

Student Transportation Safety & Compliance Checklist

General Education Transportation Programs

Every district's transportation program carries legal, safety, and equity obligations that extend to all students — not just those with IEPs. Use this checklist to evaluate your district's general transportation practices against 20 checkpoints across 5 critical areas. This is a screening tool to support your district's own legal, transportation, and safety review — it does not replace legal counsel or your district's official compliance processes.

How to Use This Checklist

For each checkpoint, mark whether your district's transportation program clearly meets the standard, meets it only under certain conditions, or fails to meet it. Then use the scoring guide on the final page to determine an overall compliance recommendation.

For each checkpoint, mark **one** box per row with a pen: **C** = Clear, **CO** = Conditional, **G** = Gap.

CLEAR	Meets the standard without qualification
CONDITIONAL	Meets the standard only with specific safeguards in place
GAP	Fails to meet the standard as currently practiced

Section 1 — Driver Qualifications & Vehicle Safety

Baseline standards for who drives and what they drive

1. All drivers operating vehicles that require a CDL under federal or state law hold a valid CDL with the appropriate passenger and school bus endorsements. For any drivers or vehicles operating under a state-specific small-vehicle or CDL-exemption provision, the district has documented the applicable exemption and confirmed the vehicle/route qualifies.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
2. Drivers complete required background checks, drug/alcohol testing, and physical qualification exams on your state's required schedule, not just at initial hire.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
3. Vehicles undergo documented, scheduled safety inspections (brakes, tires, emergency exits, lighting) consistent with state DOT requirements.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
4. Driver training includes defensive driving, railroad crossing procedures, and student management basics, refreshed on a recurring schedule.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G

Section 2 — Route & Stop Safety

Getting students to and from school safely

5. Bus stops are evaluated for sightlines, traffic speed, and pedestrian safety before being finalized, not just for driving efficiency.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
6. Routes are reviewed at least annually for stop consolidation, ride-time limits, and changing neighborhood conditions.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
7. Students and families receive clear, accessible information about stop locations, pickup/drop-off times, and any route changes.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
8. Younger students (elementary-age) are not assigned to stops requiring unsafe road crossings without a documented safety review.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G

Section 3 — Emergency Preparedness & Response

Planning for the unexpected

9. Every route has a documented emergency evacuation plan, and drivers practice evacuation drills on a recurring schedule.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

10. Drivers have clear, practiced protocols for medical emergencies, severe weather, and mechanical breakdowns.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

11. Two-way communication (radio, phone, or app-based system) connects every vehicle to dispatch at all times during operation.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

12. A documented plan exists for reuniting students with families in the event of a significant delay, accident, or emergency.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

Section 4 — Student Rights & Equity

Ensuring transportation doesn't create unequal access

13. Transportation is provided consistent with McKinney-Vento requirements for students experiencing homelessness, including maintaining transportation to a school of origin when required.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

14. Transportation policies and practices do not create disparate impact across neighborhoods, income levels, or student populations without documented justification.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

15. Students who transfer schools mid-year (including in foster care or between district schools) have transportation arrangements addressed promptly, not left unresolved for weeks.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

16. Language access (translated materials, interpretation) is available for transportation-related communications with families who are not English-proficient.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

Section 5 — Communication & Accountability

Keeping families informed and the system accountable

17. Families have a clear, accessible way to report transportation concerns or safety issues, and complaints are tracked to resolution.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

18. Transportation delays or disruptions are communicated to families in a timely manner, through a reliable channel (app, text, phone tree).

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

19. Transportation data (on-time performance, incident reports, route efficiency) is reviewed by district leadership on a regular cadence.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

20. Third-party transportation contractors, if used, are held to the same safety, training, and reporting standards as in-house staff.

☐	☐	☐
C	CO	G

Scoring Guide & Compliance Recommendation

Count your marks across all 20 checkpoints, then use the guide below to determine an overall recommendation.

STRONG COMPLIANCE

17–20 Clear

Your transportation program meets nearly all standards without qualification. Continue standard monitoring and annual review procedures.

CONDITIONAL COMPLIANCE

12–16 Clear, or any Conditional

Your program meets the standard only after specific safeguards identified in your Conditional items are formally documented and put in place. Re-evaluate before the next school year begins.

COMPLIANCE GAP — ACT NOW

Any single Gap item, or fewer than 12 Clear

Your program does not currently meet the standard required to safely and legally transport students. Address identified gaps immediately and involve your district's legal counsel and transportation director.

Note: A single "Gap" mark on any Driver Qualifications & Vehicle Safety item (Section 1) or any Emergency Preparedness & Response item (Section 3) should be treated as an automatic "Compliance Gap" recommendation, regardless of the overall score, given the legal and student-safety weight of those areas.

This checklist is provided as a screening aid and does not constitute legal advice. Consult your district's legal counsel and transportation director for guidance specific to your circumstances.

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