

Transport for Students with Special Needs

Guidelines

Document title	Transport for Students with Special Needs
Contact details	Passenger Transport Branch Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) Northern Territory Government
Approved by	Director Passenger Transport Executive Director, Inclusion and Engagement Services
Date approved	DIPL 3 November 2022 DoE 23 November 2022
Document review	Three years
TRM number	2022/2116

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1	October 2014	School Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial version
1.1	August 2019	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merge into new template and updates throughout document.
1.2	June 2022	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions updated to include transit carer. Moved Roles and Responsibilities into the Special needs transport policy. Updates - Introduction, Application and Assessment Process, Student Management, Contacts and Appendix 1. Removed reference to carers - under the Education Act 2015 (NT) a parent is a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child.
1.3	July 2022	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft
1.4	October 2022	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 6.2 Assessment includes reference to criteria 5, residential requirements. Appendix 1 reformatted in line with digital communications request and includes minor updates to wording and email address for DIPL.
2.0	November 2022	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved and published on website.

Acronyms	Full form
DoE	Department of Education
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
NTG	Northern Territory Government

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Context	4
3. Definitions	4
4. Roles and responsibilities	5
5. Transport services	5
6. Application and Assessment Process	6
6.1. Applications.....	6
6.2. Assessment.....	6
6.3. Re-assessment.....	6
7. Student Management	7
7.1. Minor Incident/s.....	7
7.2. Major Incident/s.....	7
8. Appeal Process	8
9. Monitoring	8
10. Related legislation, policy documents and resources	8
10.1. Legislation	8
10.2. Policy documents.....	9
10.3. Resources	9
11. Contacts	9
11.1. Transport Service Providers	9
11.1.1. Darwin	9
11.1.2. Katherine.....	9
11.1.3. Alice Springs.....	9
11.2. Northern Territory Government.....	9
11.2.1. DIPL - Public Transport Unit.....	9
11.2.2. Department of Education	10
11.3. Schools.....	10
11.3.1. Darwin	10
11.3.2. Katherine.....	10
11.3.3. Alice Springs.....	10
Appendix 1 Application and assessment process summary	11
New requests for special needs transport	11
Change to special needs transport	11
Suspension or cancellation of special needs transport	11

Read these guidelines in conjunction with the:

- Transport for students with special needs policy.¹
- Frequently asked questions.²

1. Introduction

The Department of Education and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics are committed to ensuring every child and young person can access a quality education that is capable of enabling all children to reach their potential and maximise their achievements and contribution to the community.

The Education Act 2015 (NT) stipulates that parents are responsible for ensuring their child/ren receive an education, this includes ensuring appropriate transport for their child/ren to travel to and from school.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and the Department of Education acknowledges that families of children and young people with special needs may experience difficulties when arranging school transport options for their children. To assist in allaying these difficulties, DIPL provides transport services for eligible children and young people with special needs who are unable to travel to school independently and safely and may not be able to access education without the provision of special needs transport to and from school.

The transport services provided by DIPL do not operate to relieve parents of their responsibilities. The service supports those children with special needs who have limited or no other viable transport options to continue to receive an education.

2. Context

These guidelines set out the circumstances and conditions under which transport services for children with special needs will be considered and are aligned with the:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.³
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.⁴
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*.⁵
- Education Act 2015.⁶

3. Definitions

Aggressive behaviour - refers to a form of physical or verbal behaviour aimed at domination of one person over another, it is often angry, hostile and destructive and intended to cause physical or emotional injury or destruction of property.⁷

Child(ren) - refers to persons under the age of 18.⁸

Enrolment in a specialist setting - refers to a child being identified as eligible and is enrolled in a special school or special centre in line with the enrolment in special schools and special centres guidelines.

¹ https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/256208/Transport-for-Students-with-Special-Needs-policy.pdf

² https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/292381/Frequently-asked-Questions-Transport-for-Students-with-Special-Needs-2....pdf

³ https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>

⁶ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015#page=36&zoom=auto,88,273>

⁷ <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Aggressive+Behaviour>

⁸ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

Major incident - refers to a significant event or situation for which the degree of impact on a business/organisation or people involved is extreme such as serious injury, loss of life, serious disruption or extensive damage to property.

