

Have a Safe and Successful School Year!



Parent / Student Transportation Handbook

St. Mary's County
Non-Public School Transportation Office
Department of Public Works & Transportation
P.O. Box 409
44829 St. Andrews Church Rd.
California, MD 20619
Phone: 301-475-4200 ext. 1124
Fax: 301-866-6797
Email: Becky.George@stmarysmd.com

ST. MARY'S COUNTY NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS School Bus Transportation Services

Parent / Student Transportation Handbook



For more information, please visit:

www.stmarysmd.com/dpw/nonpublicschools.asp

*Sponsored by
The Commissioners of St. Mary's County*

COUNTY'S ROLE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

In 1941, St. Mary's County enacted Public Law, Chapter 116-1, entitled "Bus Transportation," to the St. Mary's County Code. This law was established to ensure all children who attend schools in St. Mary's County be entitled to transportation.

The St. Mary's County Transportation Office under The Commissioners of St. Mary's County is responsible for Non-Public student transportation and bus routing to improve efficiency of services, develop and maintain safety standards including bus driver training programs, conducting bus inspections, communicate effectively with school principals, parents, students, bus drivers, law enforcement officers and the local and national weather service. In addition, the Transportation Office is responsible to contract for school bus transportation with qualified contractors for Non-Public School Bus Transportation in St. Mary's County.



COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for School buses

Parents:

- Each day, prior to your child boarding the school bus, ensure that your child is well, with no signs of the COVID-19 virus such as temperature, coughs or flu like symptoms.
- Contact the school or bus contractor with child transportation cancellations.
- Requests for bus riders received after Aug. 3, 2020 will be waitlisted and may not be accommodated during the current semester due to COVID-19 planning limitations.
- As an added precaution, Out-of-County student transportation is temporarily suspended until further notice.

Students:

- Wear a facial cover that properly fits and covers both the nose and mouth; do not touch your face. Students will not be able to board the bus without a face cover and must remain covered for the duration of the transport. For the safety of all, not complying with this face cover policy will result in disciplinary action.
- Keep a 6 foot distance from other students when possible.
- Wash hands per CDC guidelines and use hand sanitizer when soap and water are unavailable.
- Don't share pens, pencils or other school items with other students.

Drivers:

- Wear a facial cover with good visual perspective.
- Sanitize bus seats, handrails, windows or other touched areas daily and in accordance with guidelines and policies.
- Keep a safe distance from students, parents & school staff.
- Notify contractor if you have a temperature or COVID-19 symptoms and follow all established COVID-19 procedures.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

1. For inclement weather, County media announcements regarding the closing or delayed opening of schools begin at approximately 6:00 a.m. During severe weather conditions, pertinent information concerning the school transportation programs will be announced on the County's website www.stmarysmd.com, as well as radio and television stations. The Non-Public School Bus Transportation Office is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
2. Non-Public School buses will follow the Board of Education school bus cancellation schedule. Information will be announced on local television channels and radio stations.



SAFETY AWARENESS REMINDER



1. Parents, whenever possible, your children should stay in groups. Consider having at least one adult parent/guardian remain at each stop until children are safely boarded.
2. Children should never accept a ride without first getting permission from parents and/or school officials, even if it is someone your child knows.
3. Taking short cuts to bus stops can be dangerous. Children should always stay on walking routes selected by parents.
4. Never openly discuss that your children are "latch key kids."
5. If necessary, have "home alone" plans for emergencies, and for phone and door answering.
6. Advise your children to never leave school with anyone without first checking with school officials, even if they are notified of "an emergency." Children should know that all emergencies **must** be coordinated through school officials.
7. Know your children's bus number(s) and stop locations in case of an emergency.

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. **Father Andrew White** Phone: 301-475-9795
2. **Kings Christian Academy** Phone: 301-994-3080
3. **Little Flower School** Phone: 301-994-0404
4. **Mennonite School** Phone: 301-373-2912
5. **Leonard Hall
Junior Naval Academy** Phone: 301-475-8029
6. **Mother Catherine Academy** Phone: 301-884-3165
7. **St. John's School** Phone: 301-373-2142
8. **St. Mary's Ryken** Phone: 301-475-2814
9. **St. Michael's School** Phone: 301-872-5454
10. **Bay Montessori School** Phone: 301-737-2421



DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

1. If necessary, Bus Behavior Reports are sent to the respective school to inform school officials and parents of a disciplinary incident involving your student. All Bus Behavior Report forms documenting notices of misconduct must be signed by the bus driver and returned to the school.
2. Inappropriate student behavior that may jeopardize the safety and well-being of other students will not be tolerated. Fighting, creating disturbances, disrupting the driver or other students will warrant disciplinary action.
3. The driver of the bus is in full charge of the students, except in the presence of a teacher. When rules or regulations are not being observed, the driver may complete and submit a Bus Behavior Referral Form to the disciplinarian of the school and the Transportation Office.
4. The disciplinarian will make a determination of the disciplinary action and/or suspension, and will inform the parent/guardian, bus driver, and Transportation Office within **five (5) business days**.
5. Disciplinary actions can range from verbal or written warnings up to a ten (10) day school suspension or permanent suspension of all bus riding privileges. Other appropriate action may be necessary as determined by the disciplinarian of each school.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

Parent Information:

- The school will notify the parents of the students involved in the accident. All information on student injuries will be reported to the school as it becomes available.
- Parents wishing to remove their child from the scene of an accident must sign a "Student Release Form" provided by Transportation Office personnel.
- A replacement bus will be provided to transport the uninjured students back to the school or to continue the bus route, provided the existing bus is in unsafe mechanical condition.
- Students involved in an accident shall be taken to the nearest hospital for medical evaluation if deemed necessary by the volunteer fire and rescue ambulance crew, Maryland State Police and/or Office of the Sheriff.

Student Information:

- Please remain calm and follow the school bus driver's instructions, especially in the event of an accident involving your bus.

Bus Driver Information:

- Driver shall offer assistance to the students until the Emergency Response Team arrives at the scene of the accident.
- The Transportation Supervisor will report to the scene of the accident to provide assistance as well as liaison between the parents, students, and emergency responders.

BUS STOP INFORMATION

1. Bus stops are established first by safety, then by location of students, and current bus routes.
2. Bus routes and scheduled stops are generally designed for eligible pupils who can walk within a ½ mile for elementary school (grades 1-8) and/or 1 mile for high school (grades 9-12). This provision shall be used to reduce excessive time and miles traveled whenever possible and practical.
3. New stops may be requested by parents, guardians and/or the school principal, in conjunction with current regulations and safety factors. Requests should be made via a Request for Transportation Form.
4. Stops will not be established where hazards exist, and should be located in such a way to maximize the visibility of the stopped bus by approaching traffic.
5. Off-road loading zones may be approved by the Transportation Supervisor.
6. Students are responsible for leaving home early enough to arrive at the designated school bus stop ten **(10) minutes** before the scheduled arrival time of the bus, and should be standing at the stop waiting to step onto the bus.
7. Multiple transfer locations have been established from various geographical areas to facilitate transportation of students to their respective schools, which may result in individual riding times in excess of 1 – 1 ½ hours.
8. Under no circumstances will students be permitted to board or disembark the school bus at an unauthorized bus stop location.

REQUESTS FOR TRANSPORTATION

1. A Request for Transportation Form MUST be received by the Transportation Supervisor for any of the following reasons:
 - a. New student enrollment;
 - b. Change of address / contact Information;
 - c. Change of guardianship;
 - d. Occasional Riders: Any student who needs to ride a bus he or she does not regularly ride, whether it's for one day or several days throughout the year. In these cases, the form should be received 2 business days in advance of the requested date(s); and
2. A Request for Transportation Form is available online at St. Mary's County website: [www. stmarysmd.com/dpw/nonpublicschools.asp](http://www.stmarysmd.com/dpw/nonpublicschools.asp).
3. A new student's request for transportation is only accepted via the Request for Transportation Form. The request may be submitted to the Transportation Office via email, postal mail, or by faxing the form to 301-866-6797 no later than the established deadline.
4. Bus stop changes or additions may not be guaranteed to be accommodated if insufficient notice is provided to the Transportation Supervisor (min. 2 business days advanced notice is requested). Typically, no adjustments are made during the first two (2) to three (3) weeks of school.
5. Out of county students must be transported to an existing bus stop location within St. Mary's County in order to utilize transportation services. A fee of **\$900** per student per year will be assessed at the time a request for transportation form is received. Parents will be notified about specific payment instructions via mail in the beginning of the school year. **SEE COVID19 SAFETY GUIDELINES ON PAGE 19 FOR UPDATED INFORMATION.**

