transport provider confirms travel arrangements and commencement details (6.5)
- Transport Division notifies the school and Department of Education (6.6)
- School notifies parents (6.7)

Change to Special Needs Transport

- Parents/carers or school can contact the transport provider in the case of 1 day absence (7.1)
- Change Request Form to be completed for extended absences or change of circumstances (7.2-7.3)
- School emails form to Department of Transport and School Support Services
- Department of Transport liaise with transport provider
- Transport provider confirms travel arrangements and commencement details
- School notified of decision / school notifies parents

Withdrawing Special Needs Transport

- When numerous minor incidents or a major incident occur an incident report is completed and provided to school by transport provider (9.1 & 9.2)
- Temporary withdrawal of service (9.1 & 9.2)
- School notifies parents/carers (9.1 & 9.2)
- Case management team convenes (9.1 & 9.2)
- Discussion/decision made regarding situation (9.1 & 9.2)
- Parents notified in writing of outcome (9.2)
- Appeals process begins if parents are unhappy with outcome (9.3)