



## Waterloo Community School District Transportation Handbook



This school bus transportation handbook is intended for students and parents/guardians in the Waterloo Community School District.

These policies and procedures have been developed to promote safety with cooperation from students, parents/guardians, bus drivers, and school personnel. Parents/guardians are encouraged to review these policies and procedures with their child/children to become familiar with what is expected for safe and orderly transportation to and from school.

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## **Contract Bus Services**

The District has entered into a contract with First Student to provide school bus transportation services.

## **Blackout Dates**

Blackout dates are the day following the final day of registration and fourteen days after. This allows time for students to be placed at an existing stop. Changes or additions to stops will not be added during this time to allow the routes to remain stable to ensure timely communication of route times to parents and students.

## **Routes and Route Changes**

Approximately 2 weeks prior to the beginning of each school year, routing information may be found in the Parent Portal. Any change in routing resulting in a stop being moved or changed by more than 10 minutes will be communicated via ConnectEd/FirstView. In certain circumstances, the school or bus garage may contact parents/guardians by telephone regarding route changes for their student(s).

In accordance with guidance from the Black Hawk County Program Advisor, it is not possible nor is the District required to move bus stop locations due to a sex offender in the area. If issues arise with an individual at your student's bus stop location, please contact the Waterloo Police Department.

Questions regarding routes and route time schedules should be directed to First Student at 319-291-4879.

## **Transportation Eligibility – Regular Education Students**

The District is required to provide transportation by the State of Iowa to students in grades K-8 only if they live more than 2.0 miles from the school designated for attendance. Students in grades 9-12 shall be entitled to transportation only if they live more than 3.0 miles from the school designated for attendance. Waterloo Community School District chooses to deviate from state guidelines in regard to elementary students and will provide transportation to students in grades K-5 who live more than 1.0 miles from and are attending the school designated for their attendance.

Preschool students are not provided with transportation. However, exceptions are made for preschool students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which includes the need for transportation or in homeless situations, and these students will be required to wear a safety harness.

When measuring distance as determined by the Waterloo Community Schools information system to determine eligibility for transportation, the distance shall be measured by using the shortest distance on public roads only. In general, school buses do not travel on private or undedicated roads/lanes. Distance is measured from the student's driveway to the assigned attendance center's closest driveway.

Questions regarding school bus transportation eligibility should be directed to First Student at 319-291-4879.

## **Transportation Eligibility - Special Education Students**

The District shall provide transportation to eligible special needs students as determined by verification of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) requirements. Questions regarding special education transportation should be directed to the Director of Special Education at 319- 433-1854.

## **Assignment of Bus Monitor**

The assignment of monitors to a school bus is determined by a student's IEP. Monitors are employed by First Student. The District may approve the placement of a monitor on either a regular education or special education bus for safety purposes.

## **Medical Need for Transportation**

If a student has a medical need which requires special transportation, parents/guardians should have their medical provider complete the medical transportation application. Application can be obtained at your student's school or on the district website. This form should be completed and returned to your student's school. Student Services staff will contact the medical provider for any clarification if needed, and transportation will be provided as directed.

## **Seat Belts/Child Restraints/Car Seats**

School buses are exempt from child restraints unless a special needs child has an IEP; the student is in Pre-K, or parent/guardian request that defines the use. First Student will follow the Iowa Code with respect to car seats.

Parental Request for Harness – Once a parent/guardian has signed the Parental Request for Harness Use form, the form must then be signed by the building administrators and emailed to District Transportation [transportation@waterlooschools.org](mailto:transportation@waterlooschools.org) for Infinite Campus designation.

The District Transportation Manager will send the form to First Student to assign the harness.

## **Transportation Eligibility – ELL Students**

For students requiring English assistance and assigned to an English Language Learners (ELL) program, the District will provide transportation to the school where the ELL services are provided if these services are not provided at the student's attendance center.

## **Voluntary Transfer Students**

Voluntary Transfer Students are students that are approved to transfer to another building based on guidelines set by the District. Voluntary Transfer Students will NOT receive busing.