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

Mobility need - refers to challenges such as reduced mobility, fatigue, medical conditions or limited motor skills.⁹

Parent- refers to to a 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.¹⁰

Proof of residency - refers to the confirmation that a child's usual place of residence is in the NT. Proof of the child's residential address must display the actual residential address of the child e.g. Utilities bill, rental agreement, bank statement.

Safety need - refers to the existence of significant risk of harm or danger to the child, or others, during the travel to and from school.¹¹

Special needs assessment - refers to the process used to determine a child's specific learning strengths and needs.

Transit carer- refers to the person who has parental responsibility for the child during travel.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Refer to the Transport for Students with Special Needs Policy.

5. Transport services

Children are only able to access transport services to travel to and from school each day of term as per the education department school calendar.

Approval for transport services is dependent on the child meeting the eligibility criteria. Transport services provided may be one or a combination of the following:

- designated group pick up/drop off points
- door to door, from home to school and return. A maximum of two residential addresses can be listed. The days transport services are required from each address must be clearly detailed on the request form. DIPL cannot guarantee that any last minute requests to change these days will be accommodated. Changes must be advised no later than seven (7) days prior.

Parents are required to communicate any changes to approved transport services by completing a change request for special needs transport form and submitting to their child's school.

⁹ <https://parents.education.govt.nz/learning-support/learning-support-needs/transport-assistance/>

¹⁰ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015#page=15&zoom=auto,88,747>

¹¹ <https://parents.education.govt.nz/learning-support/learning-support-needs/transport-assistance/>

6. Application and Assessment Process

6.1. Applications

School principals are best placed to manage parent expectations and enquiries regarding eligibility for transport services.

Parents should obtain the request for special needs transport form from their child's school to apply for special needs transport services. Parents are to submit the completed request form to the child's school.

6.2. Assessment

School principals will assess transport services requests against the following eligibility criteria:

- criteria 1 - special needs assessment
- criteria 2 - age and residency
- criteria 3 - demonstrated need for transport services
- criteria 4 - enrolment
- criteria 5 - residential requirements.

The principal or school delegate will complete the principal checklist on the request form, attach any relevant supporting documents as well as the current student profile and/or medical care plans and submit the form and attachments to the DoE for special needs assessment. DoE will forward all requests for transport services to DIPL.

DIPL will notify the transport provider of requests for transport services to assess the request and criteria 5, residential requirements.

All transport service request are subject to a seven (7) day processing period. Transport providers will confirm transport arrangements and commencement details with DIPL who will notify the school via email of transport service details including:

- travel times
- pick up and drop off locations.

The principal or school delegate will advise all parents by phone and follow up in writing whether an application has been approved/not approved within five (5) days of receiving feedback. If approved, the principal or school delegate will provide parents with the commencement date of transport, bus number and pick up and drop off time.

Both departments understand that there may be mitigating circumstances that fall outside of the eligibility criteria and may issue an exemption for some children. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be sent back to the school with reasons as to why the application has been unsuccessful and the principal or school delegate will advise the parent. Parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome can request a review of the decision.

6.3. Re-assessment

Current year approval does not guarantee re-approval for transport services for the following year.

Parents are required to complete and submit a continuing request form to their child's school principal by close of business on the first Friday in November. Continuing request forms can be obtained from the school principal.

Parents should include any details of changes to circumstances, change of address, details of any new nominated responsible persons, updated medical needs, allergies and/or behaviour needs that have not already been advised. The principal will forward the continuation form to DoE who will assess special needs before forwarding on to DIPL for assessment. The school will notify parents of the decision before the start of term 1 each year.

7. Student Management

Transport providers require information about each child's disabilities, medical needs, allergies and behavioural needs to ensure travel safety. This information is provided by parents through the request for transport services process and, where risks are identified, an appropriate plan is to be developed by the transport provider in collaboration with the child's parents and/or school.

Transport providers and their drivers are required to maintain comprehensive reporting procedures, including maintaining incident reports. Where incidents do occur the following processes will be enacted.

