



# **BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDELINES FOR TRANSPORTATION**

**UPDATED; AUGUST 2021**

**The following guidelines are provided to ensure the safe transportation of students on school buses for home to school and return transportation.**

### **Load Counts**

The Ministry of Education, Guide to Reopening Schools states, “school vehicles can operate at full capacity”. Vehicles for elementary students should reduce capacity where possible. Elementary runs may have students in the same family or grade sitting three per seat. Where possible the seat behind the driver will be left empty. **NO COURTESY RIDES OR STOP CHANGE REQUESTS WILL BE REVIEWED OR APPROVED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

### **Loading and Unloading Students**

Students are encouraged to walk to their seat without touching seats as they pass as much as possible. Assigned seating plans will be developed and students must sit only in their assigned seats. Students will be paired with a member from the same household or in the same grade where possible. Students must follow the instructions given to them from the bus driver and remain in the seat assigned to them. Students may not change seats at any time during the bus trip.

### **Bus Stops**

The parent/guardian is responsible for the student until the student gets on the bus. It is recommended that all students and parents maintain a 2-metre physical distance while waiting at the bus stop.

### **Safety Protocols**

All students **are required to be masked** while entering and riding the bus. Masks must stay on for the duration of the bus ride. Any student that fails to comply will risk losing their transportation privilege. Any student that cannot wear a mask due to a medical or special need that prevents masking must contact their school to get an exemption. Students exempt from wearing a mask will be provided with a medical exemption tag to attach to their backpack so the driver knows they have a mask exemption. Students should be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds before they leave for the bus stop or use an Alcohol Based Hand Rub (hand sanitizer) just before boarding the bus. Students must follow the direction of the driver when boarding the bus and maintain a 2 metre distance when boarding and taking their seat on the bus. Students should avoid touching the bus seats as they pass.

### **Students Exhibiting Symptoms**

Students who have symptoms associated with COVID-19 or think they have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be allowed to take transportation. Parents must screen their child using the Ministry screening tool at **<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>** for any symptoms prior to sending them to board the bus. If a child is displaying symptoms such as coughing,

fever or other obvious signs of an illness, they will not be allowed to board the bus. The bus driver will inform the parent/guardian, if they are with the child, that the child cannot ride. If there is no parent/guardian, with the child, the driver will contact dispatch to advise the family that the child cannot be transported. If the child is too young to be home alone and the parent cannot be contacted they will be transported, sitting in the seat behind the driver, to the school. If a child gets sick at school or exhibits symptoms, they will not be transported on the bus after school.

### **On Bus Protocol**

Students will follow the direction of the driver with respect to their seat assignments. Students will sit face forward with legs down and their arms in the seat. They will not touch the seat in front of them or another child on the bus. Students must not put their arms out the windows, throw object or eat on the bus. Bus operators will be encouraged to use physical or visual cues on the bus to reinforce health and safety measures.

### **General Guidance and Operations**

All bus drivers will be subject to the COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure Policy and Testing Requirements as per the Ministry of Education.

School bus drivers and monitors will be instructed not to report to work if they:

- Have any symptoms associated with COVID-19
- May have been exposed to COVID-19
- Have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days and exempt from quarantine.

They should report immediately to their employer, complete the online [self-assessment tool](#) and follow the instructions provided.

If symptoms arise after completing a trip, the driver must notify their employer immediately so proper precautions can be taken. The Bus Operator will notify the consortium immediately if any driver has symptoms and ensure the driver does not return to work until they have tested negative for COVID-19.

Bus drivers will be assigned to a dedicated bus as much as possible. Situations of absences will result in spare drivers being utilized. When and if practicable (i.e. not during inclement weather) drivers will ventilate the bus by opening windows.