## **Transportation Objectives**

The District provides First Student a list of all students eligible for transportation services. The District then establishes the bus route and stops along the route. Routes are designed to achieve safety, maximum utilization, eliminate unnecessary mileage and duplication while assuring timely arrivals and departures within the framework of established school hours. Students will be assigned to a bus route based on their primary home address.

Students will be transported only on the route to which they have been assigned unless special alternate route requests have been made with the School District (For transportation to/from child care provider see Child Care Transportation).

Only those students assigned to the bus route will be transported.

When possible, routes begin at the farthest point from the school or schools served and proceed on the shortest charted course. Exceptions may exist when it is determined more economical to do otherwise and/or when there are hazardous conditions. Every effort will be made to ensure riding time on the school bus is no longer than 60 minutes for students in grades K-8 and 75 minutes for students in grades 9-12. However, when circumstances arise and Iowa Code allows, exceptions to these ride times may be made.

## **Student Change of Address**

Parents/Guardians should not contact First Student (the bus garage) to provide a change of address. Students moving to a new address or new students into the District should contact one of the District Registrars, at the Education Service Center (ESC) at 319-433-1800 with this information and please communicate your student's need for a bus from the new address. They will make the change in Infinite Campus and the District Router will be notified.

Please allow up to 3 days to determine if a student is eligible for transportation.

If a student has moved to a new school attendance boundary they may be allowed, through special permission to attend their former school for the remainder of the current school year. However, transportation will NOT be provided.

### **Shared Custody**

The district reserves the right to request documentation (i.e. custody/shared placement agreements, etc.). Once documentation is reviewed, the district will provide transportation to the primary home address that qualifies under state/district transportation guidelines. Transportation will be provided to the primary address only unless noted otherwise in the custody/shared placement agreement.

### **Homeless Student(s)**

When a student is identified as homeless by District staff, the student(s) will be provided with transportation to and from their home attendance center for the remainder of the school year. For more information on homeless student transportation, please contact Student Services or the District Registrar at 319-433-1801/ 319-433-1872.

### **Bus Stops**

Students are to be waiting by the curb of the property or at the designated safe stop at least 5 minutes before their scheduled stop time and not in their house, on the front porch, or in the garage. If the driver cannot see the student waiting, the driver will continue to the next stop. If your student is not present at the stop when the bus arrives the driver is NOT required to return. Too frequent and extended stops cause delays in the fixed bus schedules, increase traffic congestion, and delay the arrival of students at school.

- Students will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned stop only.
- Student's assigned stop in the AM and PM may differ.
- Student's bus number may differ from AM to PM
- Students will NOT be allowed to ride a different bus from the one they are assigned.
- Generally, students will not be asked to walk more than 0.3 miles to a bus stop location.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the conduct of students while going to and from bus stops and for students waiting at bus stops.

### **Kindergarten Waiver- to- walk**

Kindergarten students are required to have an adult present at their bus stop. However, some parents/guardians will complete a Waiver to Walk Home form. Waiver to Walk forms are available at your child(ren)s school and on the district website. Once the form is completed it can be returned to the student's school or emailed to [transportation@waterlooschools.org](mailto:transportation@waterlooschools.org)

If a Kindergarten student does not have a Waiver to Walk form on file, the bus driver will NOT drop the student off at the bus stop unless an adult is present. The driver will make an additional attempt to drop the child off while also alerting the bus garage of the situation. Bus garage staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian(s) by phone (number listed in bus garage system from Infinite Campus) and will return the student to the building administrator at the school if unable to reach the parent/ guardian. If the building administrator is unavailable, contact will be made with the Executive Director of Student & At-Risk Services or designee. In extenuating circumstances, when no contact can be reached for the child (ren) after several attempts, the Waterloo Police Department will be contacted.