7.1. Minor Incident/s

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

- distracting the driver such as throwing objects at the driver or transit carer, yelling, consistently talking to the driver or loud music/electronic sounds
- removing articles of clothing
- exposing genitalia
- annoying other passengers
- refusing to get on or off provider transport
- unbuckling restraining devices such as seatbelts and harnesses.

Persistent engagement in these types of behaviours by a child will result in:

- a) Completion of an incident report with a copy provided to the school to raise the minor incident with the child/ren's parents.
- b) Discussions between the school, parents, and child (where appropriate) and transport provider.
- c) Implementation of a behavioural management plan, where appropriate, that will be monitored by the transit carer in collaboration with the school principal. Where the behaviour does not improve, transport services may be suspended or cancelled.

7.2. Major Incident/s

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

- abusing other children, transit carers or drivers physically such as spitting, hitting, biting, fighting or kicking
- abusing other children, transit carers or drivers verbally such as name calling, shouting, swearing or taunting
- moving around the vehicle in a dangerous manner
- damaging or vandalising another person's property including the transport vehicle
- possession of a weapon or illicit drugs including tobacco
- inappropriate sexual behaviour
- intimidating and offensive acts.

Engagement in these types of behaviours by a child may result in:

- a) completion of an incident report with a copy provided to the school to raise the major incident with the child/ren's parents
- b) immediate temporary withdrawal of services until appropriate action has been taken to resolve the issues.
- c) discussions between the school, parents, and child (where appropriate), transport service providers and DIPL.

Discussions may result in the following:

1. Implementation of a behavioural management plan developed in consultation with the school, parents and child (where possible) that will be monitored by the transit carer in collaboration with the school principal. Where the behaviour does not improve, transport services may be cancelled.
2. Reassessment of continuing transport services due to unsafe behaviour of the child.
3. Cancellation of transport services. DIPL will confirm in writing to the school for the principal or school delegate to provide to the parents advising of the cancellation.

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.

8. Appeal Process

Parents can contact their child's school directly to request a review of transport services decision relating to ineligibility, withdrawal of service or changes to service.

The school will contact DIPL if the matter cannot be resolved at the local level. The DoE and DIPL will conduct an internal review and enter into further discussion with the parents.

Transport providers should note that the DIPL may issue an instruction that a decision to refuse transport services to a child be deferred while the matter is being investigated. The transport provider and drivers must follow this instruction.

9. Monitoring

DIPL and DoE will undertake annual monitoring of individual school travel services and transport provider performance and meet during term 3 of each school year to discuss issues, performance and the subsequent school year.

Regular review and monitoring will ensure operational efficiency and the changing needs of children are met within budget and resource allocations. This may require amendments to transport services.

10. Related legislation, policy documents and resources

10.1. Legislation

Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992.¹²

¹² <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>

Disability Standards for Education (Cth) 2005.¹³

Education Act (NT) 2015.¹⁴

10.2. Policy documents

Guidelines for Transport for Students with Special Needs.¹⁵

Frequently Asked Questions.¹⁶

Enrolment in special schools and centres guidelines.¹⁷

Sexual behaviours in children guidelines.¹⁸

10.3. Resources

Mobility and Accessibility for Children Australia (MACA) - Buckle covers model policy – policy guidance for the prescribing and use of child restraint and seatbelt buckle covers.¹⁹

Neuroscience Research Australia and Kidsafe Australia - Best practice guidelines for the safe restraint of children travelling in motor vehicles.²⁰

True Relationships and Reproductive Health - Traffic lights guide to sexual behaviours in children and young people.²¹

11. Contacts

11.1. Transport Service Providers

11.1.1. Darwin

CDC Northern Territory (ComfortDelGro)	Operations Manager	8944 2444
--	--------------------	-----------

11.1.2. Katherine

Katherine Taxi	Manager	0408 802 693
----------------	---------	--------------

11.1.3. Alice Springs

Australian Transport Group	Manager	8952 5688
----------------------------	---------	-----------

11.2. Northern Territory Government

11.2.1. DIPL - Public Transport Unit

Special Needs and Events Planner	8924 7843
Manager Public Transport	8924 7577

Email:	public.transport@nt.gov.au
--------	--

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>

¹⁴ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015#page=36&zoom=auto,88,273>