SCHOOL'S ROLE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION



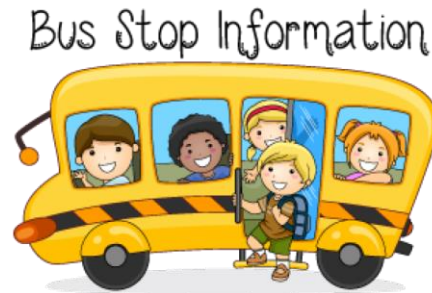
1. The local school administrators and County have concern for all of the items listed in this booklet, but parents have the legal responsibility for their children as they travel to and from school as pedestrians, or as they travel to and from a school bus stop.
2. The responsibility of the school administrators and County begins when the children step onto the school bus. This responsibility ceases at the end of the school day when the school bus departs the unloading area at the students' normal discharge point.
3. Questions regarding walking to and from school should be discussed with the school principal first.
4. If it is anticipated that a field trip will be returning later than planned, it is the chaperone's and/or school administrator's responsibility to notify the parents and the Transportation Office.
5. Each school assigns a disciplinarian who will make a determination of the level of discipline and inform parents/guardians, bus driver and the Transportation Office. Bus Behavior Report referrals shall be submitted to the school by the end of each school day.

TRANSFER POINT INFORMATION

PARENT / GUARDIAN'S ROLE (Cont'd.)

7. **Children that are PK3 – 2nd grade:** an adult must be present at the bus stop during pick up and drop off, or an authorized person who is at least 13 years of age for students who are PK3 – 2nd grade. The parent must be at the school bus doors when receiving their child off of the bus in the afternoons. If no such persons are present at the bus stop in the afternoon, then the bus driver will keep the student on the bus, contact the student's school staff, and return the student to their respective school upon completion of the afternoon bus route. Parents will be notified by the school to pick up their children at the school; drivers will not let students off at unauthorized bus stop locations to meet parents who may be absent/ tardy.
8. Parents should instill awareness in their children of other safety issues. Do not permit your children to accept candy, soft drinks, money, toys or rides from strangers or to associate with anyone they do not know. Teach your children that if this problem is encountered on the way to or from school, or at any other time, you, the bus driver, or the teacher must be told as soon as possible.
9. Weather should determine how children are to be dressed. Encourage your children to wear clothing that will keep them warm, allow them to see, and also enable them to be clearly seen by drivers of vehicles. If children cannot be seen by drivers of vehicles, they are in danger. Children should leave a few minutes earlier than their normal starting time in bad weather in order to safely reach the school bus stop or school on time.
10. Parents are responsible for notifying the Transportation Office regarding any changes in address, phone numbers, or emergency situations that are transportation related.

1. With the safety of all students and buses a top priority, the County's Non-Public School Bus Division observes the following drop off practices for transfer students:
 - A. Recommendations for routing buses, designating waiting areas for students, separating school buses and student drop-off areas are implemented each year.
 - B. Little Flower School and Mother Catherine Academy are not available school bus transfer points for students transported by cars.



INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

1. A disabled child, whose parents choose to send to private school, is entitled to have the same services available to the child were he/she to attend public school.
2. The St. Mary's County Non-Public School transportation system makes reasonable accommodations for requests, and provides services to persons with disabilities through the St. Mary's Transit System's ADA Para-transit Program.

BUS DRIVER'S ROLE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION



The school bus driver plays a very important and responsible role in the educational system. In most instances, the bus driver is the first representative of the school system to meet the students in the morning and the last to see them in the afternoon. While students are on the bus, their safety is in the driver's hands. Bus drivers are responsible for their passengers, good order and discipline, and for efficient and economical operation of the vehicle. Bus drivers should strive to fulfill these responsibilities successfully and should be respected and appreciated as a person. The driver is in a position to have a huge influence on a student's attitude toward school.

In perhaps no other area of education does a school system accept more responsibility for student's life and welfare than during the mass movement of students in school buses on the public highways, streets, and roads. Therefore, as a member of the "Safety Team," it is essential not only to provide adequate equipment, but to strive constantly to improve operational safety and efficiency. The "Safety Team" consists of every individual who is in any way involved with the student transportation program in this County, especially the bus driver.

Certainly, it cannot be denied that student passengers are affected by their ride to and from school. Their experiences on the bus, both positive and negative, become a part of their education.

PARENT / GUARDIAN'S ROLE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

1. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children from the time the children leave home in the morning until they board the school bus and in the afternoon from the time the school bus departs the unloading area, until the children reach home. While the child is on the school bus, the responsibility lies with the bus driver and the Transportation Office.
2. As children walk to and from the bus stop or school, and while they wait at the school bus stop, they must show consideration and respect for the property of those citizens whose homes and places of business are located along their routes. Parents should be aware of their liability for damage caused by their children to the property of others, including the school bus.
3. Parents are responsible for ensuring their children leave home early enough to arrive at the designated school bus stop at **least ten (10) minutes before the scheduled arrival time** of the bus and are standing at the stop waiting to step onto the bus.
4. Parents, together with their children, should develop a walking route to and from the school bus stops or school, which minimizes the exposure of children to vehicular traffic. The route should be safe, direct, and uninterrupted when possible.
5. Please keep in mind that riding a school bus is a privilege. This privilege may be temporarily denied or permanently revoked for disobeying rules stated in the Student's Role section of this Handbook or if the misconduct of a student jeopardizes the safe operation of the school bus.
6. Any student that is serving a suspension will **not** be allowed to ride any Non-Public school bus for the duration of the suspension. Refer to "Disciplinary Actions" section for more information.