Bus drivers must perform hand hygiene using the on board Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR) (containing a minimum of 60% alcohol):

- Before and after trips
- After assisting a child to their seat
- Touching wheelchairs or other assistive devices
- Having direct contact with children during the trip

## **Face Masks/Coverings**

Bus drivers must wear a facemask or face covering while children are boarding the bus, during transportation and while children are deboarding the bus. Drivers will be provided with an adequate supply of face coverings. In addition, drivers will be provided with on-board PPE Kit containing additional PPE such as gloves, safety glasses/goggles, face shield or any other PPE that is deemed necessary by their employer. No PPE shall interfere with the driver's ability to access vehicle controls, hinder, or distort the driver's view directly or through mirrors of the road, students or pedestrians around the bus or of passengers.

Bus drivers will receive the required training on the health and safety measures to ensure the measures are understood, followed and enforced. Bus Operators will be required to have a PPE program in place. A series of training videos from [Public Health Ontario](#) can be used to instruct staff on the proper use of PPE.

The Consortia will inform the school boards affected as well as the Windsor Essex Public Health Unit of any suspected cases of COVID-19 of school bus drivers and monitors.

## **Cleaning Protocols**

All buses will be equipped with a [Health Canada approved disinfectant product](#), waste disposal bags, disposable cloths and absorbent materials for emergency clean ups on the bus.

Drivers will be provided with manufacturer's instructions and Material Safety Data Sheets for the product, which explain the proper use, handling, placement, storage and warnings associated with the product. Refer to the Public Health Ontario [Fact Sheet for Environmental Cleaning](#) for more details.

- Driver cockpits must be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of each shift
- High touch surfaces that are accessible to students will be cleaned at the end of the morning runs, prior to the start of the school to home trips, and at the end of the shift. Those surfaces will include, but are not limited to, the inside hand railing, seats and any other parts that are commonly touched by students.
- Bus operators will keep a record of cleaning protocols and submit them to the consortium for approval and record keeping.

In the case of major issues such as a student vomiting, bleeding or showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, the driver will pull over and inform radio dispatch to send another bus. The parents/guardians of the student will be instructed to meet the bus to pick up the student in question. The driver will ensure they wear additional PPE such as eye protection, face shields and gloves if they have to attend the student. The bus will then be returned to the bus yard for a proper and thorough cleaning prior to being put back in service.

In the case of any medical emergency, the driver will be instructed to pull over and call 911 for assistance.

## **Transportation for Students with Special Needs**

Protocols for transportation of students with special needs will include the above protocols as well as any further PPE that is required for protection of the driver if they are in close contact with the student. Parents that board the bus to secure equipment for their child must wear a face mask in order to board the bus. Student transportation will work in concert with the boards' Special Education Department to ensure that any individual student plans are implemented to safely transport the student.

## **Management of Covid-19 on School Bus**

- School Bus driver becomes ill during the work day:
  - Bus driver must:
    - Notify employer
    - Consult with health care provider and follow recommendations
    - If tested for COVID-19, follow the isolation guidance provided by health care provider
    - Follow guidelines on return to work depending on scenario.
  - Bus Operator must:
    - Notify the consortium as soon as they have been advised of the illness
    - Ensure bus had a deep cleaning as required
    - Secure alternate driver to deliver service until driver is cleared to return to work.
  - Consortium must:
    - Notify school principal of the situation
    - Update school principal of outcome and actions taken
  
- School Bus driver tests positive for COVID-19
  - Bus driver must:
    - Notify employer
    - Consult with health care provider and follow recommendations
    - Follow guidelines on return to work.
  - Bus Operator must:
    - Notify the consortium as soon as they have been advised the driver is positive for COVID-19
    - Notify any schools who had charters serviced by the driver
    - Secure alternate driver to deliver service
    - Follow guidelines on return to work for driver
  - Consortium must:
    - Notify principals of all schools that were serviced by the driver
    - Ensure the bus operator completes a deep cleaning of any buses used by the driver

- Assist the school with an issues related to the cohort seat assignments for the bus
- Provide support to the bus operator and school as requested
- Ensure that the bus driver and the bus operator follow above noted requirements.