¹⁵ https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/292380/Transport-for-Students-with-Special-Needs-guidelines.pdf

¹⁶ https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/292381/Frequently-asked-Questions-Transport-for-Students-with-Special-Needs-2....pdf

¹⁷ https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0004/437476/Guidelines-Enrolment-in-Special-Schools-and-Special-Centres.docx

¹⁸ https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0009/731682/guidelines_sexual_behaviour_in_children.docx

¹⁹ <https://assets.macahub.org/downloads/Buckle-cover-model-policy-161121.pdf>

²⁰ https://kidsafe.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Best-Practice-Child-Restraint-Guidelines_202009-FINAL_high-res.pdf

²¹ <https://www.true.org.au/traffic-lights-sexual-behaviours-in-children-and-young-people>

11.2.2. Department of Education

Inclusion and Engagement Services

8944 9257

Email:

sesupport.det@education.nt.gov.au**11.3. Schools****11.3.1. Darwin**

Henbury School	Principal	8989 7092
Humpty Doo School	Principal	8988 1255
Nemarluk School	Principal	8985 0400
Palmerston Special Education Centre	Principal	8997 7860
Taminmin College	Principal	8983 7000
Woodroffe Primary School	Principal	8983 7600
Forrest Parade School	Principal	8997 7111
Mimik-ga Centre	Principal	8983 7900

11.3.2. Katherine

Kintore Street Special School	Principal	8973 3888
-------------------------------	-----------	-----------

11.3.3. Alice Springs

Acacia Hill School	Principal	8955 2222
Centralian Middle School	Principal	8950 2500

Appendix 1 Application and assessment process summary

New requests for special needs transport

1. Parent completes New Request form for Special Needs Transport if school deems student meets eligibility criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4.
2. School emails request to Department of Education (DoE) sesupport.det@education.nt.gov.au.
3. DoE assesses application against eligibility criteria 1 and progresses application to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL).
4. DIPL liaises with transport provider and assesses eligibility criteria 5.
5. Transport provider confirms travel arrangements and commencement details if application successful.
6. DIPL notifies the school, via email, if application was successful or unsuccessful.
7. If successful, school receives transport service details. If unsuccessful, school receives reasons why request was unsuccessful.
8. The principal or school delegate advises parents of application outcome by phone and follows up in writing.

Change to special needs transport

1. Parent promptly informs transport provider of student's absence due to short term illness or other reason (less than 5 consecutive school days)*.
2. Parent completes a Change Request form if their child will be absent for an extended period (5 or more consecutive school days) or seeks permanent variation.
3. Parent submits Change Request form to school 7 days prior to the date change is required.
4. School immediately emails DIPL the Change Request form to public.transport@nt.gov.au.
5. DIPL liaises with transport provider.
6. Transport provider confirms arrangements and details with DIPL.
7. DIPL informs school of outcome.
8. School notifies parent by phone and email confirms outcome.

*Non-attendance without notification for more than 10 days may result in cancellation of service.

Suspension or cancellation of special needs transport

Student persistently involved in minor incidents

1. Transport provider completes incident report and submits copy to school for school to raise with parents.
2. School, parents and student (as appropriate) and transport provider discusses behaviour.
3. School implements behaviour management plan, where appropriate.
4. Transit carer in collaboration with the principal monitors the student's behaviour and plan.
5. DIPL and the transport provider suspends or cancels service if behaviour does not improve.

Student involved in major incident

1. Transport provider completes incident report and submits copy to school for school to raise with parents.
2. DIPL and transport provider temporarily suspends services.
3. School, parents and student (as appropriate), DIPL and transport provider discusses behaviour.
4. School implements behaviour management plan, where appropriate.
5. Transit carer in collaboration with principal monitors student's behaviour and plan.
6. DIPL and transport provider considers continuation of service or cancellation of service.
7. DIPL advises school in writing of continuation or decision to cancel service.
8. Principal or school delegate advises parents of cancellation.
9. If a parent is unsatisfied with the outcome, they can contact the school direct and appeal the decision.