STUDENT'S ROLE (Cont'd.)

7. Portable electronic devices may be used while on the bus with personal earphones. Sound levels will be kept at a minimum as not to disturb other students or the driver. No profane or obscene media is allowed. The Transportation Office is not responsible for any damage to a device or student use of a device at school.
8. Do not extend any part of the body or discharge anything from the window.
9. All students must be seated in their assigned seats while the bus is in motion, and are not permitted in front of the first row of seats until they are authorized by the driver to exit the bus.
10. No large bundles or animals are permitted on the bus. Only packages, equipment or musical instruments that can reasonably be held on a student's lap are permitted.
11. Students may converse in a normal tone and in an appropriate manner. Loud, profane, or obscene language will warrant disciplinary action.
12. Studying is permitted, provided no pencils or pens are used.
13. Student seats are assigned by the bus drivers. Students must cooperate in keeping the bus clean and undamaged, especially in the seating area. Any damage to a school bus may result in the immediate suspension of transportation privileges for the student(s) involved, and/or until the terms for the repair and cost have been settled satisfactorily. Parents/guardians will be accountable for student damage to the bus through a parent/guardian conference, which will determine the cost to repair the bus.

Bus Driver Responsibilities include:

1. Explaining the rules to all students.
2. Enforcing the rules with all students.
3. Treating all students fairly, respectfully, and in a friendly manner.
4. Introducing themselves and greet each student by name.
5. Maintaining a positive attitude.
6. Concentrating on safe driving skills.
7. Assisting students with their transportation information when needed.
8. Providing verbal recognition to students for positive behavior (drivers are prohibited from giving excessive material gifts of any kind to students).
9. When necessary, correcting students individually.
10. When necessary, stopping the bus to restore order.
11. Ensuring an escort is at the bus stop for children PK3 – 2nd grade before allowing the student(s) to disembark the bus.



SCHOOL BUS EVACUATIONS

1. Drivers are responsible for completing school bus evacuation drills in cooperation with the assigned school officials at least twice a year; once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Non-Public School Bus Evacuation Drill Procedures are in place to guide the safe and orderly unloading of students from the school buses.
2. In the event of a real emergency or an accident involving students aboard a non-public school bus, procedures are also in place for the identification of students, notification of parents, and notification of school personnel (See also Page 16).
3. For other emergencies, students may be taken to a designated "host" school site.



SAFETY SEATS AND SEAT BELTS

4. However, school buses (Class H) are not required to provide child safety or restraining devices. It is recommended that parents of pre-school aged children arrange alternative means of transportation to school.

STUDENT'S ROLE ON THE BUS

The following School Bus regulations will serve as notice to all new students and remind returning students who ride the Non-Public buses that these rules are to be obeyed at all times while riding the bus.

1. Students must ride only the bus(es) to which they are assigned. Once a student gets on the bus he/she is not permitted to get off until the destination or transfer point is reached. No student will be permitted to board a bus other than at his/her designated stop. If a parent/guardian wishes to pick up a child after school and the child is on the bus, the parent must identify him/herself to the driver and request the child be permitted to be discharged to the parent's care.
2. When a student gets off at his/her transfer school, he/she must go directly to the transfer bus. If he/she does not get on the assigned bus, but instead gets into a private vehicle, the bus driver will call the Transportation Office and report the name of such student. The parent/guardian and the school disciplinarian will be advised.
3. No person is permitted to transport or have in his/her possession firearms or any other dangerous weapons (real or pretend) while on the school bus. **Violations will result in automatic dismissal from the bus for the remainder of the school year.** Students will also be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
4. The use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and vaping is prohibited on the bus at all times. **Violations will result in automatic dismissal from the bus for the remainder of the school year.** Students will also be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
5. Proper student attire, as mandated by the designated school dress code, is required. **Dress Code compliance is the responsibility of the parents and/or the individual school.**
6. All food and drinks must be in closed containers. No food or drinks may be consumed on the bus, i.e., gum, candy, etc.