## **After Hours – Missing Student**

If a parent/guardian alerts the bus garage and/or the Waterloo Community School District that their child did not make it home after school the following steps will be taken:

1. Verification of child's attendance at school that day.
2. If the student rides the bus, verification that the child boarded the bus at the school at the end of the day, and an all-call will be put out to buses to make sure that the child did not board an incorrect bus or ride home with someone else. If the child did in fact board a bus, verification of where the child was dropped off will be provided by the bus driver through the bus garage.
3. First Student and WCSD staff will begin contacting telephone numbers on Infinite Campus for the missing student, and connections to other students will be made through these contacts to determine others that could be called for student location.
4. Building administrator or designee will be contacted, and video from building exits will be reviewed.
5. Once all WCSD resources have been exhausted, the Executive Director of Student & At-Risk Services or designee will contact SRO or Police Department.

## **Parent/Guardian Providing Transportation**

In situations where transportation by school bus is impassable, service is not available, or in special circumstances, parents/guardian(s) may be required to transport their children to the school designated for attendance. In these situations, parent/guardian(s) will be reimbursed for such transportation service in accordance with Iowa code.

## **Transportation due to a Hazard**

The District has deemed some areas hazardous. Students who live within the mile minimums and attend their home attendance boundary building but would have to walk on, alongside, or across streets that pose a safety hazard could be considered eligible for transportation. If a parent/guardian believes a hazard exists, please contact First Student at 319-291-4879 for a review of the hazard.

Each school year, the school District will be re-evaluating all areas to determine areas for which we will add, remove, or retain hazardous routes.

## **Child Care Transportation**

Program Details:

The student first must be eligible for bus transportation from their primary home address. Therefore, the residence of the student is more than two (2) miles (middle school) or more than one (1) mile (elementary school) from the student's boundary school.

The program is provided on a space-available, time-available, first-come, first-served basis. Participation is limited according to capacity as determined by the district and is available to students in grades K-8, or special needs Pre-K who have transportation included in their IEP.

The student attends a child care facility; that is a licensed child care center, a preschool, or a registered

child development home. The child care facility is in an area where transportation can be serviced within the school's attendance boundaries and is also two (2) miles (middle school) or more than one (1) mile (elementary school) from the student's boundary school. **The child care center must be within the student's boundary school.**

Written authorization is received by the parents/guardians of the student, with a copy at both the student's school of attendance and First Student, transportation department.

The request shall be submitted for a period of time of at least one semester and may not be submitted more than twice during a school year.

The program is only available on existing bus routes and at existing stops. **No additional routes and or stops will be considered for Child Care Transportation riding students.**

Students that are approved for child care transportation may have to surrender their seat to an eligible student should the need arise.

If there is no longer a need for the existing stop, child care transportation will end as well.

Buses/ Vans provided specifically for special education students may not be eligible for this program.

Bus stop locations and times are assigned by The District.

Availability of seats and location of bus stops is subject to change based on changes in enrollment, boundaries, and other factors determined by the District or First Student and can occur at any time. When changes to routes or stops occur, families utilizing Child Care Transportation will be notified at the same time that the families of eligible students are notified.

Students must be picked up and dropped off at their assigned location only. **No guest students will be allowed to ride along with child care students.**

All students riding the bus are subject to the rules and regulations of conduct and safety established by the District and First Student. The District and First Student use video cameras on school buses as a means to maintain a safe environment for students and staff.

Once a parent/guardian has completed the Child Care Transportation application the form can be returned to their student's school or emailed to [transportation@waterlooschools.org](mailto:transportation@waterlooschools.org) District transportation staff will then determine if there is a bus in the area and space available on the bus and verify the child care facility is a licensed child care center, a preschool, or a registered child care provider. If one of the criteria is not met, the application is denied.

Parents/Guardians will be contacted of approval or denial.

## **Discretionary Transportation**

### **Program Details:**

Under the authority of Chapter 285 of the Code of Iowa, the Waterloo Community School District will provide transportation, or reimburse parents/guardians for all high school students residing more than three (3) miles from their designated high school; all middle school students residing more than two (2) miles from their designated attendance center; and all elementary students who live more than one (1) mile from their assigned attendance center.

Students who live less than the above stated guidelines may ride a school bus, providing seats are available on a regularly scheduled corner stop on a regularly scheduled route. **Students on a Voluntary Transfer do not have the option to apply or receive a discretionary route/stop. Your application will automatically be denied.**

Discretionary transportation will not be available for at least the first month of school. Any request for transportation on a discretionary basis will require a minimum of 3 days for processing. This will provide time for The District Router to determine availability of space on existing bus routes.

