

PRESCHOOL and EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Transportation Handbook for Parents

The Westchester County Preschool/Early Intervention Transportation Program is managed by Westchester County Department of Health Children with Special Needs. We are pleased to provide you with this handbook to help you understand the procedures and answer any questions you may have. Please take a few moments to read this important information now, and keep this handbook available as a reference throughout the school year.

Transportation Service Options:

Mileage Reimbursement



No-Cost Monthly Metro Cards



County-Provided Bus Service



September, 2023

Transportation Service Options

Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) provides Transportation Service for children with special needs as mandated by Section 4410 of the Education Laws of 1989, Title II-A of Article 25 of the Public Health Law and/or other applicable acts.

Transportation Service is defined as transportation of each child to and from the child's special needs program (the program or agency providing educational services to the child) using a vehicle that can accommodate the specific needs of the specific child. This includes County-provided school bus service in vehicles equipped with a radio, child-restraint seat and properly trained drivers and monitors; and parent transportation by personal car or public bus. As the parent/guardian, you must discuss all available transportation service options with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator or your school district's Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE) Chairperson. Your school district is defined by the geographical area in which your family lives. Each school district has its own CPSE for children 3-5, which determines your child's special education needs.

Mileage Reimbursement Parents/guardians will be reimbursed for driving their child to and from an Early Intervention Toddler Development Group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Early Intervention services occurring at a facility (not a toddler development group) contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a Parent-Child group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or to the approved 4410 Special Education Preschool Program contained in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Reimbursement is paid at the current County approved rate per mile, for one round trip daily between the child's residence or daycare and the location of the program, service or group, as calculated by Google Maps. Parking and tolls may also be reimbursed when required and when authorized by WCDH. Parents are required to submit the necessary documentation.

No-Cost Monthly Metro Cards Parents/guardians who transport their child to and from the program, service or group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) by public transportation may receive one no-cost unlimited-use monthly MetroCard for each month during the period their child is authorized for services. The MetroCard is valid for 30 days from its first use and can be used on any Westchester Bee-Line Bus and all New York City local buses and subways*. Parents are required to submit the necessary documentation. In some cases, Taxi Fare Reimbursement may be available.

*The OMNY fare payment system is scheduled to replace the MetroCard in 2024.

County-Provided Bus Service is available to children attending an Early Intervention Toddler Development Group contained in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), or the approved 4410 Special Education Preschool Program contained in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Whichever option is selected at the IFSP or CPSE meeting, it must be listed on your child's IFSP or IEP prior to the beginning of transportation services and it **must be consistent for each day** your child is scheduled to attend the program/service. You may not combine a Metro Card or transportation reimbursement and County-provided bus service. Any necessary change in the selected transportation option must be communicated to either the Early Intervention Service Coordinator or your school district's CPSE Chairperson; and the appropriate paperwork completed prior to the beginning of the new service option.

If You Choose Bus Service

The Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) must ensure safe and efficient transportation is provided for all Westchester children approved for transportation service. Bus service will only begin once WCDH receives and reviews your child's IFSP or IEP authorizing transportation service and a properly completed Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF). If WCDH does not receive these required documents, or if they are incorrect or arrive late, **BUS SERVICE MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE FIRST DAY OF PROGRAM.** Speak to your child's Early Intervention Service Coordinator to confirm that the correct paperwork is submitted in a timely manner. Or speak to your school district's CPSE to request that your child's meeting be scheduled in a timely manner and that all required documents have been completed and submitted to the WCDH.

Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF) A completed Bus Transportation Authorization Form (TAF) is required before your child can ride the school bus. Your school district or service coordinator will provide you with the TAF to complete. The TAF provides the following information:

1. **PICK-UP ADDRESS** – Your home address. If you choose an address other than your home, the alternate address must also be located within Westchester County. **The pick-up address must be the same every day of the week.**
2. **DROP-OFF ADDRESS** – Your home address or an alternate address within Westchester County. This address may be different from the pick-up address, but **it must be the same every day of the week.**
3. **EMERGENCY NUMBERS** — in case we cannot reach you. This should be someone who knows your child and who has agreed to receive and assume responsibility for your child.
4. **MEDICAL INFORMATION** — This is information you and your child's physician feel is important for us to have in order to provide safe transportation. Complete this section to help us understand your child's needs. Tell us if your child has special medical conditions such as seizures, temperature difficulties, allergies, etc., if your child takes medication regularly and what the medication is. **This information may be shared with EMS workers in an emergency.**

You must contact your school district or service coordinator to request a change in information on the TAF. Changes to bus routes cannot be made by submitting forms or requests directly to the bus driver/company. Your school district/service coordinator will complete a new TAF and submit the form to the WCDH. Changes to the pick-up and/or drop-off address or the program location may take up to 10 days to accommodate.

No temporary changes to pick up or drop off locations are permitted. Once a student's trip is scheduled according to the information on the TAF, it can only be changed if the family permanently moves to a new address or permanently changes the alternate pick-up or drop-off address. Do not submit forms requesting a temporary change of address.

Your child's TAF must be up-to-date at all times. Bus service will be suspended if any significant information on the TAF is found to be incorrect. You must contact your school district or service coordinator to request an updated TAF if there is a change in your child's pick-up or drop-off address, program location, the program session time, the name of the person(s) authorized to meet your child at the bus, the telephone numbers for yourself or emergency contacts or your child's medical needs.

Bus Service Procedures

What to Expect:

- Your child will receive one round trip (from home to program, from program to home) on a vehicle equipped with child-restraint seats for all children. The vehicles will provide air conditioning as needed from May 1st through October 1st and be properly heated in cold weather months. The vehicles will be wheelchair accessible if necessary.
- Medications are not permitted on the bus. If your child requires medication, it is your responsibility to bring your child's medication to the program.
- Parents may not enter or ride on the bus.
- Bus routes are generally scheduled for up to 60 minutes. If your child lives a significant distance from the program, the scheduled time of the bus route may be up to 75 minutes. Factors such as traffic congestion/accidents or inclement weather may cause the bus route to take more than the scheduled amount of time. Parents should also keep in mind that buses often depart from the program several minutes after the program's dismissal time once all children have boarded the bus.
- **Scheduled pick-up and drop-off times are approximate.**

Bus Monitors:

- Each vehicle will have one bus monitor.
- The bus monitor will assist your child with getting on, riding, and getting off the bus.
- The bus monitor is not permitted to escort your child to or from the school bus. A parent/caregiver, school/program employee or daycare provider must escort all children to and from the bus.
- The bus monitor will assist the bus driver in making sure all children are securely fastened in a child restraint system or the wheelchair tie-down and are traveling comfortably. The bus monitor will report any problems to the bus driver.
- The bus monitor is not permitted to help dress your child while on the bus.
- The bus monitor is not permitted to help feed your child while on the bus. Children must not eat while on the bus.
- The bus monitor is not permitted to give a toy to a child and must not allow a child to enter the bus while playing with a toy. Children may not hold or play with a toy while traveling on the bus.
- The bus monitor may not take messages from you for the bus company dispatcher or manager.

Waiting for the Bus:

- The Bus Company will call to give you the **approximate** scheduled pick-up and drop-off times for your child.
- Your child must be ready 10 minutes before the pick-up time. If occasionally your child is not ready at the scheduled pick-up time, the driver is not required to wait more than 5 minutes before continuing on the route. **The driver is not required to wait 5 minutes for your child each day.**
- If you are waiting more than 15 minutes from the scheduled pick-up time, and are not contacted by the Bus Company, please call the dispatcher.
- If the bus is late more than two (2) consecutive times, report this to your child's EI or preschool program for assistance.
- Changes in pick-up and drop-off times happen during the school year when children are added or leave the program. The Bus Company will notify you of any schedule changes.

