



SISC Risk Management Bulletin

Transporting Students

June 2009

Background

Whether it's home-to-school, field trips, or sporting events, how to transport students, and by whom, is an important consideration for district administrators.

It is SISC's position that the best method of transporting students is with a yellow school bus, driven by a licensed school bus driver.



Every effort should be made to put a school bus driver behind the wheel of a vehicle that is transporting students. Licensed school bus drivers are subject to ongoing training and education that helps to make them the safest drivers on the road. However, we recognize this is not always feasible so the remainder of this bulletin will explore the other available options.

Student Transportation Options

Charter Bus

It is acceptable for district to use commercial charter services; however, the driver must either possess a California School Bus license, or be SPAB certified.

15 Passenger Vans

The regulations governing the use of these vans changed several years ago and the current standard requires a Class B license (commercial license) and an endorsement for operating a passenger transportation vehicle.

The license requirement is based on the design of the vehicle, not the number of passengers being transported. A 15 passenger van can not be modified to carry fewer passengers so as to avoid the licensing requirement.

10 Passenger Vans, Sport Utility Vehicles, and Passenger Vehicles

None of these vehicles require a commercial license to operate, regardless of whether they are used to transport students. It is important to note that some 12 passenger vans have been modified so as to reduce the capacity in order to allow a non-commercial license holder to operate the vehicle. This is a controversial issue that must be carefully considered by district administration. The issue involves the design of the vehicle, so the purchase of such vehicles should include factory designed or modified vans that reduce capacity. Districts should not modify vehicles on their own.

Also, with this category care should be taken to ensure the vehicle is not being overloaded with passengers and gear. Heavy athletic gear can quickly overload a vehicle and effect vehicle handling.

Only properly trained and licensed school employees should operate district-owned vehicles.

These employees should also be evaluated and held to behind-the-wheel proficiency standards. Districts should consult their bus driver instructors/trainers to create and/or deliver training for all school employees who may transport students.

SISC Risk Management Services also has a driver education program that can be used for this purpose. It is critically important for these drivers to receive formal driver education training specific to the vehicle they are driving.

Parent and Volunteer Drivers

District administrators should not allow parents or other volunteers to operate school-owned vehicles. However, it is becoming more common for districts to utilize the help of parents or other volunteers to provide student transportation, especially on field trips or sporting events. This is usually achieved either by the coordination of district personnel, or individually by parents.

How volunteer transportation is coordinated will determine what insurance policies come into play. The way to establish the greatest level of protection for the district is to not provide transportation or to coordinate transportation to an event. For example, if the band has a scheduled competition, and the students are told the location and informed that transportation will not be provided, then the parents are responsible to coordinate the transportation of their children to the event. The district does not have liability for any incident that occurs en route to the competition.

However, if in the same circumstance the band director coordinates several parents to transport the students assigning students to volunteer drivers in order to ensure everyone has transportation, then the district has assumed liability for this trip. This is not necessarily prohibited, but district administrators must realize that such drivers will likely be deemed volunteers of the district, thereby covered under the workers’ compensation and liability insurance of the district.

In addition, the district becomes liable for the actions of its volunteers. **This means that all volunteer drivers must be fingerprinted and processed at the same level as district employees.** A current “H 6” DMV printout must also be on file with the district. Ensuring that

such drivers have adequate levels of insurance is also important.

Vehicles that are not owned by the district, but used for district business are covered by SISC as non-owned autos. The SISC coverage is secondary to the insurance of the vehicle owner.

Utilizing volunteer drivers can be very problematic and district administrators should be wary of this practice, especially if there is not someone specifically assigned to the task of coordinating, reviewing, and approving these drivers, as well as coordinating parent consent regarding private transportation.

If volunteer drivers will be utilized and coordinated by the district, a Driver Registration Form should be completed and kept on file. The form is available at the SISC Risk Management Services website at:

<http://sisc.kern.org/safetyandlosscontrol/>

The form is titled Transportation for School Related Trips and is under the Forms section.

Vehicle and Driver Matching