The program is provided on a space-available, time-available, first-come, first-served basis. Participation is limited according to capacity as determined by First Student and is available to students in all grades.

The program is only available on existing bus routes and at existing corner stops. No additional routes and or stops will be considered.

If there is no longer a need for the existing corner stop, discretionary transportation will end as well. Stops provided specifically for special education students will not be used for this program. Bus stop locations and times are assigned by the district transportation staff.

Availability of seats and location of bus stops is subject to change based on changes in enrollment, boundaries, and other factors determined by the District or First Student and can occur at any time. When changes to routes or stops occur, families utilizing Discretionary Transportation may have to surrender the seat to an eligible student should the need arise. In this case, they will be notified at the same time that the families of eligible students are notified.

Students must be picked up and dropped off at their assigned location only.

If the student's address has changed and they still do not qualify under state/District transportation guidelines a new discretionary form is required with the new address.

All students riding the bus are subject to the rules and regulations of conduct and safety established by the District and First Student. The District and First Student use video cameras on school buses as a means to maintain a safe environment for students and staff.

Once a parent/guardian has completed the Discretionary Transportation application and returned it to their student's school, or emailed to district transportation [transportation@waterlooschools.org](mailto:transportation@waterlooschools.org) Transportation staff will then determine if there is a bus in the area and space available on the bus. If there is a bus in the area (for their attendance center) and space available on that bus – the student is routed. If one of the criteria is not met, the application is denied. The parents/guardians will be notified of approval/denial.

## **Application Process**

To apply for Child Care or Discretionary Transportation, please download the form(s) on the Waterloo Community School District website ([www.waterlooschools.org](http://www.waterlooschools.org)) or obtain the form(s) from your child(ren)s school.

Mail your application to First Student at:

First Student

1601 Black Hawk St

Waterloo, IA 50702

Or, deliver your application to your child(ren)s school.

Or, email your application to district transportation [transportation@waterlooschools.org](mailto:transportation@waterlooschools.org)

Waterloo Community School District and First Student will begin processing applications upon receipt, in the order they are received. Each application will be kept on file until it is determined if the student is eligible for a seat on the bus.

## **Seat Assignments**

Safe operation of the bus and delivery of students to the school is the main focus of the bus driver. Seating assignments may be established by the driver or building administrator should disruptive behaviors take place.

Students at the elementary school level will be routed three to a seat to capacity with a 90% margin to accommodate new students to the area, and to make sure that there is room on the bus. If the bus is past that capacity, students that apply for Discretionary or Child Care transportation will not be added to that bus.

Students at the middle and high school levels will be routed two to a seat to capacity with a 90% margin to accommodate new students to the area and to make sure that there is room on the bus. If the bus is past that capacity, students that apply for Discretionary or Child Care transportation will not be added to that bus.



## **Other District Provided Transportation**

- After-School Activities – Students who participate in extracurricular activities/sports after school are eligible for the Activity Bus.
- Field Trips – Students who participate in approved school sponsored field trips or activities will be provided transportation to and from the destination.

## **Student Responsibilities**

School bus transportation is a privilege and should not be taken for granted. Anything that happens on the bus to divert the driver's attention from his/her job immediately endangers the safety of the riders. Student refusal to adhere to the following responsibilities may result in transportation privileges being revoked.

The student's responsibilities (including safety precautions) are as follows:

1. Students shall be at their designated pickup location at least 5 minutes prior to the time scheduled for the bus to arrive. The bus will not leave the stop before the designated pickup time. Students are to stay off the roadway at all times while waiting for the bus at the designated stop.
2. Students who must cross a roadway when boarding or leaving a bus must go to the front of the bus and wait for a signal from the driver before crossing the road. The driver shall see that the way is clear before signaling students to cross. Students must never cross behind the bus.
3. Students are to wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before attempting to enter or leave.
4. Students must keep their arms and head inside the bus at all times and refrain from throwing objects out the window or in the bus. Windows shall not be lowered more than halfway.
5. Students must remain in their seats while the bus is in motion.
6. Students shall conduct themselves in an acceptable manner at all times. Fighting, vulgarity, rude or abusive behavior, damaging the bus, or other improper conduct shall not be tolerated.
7. Students may ride only those buses to which they are assigned. Inviting friends to ride the bus will not be permitted.
8. Students will be picked up and unloaded only at approved stops unless another regular route stop is requested by the parents/guardians and approved by the District or designee.

