

Special Education Transportation Compliance Checklist

Related Services Under IDEA

Transportation is a required related service under IDEA for many students with disabilities — not an administrative afterthought. Use this checklist to evaluate your district's special education 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 — IEP Transportation Requirements

Ensuring transportation matches what the IEP actually requires

1. Each student's IEP explicitly documents whether transportation is a required related service, and if so, the specific accommodations needed (e.g., door-to-door, wheelchair lift, harness/restraint system).	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
2. Transportation-related accommodations in the IEP are shared with transportation staff (drivers, aides) before the student's first day of service, not after an incident.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
3. Any change to a student's transportation needs (address change, new medical need, behavior plan update) triggers a documented review and update of transportation arrangements.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
4. Ride time and route length are considered against each student's individual needs, not just administrative efficiency, particularly for students with medical fragility or significant behavioral needs.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G

Section 2 — Vehicle & Equipment Accessibility

Physical accessibility and equipment maintenance

5. Wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement systems are inspected and maintained on a documented schedule, not only after a reported malfunction.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
6. Vehicles serving students with disabilities are matched to each student's specific equipment needs (e.g., lift capacity, harness type, size of mobility device).	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
7. Backup vehicles/equipment are available and pre-identified in case of breakdown, so a student's service is not simply canceled without an accessible alternative.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G
8. Temperature control, medical equipment power needs (e.g., for ventilators or feeding equipment), and other health-related vehicle requirements are documented and met.	☐	☐	☐
	C	CO	G

Section 3 — Staff Training & Behavior Support

Preparing drivers and aides for the students they serve

9. Drivers and bus aides receive training specific to the disabilities and behavior support needs of the students on their route, not just general bus safety training.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
10. A student's behavior intervention plan (BIP), if one exists, is communicated to transportation staff in an actionable, plain-language format.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
11. There is a clear, documented process for transportation staff to report and escalate behavioral incidents or safety concerns without delay.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
12. Substitute drivers and aides receive the same student-specific information as regular staff before covering a route, not a reduced version.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G

Section 4 — Emergency Preparedness & Evacuation

Planning for the student with the most complex needs

13. Emergency evacuation procedures for each bus route account for students who cannot self-evacuate, including specific assigned responsibilities for staff.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
14. Evacuation drills are practiced with the actual equipment and scenarios relevant to the students on that route (e.g., wheelchair evacuation, non-ambulatory students).	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
15. Emergency contact and medical information for each student is physically accessible to drivers/aides during transport, not only stored digitally at the district office.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
16. A communication plan exists for notifying families quickly in the event of a delay, breakdown, or emergency involving their student's transportation.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G

Section 5 — Communication & Procedural Safeguards

Keeping families informed and rights protected

17. Families are notified in advance, and given the opportunity to provide input, before a student's transportation route, timing, or vehicle assignment changes.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
18. Transportation complaints or concerns from families follow a documented resolution process, consistent with IDEA procedural safeguards.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
19. Transportation delays or disruptions affecting a student's related services (e.g., missed therapy due to late pickup) are tracked and remediated, not simply logged and forgotten.	☐ C	☐ CO	☐ G
20. Transportation providers (including any third-party contractors) are bound by the same student privacy and disability-related obligations as district 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 serve students with disabilities in transportation. Address identified gaps immediately and involve your district's legal counsel and transportation director.

Note: A single "Gap" mark on any IEP Transportation Requirements item (Section 1) or any Emergency Preparedness & Evacuation item (Section 4) 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.