You or an Authorized Caregiver Must Meet the Bus:

- All children must be met at the school bus by a **parent/guardian** (a person legally responsible for the care of the child; may be parent, foster-parent, relative, The Department of Social Services) or **caregiver/responsible person** (individuals designated by the parent/guardian to care for the child who are **at least 14 years of age**) **listed on the TAF.**
- For the safety of your child the **bus driver is prohibited from releasing your child to someone not named on the TAF.** ID must be presented.
- The parent/guardian must be waiting at the drop-off address 10 minutes before the scheduled drop-off time.
- If you or someone listed on the TAF are not available to meet the bus and the Bus Company cannot reach you or the emergency contacts, the Bus Company **must call 911 to report that no one is available to receive your child.**

Absence:

- The parent/guardian is required to **notify the Bus Company at least one (1) hour in advance** of the scheduled pick-up time if the child is going to be absent.
- If your child will not need the bus for several days because of a family vacation, etc., a minimum of one (1) day advance notification is requested. **You must call the Bus Company dispatch office (do not tell the bus driver or monitor).** You must also notify the program.

Suspension of Service:

- If you fail to notify the Bus Company that your child will be absent and the bus arrives at your home to provide service, this is considered a No-Show. **If your child is a No-Show for two (2) consecutive days, bus service will stop.** You may call the Bus Company to start service again. If it has been five days or more since your child's bus service was stopped due to No-Shows, you must contact your child's service coordinator or school district to request bus service. **It will take 5-10 days for bus service to start again.**
- **If the bus company is unable to transport your child safely due to his/her behavior while traveling or boarding and alighting the bus, it may be necessary to temporarily suspend bus service. Your child's program will notify you if there is a problem. The program, your school district, the bus company and the WCDH will work with you and your child to find a solution. Bus service will resume when your child can be transported safely.**

Inclement Weather:

- Please listen to local radio or TV or search online for school delays or closing notifications. You may find school district and program closings by following these links to News 12 Westchester and WHUD Westchester:

<http://westchester.news12.com/> and <http://pam1.com/stormcenter/whud.php>
- If you are not sure about your child's program, contact the program directly.
- The WCDH follows the local school district closings throughout the county. If your school district is closed, WCDH transportation will also be canceled.
- If your child's program chooses to open and WCDH does not provide bus service, you may drive your child to the program; **please be aware that you are responsible for round-trip transportation.**
- Please be aware that if bus service is provided in bad weather you should expect delays.

Complaints:

- If you have questions or concerns about your child's bus schedule, lateness, or other service problems, please call the bus company office and speak with the dispatcher or the manager. **Do not discuss problems with the bus driver or monitor.**
- Please report unresolved bus service problems to your child's program for assistance.
- If the program is unable to resolve the service problem, they will contact the WCDH Program Administrator.

School Bus Service for the 2023-2024 School Year & Summer 2024:

<i>PROGRAM or GROUP NAME</i>	<i>BUS COMPANY NAME</i>
ACDS - PELHAM	ALL COUNTY BUS
ACDS - SCARSDALE	ALL COUNTY BUS
ALCOTT SCHOOL - DOBBS FERRY	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
ASCEND AUTISM - HAWTHORNE	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
BLYTHEDALE/MT. PLEASANT BLYTHEDALE -VALHALLA	TLC TRANSPORTATION
CITY PRO GROUP - NEW ROCHELLE	ALL COUNTY BUS
CLEAR VIEW SCHOOL - BRIARCLIFF MANOR	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL - HAWTHORNE	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL CCC/WHITE HOUSE - KATONAH	WHITE PLAINS BUS
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL - MT. KISCO CHILD CARE -MT. KISCO	WHITE PLAINS BUS
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PEAS & KARROTS - OSSINING	WHITE PLAINS BUS
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL MASCIA - TARRYTOWN	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
EASTER SEALS PROJECT EXPLORE - VALHALLA	ALL COUNTY BUS
EASTER SEALS PROJECT SOAR - CARMEL	WHITE PLAINS BUS
ELIZABETH SETON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL - WHITE PLAINS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
FRED S. KELLER SCHOOL - PIERMONT	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
FRED S. KELLER SCHOOL - WHITE PLAINS	ALL COUNTY BUS
FRED S. KELLER SCHOOL - YONKERS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
GREENBURGH PRE-K - HARTSDALE	ALL COUNTY BUS
GUIDANCE CENTER - NEW ROCHELLE	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
GUIDANCE CENTER - PEEKSKILL	WHITE PLAINS BUS
HAWTHORNE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL - HAWTHORNE	ALL COUNTY BUS
HUDSON VALLEY EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER - BREWSTER	MAT BUS CORP.
JCC TOWARD TOMORROW - SCARSDALE	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
JCC TOWARD TOMORROW TIC - WHITE PLAINS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
LOS NINOS - HAWTHORNE	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
LOS NINOS - VALHALLA	SUPER WHEELS
MAMARONECK PRE-K - MAMARONECK	ALL COUNTY BUS
NY INSTITUTE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION - BRONX	ALL COUNTY BUS
PARKSIDE PRESCHOOL - MAHOPAC	MAT BUS CORP.
PORT CHESTER THERAPEUTIC NURSERY - PORT CHESTER	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
PRIME TIME PRESCHOOL- FISHER AVENUE, WHITE PLAINS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
PRIME TIME PRESCHOOL - NORTH BROADWAY, WHITE PLAINS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
PRIME TIME PRESCHOOL - NORTH STREET, WHITE PLAINS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
PSSLLC - NEW ROCHELLE	ALL COUNTY BUS
REBECCA TURNER PRESCHOOL - MT. VERNON	ALL COUNTY BUS
RISING GROUND/AMES - YONKERS	ASTRA TRANSPORTATION
STEPPING STONES - WHITE PLAINS	ALL COUNTY BUS
THERA CARE BRIGHT BEGINNINGS - YORKTOWN	WHITE PLAINS BUS
THERA CARE HARRISON CHILDREN'S CENTER - HARRISON	ALL COUNTY BUS
UNITED PRESCHOOL CENTER - WHITE PLAINS	TLC TRANSPORTATION
WESTCHESTER SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN - YONKERS	TLC TRANSPORTATION
WESTSTCOP THERAPEUTIC NURSERY - GRANITE SPRINGS	TLC TRANSPORTATION

Bus Company Contact Information:

All County Bus	914-963-9600
Astra Transportation	914-965-9006
MAT Bus	914-278-6829
Super Wheels	914-613-8225
TLC Transportation	914-375-2258
White Plains Bus	914-328-1400

When There is an Accident:

Our most important mission is the safe transport of your child. If your child is in an accident or appears to be ill, the following steps will be taken.

- The Bus Company immediately notifies WCDH and your child's program.
- During program hours, your child's program will contact you. After program hours, the Bus Company will contact you.
- Your child may be taken to the Emergency Room; the police officer(s) at the scene will determine if this is necessary.
- Since New York is a no-fault insurance state, **in the event that your child is involved in a school bus accident and requires medical treatment, the parent/guardian's automobile insurance is primary for all costs, including the emergency room.** This is a New York State Law.
- Should the parent/guardian not have automobile insurance, the bus company is responsible for insurance and possible post-accident costs.

When There is Illness or an Injury on the Bus:

- The bus driver and monitor do not administer first aid.
- In the event of an emergency, the bus driver will park the bus in a safe location and contact the dispatcher.
- When there is a nurse on the vehicle, the nurse will treat the child or determine if it is necessary to call for an ambulance. Otherwise, Dispatch will call an ambulance.
- The bus driver will wait for assistance/an ambulance to arrive.