## **Discipline/Awards**

Waterloo Community School Bus Expectations include being safe, being respectful, and being responsible. The procedures to be followed for infraction of student responsibilities outlined above are:

Minor infractions:

1st Offense – Warning & parent notification

2nd Offense – Referral, 1 day+ bus suspension & parent conference (includes student, parent, administrator)

3rd + Offense – 3-day suspension; students may be removed from the bus for an extended period of time (administrator discretion).

Major infractions:

1st Offense – Parent notification & 3-day suspension

2nd Offense – Parent conference (includes student, parent, administrator) & 5-day suspension

3rd + Offense – Students will be removed from the bus for an extended period of time or permanently for the remainder of the current school year; transportation will be the responsibility of the guardian.

Consequences issued may be more severe than those listed depending on the nature of any incident based on administrative discretion.

When the behavior by a student is such that it becomes an immediate threat to the safety of other riders the student

may be suspended or bus privileges immediately revoked without going through the steps above.

#### **Awards**

Drivers may use an award system of bus tickets provided by Waterloo Community School District to recognize students when the students meet or exceed expectations of being safe, respectful, and/or responsible. Drivers will not give every student a ticket every time they ride the bus but rather as recognition for meeting or exceeding expectations.

#### **Bus Accidents**

When a school bus or any vehicle transporting students is involved in any accident, First Student shall contact assigned District personnel, immediately. First Student shall then call the parents/guardians of each student on the vehicle. First Student will complete the appropriate accident report and file it accordingly with the District.

#### **Health Needs**

Parents/Guardians should notify the Nurse or Health Assistant at their child(ren)s school of any specific health needs (asthma, seizures, diabetes, etc.). This information will be kept confidential and shared only with school personnel and First Student transportation personnel as needed.

If a student requires medical treatment as determined by the bus driver and First Student while on a bus, the driver will contact emergency medical services.

#### **Late Buses**

Weather, traffic, maintenance difficulties, and unforeseen incidents may be responsible for delays in the arrival of school buses. In the event your bus does not arrive at the designated time, please allow 10-15 minutes before calling First Student at 319-291-4879. If a school bus is running more than 30 minutes late before or after school, First Student will attempt to contact the building administrator as well as the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each student through the ConnectEd telephone system to let them know the estimated bus arrival time.

#### **Cameras on Buses**

The District administration has authorized the use of video recordings on school District buses. The video cameras will be used to monitor student behavior, maintain order on the school buses, and promote and maintain a safe environment. Students and parent/guardian(s) are hereby notified that the content of the video recordings may be used in a student disciplinary proceeding. Video recordings are handled in accordance with District policy 706.4-R2 and procedures.

#### **Complaint Process**

Parents/Guardians should contact WCSD Transportation Manager to report concerns/problems with busing at 319-433-1835. If a parent is unable to resolve the matter with the Transportation Manager the next step is to contact their child(ren)s building administrator.

#### **Emergency Numbers**

Parents/Guardians should provide at least two (2) emergency contact numbers to the student's school. These numbers will be kept on file and only used to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) if necessary.

