

Implementing Appropriate Transportation Services for Children with Disabilities

**Louisiana Association of School Transportation Officials (LASTO) 2023 Spring Conference
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Scenario 1: You Can't Make This Stuff Up!

- Martin, a 12-year-old student with emotional disturbance (ED) returning to school after the summer break, has displayed multiple unsafe behaviors on the school bus the first week of school.
- Driver write-ups described the following behaviors as occurring: leaving his seat, standing and jumping on the seat, verbally attacking and threatening younger students, hitting the paraprofessional, punching the window and trying to stab himself with a broken pencil.
- Martin was removed from his home and picked up at a residential facility group home. He has been in this placement for three school years. This facility is operated by Child Protective Services.
- He is transported to and from school by his home district. His group home placement is approximately 15 miles away from his school placement. He attends a special education classroom, full time, in a regular school building.
- An emergency IEP team meeting is called for the purpose of approving and fitting Martin with a safety vest (child safety restraint system). In communications to schedule this meeting, the staff from Martins' group home facility, school, special education and the transportation staff, are in full agreement that usage of a safety vest should begin immediately.
- Martin refuses to wear the safety vest and will not board the school bus.

Discussion Questions Scenario 1

1. What options do the school district have to manage this situation?
2. How could this crisis situation best be managed?
3. Can the school district have done anything different to avoid the use of a child safety restraint system (safety vest)?
4. What are possible solutions to address this complex transportation issue?

Scenario 2: The Outspoken Parent

- Ms. Sparks, is an outspoken single parent when it comes to voicing her opinions about what is the most appropriate special education and related services for her son Jeremiah. She is a single parent, trial attorney and advocate for the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classes and on the regular school bus.
- Jeremiah is an eleven-year-old autistic child attending middle school. At this year's IEP meeting transportation will be addressed. Jeremiah has had several out bursts, this school year, on his assigned school bus route. He is considered a significant safety risk. Multiple parents have complained about their children not wanting to be on Jeremiah's school bus.
- A bus attendant was assigned to Jeremiah's (regular) bus route with little positive impact. The bus attendant is well trained by his behavior specialist. The behavior specialist has ridden on Jeremiah's bus multiple times. Jeremiah continues to be a runner and his behavior is unpredictable. His current driver is refusing to transport Jeremiah due to safety concerns for Jeremiah and his peers.
- Last school year, Ms. Sparks, prevailed at a due process hearing, not to have a child safety restraint system utilized for Jeremiah. The hearing officer agreed with the parent that a bus attendant was a better first step intervention. This alternative to a child safety restraint system is not currently working. The school district has months of video and written documentation about Jeremiah's unsafe school bus behavior. The mother does not want to hear about this from the school district.
- The Directors of Special Education and Transportation have spoken with Ms. Sparks about specialized school transportation including a special route and alternative transportation options. She has refused to discuss this matter and has informed the school district that she will bring an attorney advocate to her sons scheduled IEP meeting.

Discussion Questions Scenario 2

1. How should the IEP Team prepare to discuss the upcoming transportation issues and concerns?
2. Who should be invited to be on the IEP Team from the school district?
3. Ultimately, what should the school district do when they are justifiably concerned about a school bus safety matter before and during the IEP meeting?
4. What recommendations do you have for working with parents like Ms. Sparks in your school district?

Scenario 3: Inclusion of A Student Utilizing A Wheelchair on The Regular Route

- Elizabeth, a fourth grade gifted and talented student, who utilizes a wheelchair, is moving into to a new school district this coming September. She has always attended her home school. She requires no IDEA special education services. She is orthopedically impaired and has a Section 504 Plan. Her parents have contacted the new school district four months in advance of moving to arrange for transportation services and shared Elizabeth's current 504 Plan.
- The parents of Elizabeth are shocked that the new school district informs them that their daughter cannot ride on a regular school bus route because their school district does not own a regular bus route bus with a wheelchair lift. The parents request the school district reconsider this decision. After two months of frustration the parents file a Section 504 Complaint with the United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.
- Elizabeth's parents are appalled by how her new school district has approached their request for transportation services on their daughter's current Section 504 Plan. In fact, the school district Transportation Director states, "Elizabeth must have an IEP with transportation services on the IEP before she will be transported." The parents are outraged and after months of frustration go to the media for assistance.

Discussion Questions Scenario 3

1. What do you anticipate the outcome of the Section 504 Complaint will be for Elizabeth?
2. Can the Section 504 Complaint, if favorable for Elizabeth, impact other children riding on a special bus with a Section 504 Plan?
3. What should the school district have done differently to address Elizabeth's parent's transportation concerns?
4. How does your school district prevent disability discrimination regarding school bus assignments?