#### **Key Contacts**

First Student – 319-291-4879

District Transportation Manager – 319-433-1835

## Frequently Asked Questions & Quick Reference Information

### 1. Who Gets Busing to and from School?

- i. Chapter 285 of the Iowa Code has minimum requirements for students that qualify for District-provided transportation. In MOST cases, the Waterloo Schools provide transportation services that EXCEED the minimum requirements as provided by Iowa Code.
- ii. Preschool Students — Only those students with an IEP that includes transportation or in a homeless situation.  
Elementary School Students — Elementary students who attend school in their attendance area and who live more than one mile from school are eligible for transportation.
- iii. Middle School Students — Middle school students who attend school in their attendance area and who live more than two miles from school are eligible for transportation.
- iv. High School Students — High school students who attend school in their attendance area and who live more than three miles from school are eligible for transportation.
- v. Parochial Students — Through our contract with First Student Transportation Services, we transport students who attend parochial or other private K-12 schools and who meet the state's distance-from-school requirement (2 miles for elementary and middle school; 3 miles for high school).
- vi. In cases where there are fewer than ten students in an area who are eligible for transportation and who attend school in their attendance area, the parents/guardians may be required to furnish transportation.
- vii. Parents/Guardians are eligible for reimbursement by the District at the rate per mile set by the state.

### 2. What if there are special conditions?

- i. Transportation Is Also Provided in the Following Special Conditions:
- ii. Special Education — If required by the student's IEP, transportation will be provided. Otherwise, eligibility is the same as for all regular education students.
- iii. Medical Necessity — If a student's Individual Health Plan or 504 Plan requires it, or if a medical statement requires it, transportation will be provided. (Medical Transportation Application must be completed by parent and physician)  
Walking Hazard Zones — Students who live within the mile minimums, but who would have to walk on, alongside, or across streets that pose a safety hazard are eligible for transportation. If a parent/guardian believes a hazard exists, please contact First Student Transportation at 319-291-4879.

### 3. Which Students ARE NOT ELIGIBLE for District-Provided Busing?

- i. Those students who do NOT live at least the minimum distance referenced above by grade level and who do not meet one of the special conditions listed above.
- ii. Those students who have MOVED to a new school attendance area, but who wish to REMAIN at their former school and were given notice that they were not eligible for transportation from their new residence.
- iii. There are 5 or more students from that area who are going to the same school, and there is space on an existing bus that would stop at one neighborhood location.

4. How do I find out my child's bus route or bus stop?
  - i. Approximately 2 weeks prior to the beginning of each school year, routing information may be found in the Parent Portal.
  - ii. Initial routing questions should be directed to First Student Transportation at 319-291-4879.
5. After reading the information above and I still have questions, how do I know if my child qualifies for transportation?
  - i. Questions about eligibility can be answered by First Student.
6. If I live at the exact same address and have had transportation in the past, am I automatically eligible in the future?
  - i. No, a number of things might have changed. Contact WCSD Transportation Router – 319-433-2054
7. Who determines where a bus stop is located?
  - i. The Transportation Department determines where bus stops are centrally located.
8. Who should I call if I wish to appeal an eligibility decision?
  - i. Transportation Manager at 319-433-1835.
9. Can I purchase transportation for my student(s)?
  - i. Please refer to the Discretionary Transportation process in this handbook for the application process and guidelines.
10. Does my student qualify for an Activity Bus?
  - i. Yes, all students participating in an activity qualify for the activity buses.
11. Can my kindergarten student be picked up and/or dropped off without an adult present?
  - i. Parent/Guardian(s) can sign a waiver to have an older sibling or another adult present at the bus stop. Please refer to the Kindergarten - Waiver to Walk section of this handbook.
12. What do we do if the bus is late to pick my child up in the morning? Or late dropping off in the evening? Depending upon the season this may be expected (example – Winter). Please allow the bus an extra 10 minutes. If after 10 minutes the bus still has not arrived, please contact First Student at 319-291-4879.
13. Why does it take 3-5 days to establish a new stop for my child?
  - i. To establish a new, safe bus stop location the new route must be identified and then reviewed by dispatch for any potential hazards. If the new stop requires a time change for other students on the bus, the bus garage will notify each student and family. This may take a couple of days. Parents/guardians are responsible for safely transporting their child to and from school until the change can be made. Safety is the first item taken into consideration when establishing a new stop.
14. There is a special education bus stopping next door, going to the same school. Can my child ride that bus instead of walking a distance to the current stop?
  - i. Due to the special needs of the students, we do not allow other students to ride, except in the cases of siblings, and only if space is available.
15. My child is a voluntary transfer student, do they get transportation?
  - i. As stated in the Voluntary Transfer section Voluntary Transfer Students do not receive busing.