

Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program

Transportation Handbook

2025-2026



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Approved by Policy Council on: March 8, 2025

Approved by Grantee Board on: March 15, 2025

The Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program (MWNMCAP) is a family centered learning environment that respects and values children, families and the community

The safety of our children at Mid-West NMCAP is of utmost importance to us. The transportation policies and procedures have been developed to better serve our families while meeting Federal, State PED Transportation Regulations, and Head Start Performance Standards.



I. Eligible Children

1. Children are eligible to request services if the family lives within the designated boundaries. The child needs to be 3-5 years of age and enrolled in the Head Start Program. All requests will be reviewed and/or approved on an individual basis, except for the following:
 - a. Transportation Services may be provided for those who qualify and live at least one (1) mile from the Head Start center.
 - b. Children who have the highest need will have priority to receive transportation services.
2. New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) **6.41.4.8 B**: Student transportation is a privilege to students. Services may be revoked for students or families who do not adhere to the policies and procedures or whose behaviors endanger others. Transportation privileges will be revoked after every effort has been made to find a resolution with a family.

3. The Transportation Handbook Acknowledgement must be signed and turned into the Center Director/Manager, in order for your child to become eligible for transportation services. This must be signed each program year.

II. Transportation Staff:

1. Transportation staff shall follow all Head Start, Federal, State, and NMPED Rules and Regulations that pertain to transportation.
2. Transportation staff shall not use their personal cell phones on the bus at any time, unless absolutely needed for means of communication with the center.
3. Transportation drivers report to their designated location 15 minutes before any route is to begin in the morning, afternoon and for field trips. Transportation monitors will report five (5) minutes before any route is to begin in the morning, afternoon, and for field trips.
4. Transportation staff may not leave their vehicles until all transportation-related duties have been accomplished.
5. Transportation staff are expected to provide a positive, supportive environment for children and parents.
6. Transportation staff are expected to communicate effectively with program staff, parents, children, and fellow transportation staff.
7. Transportation staff will educate children regarding the appropriate transportation, safety, and health rules.
8. Transportation staff will educate the children in the proper use of height and weight appropriate child safety restraint systems in the transportation vehicle and continue to reinforce the education throughout the program year.
9. Transportation staff are trained to respond professionally, responsibly, and effectively to any emergency in the transportation vehicle.
10. Transportation staff will maintain a clean and safe vehicle to ensure the health and safety of the children.

Transportation Staff – Bus/Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) Driver Responsibilities:

1. The bus driver conducts and documents a **pre-trip inspection** of the vehicle before each trip.
 - a. The bus will not be moved if it does not pass the required **pre-trip inspection**.
 - b. The sport utility vehicle (SUV) driver conducts and documents a **post-trip inspection** of the vehicle. (This inspection includes a walk-thru of the vehicle to ensure that no children remain on the school bus.)
 2. Any necessary maintenance, incidents, or accidents are documented and reported immediately post-trip to the Center Director/Manager, I.T./QA Manager, Director of Support Services/Operation.
 3. The driver maintains daily records on the transportation of each child and the operation of the school bus/SUV. (This includes a post-trip check of the bus/SUV attendance sheet to ensure that all children who got on the vehicle, got off the vehicle.)
 4. The bus/SUV driver is responsible for the safety and orderly conduct of the children on the school bus/SUV.
 5. Children have assigned seats. Reassignment of seats may be necessary throughout the program year to be determined by the bus driver or monitor.
 6. The driver is responsible for ensuring that a parent or authorized adult signs the child on and off the bus/SUV.
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7. The driver shall not use their personal cell phones on the bus/SUV at any time, unless absolutely needed for means of communication with the center.
8. The bus/SUV Monitor will help children on and off the bus if necessary.

***Transportation records shall be maintained on premises for a period of no less than three years.**



Transportation Staff - Bus/SUV Monitor Responsibilities

1. The bus/SUV Monitor may assist the bus/SUV driver as needed in the daily pre- and post-trip inspection of the school bus/SUV and the daily recordkeeping.
2. The bus/SUV Monitor assists with maintaining a clean and safe environment in and around the school bus/SUV.
3. The bus/SUV Monitor remains with the children at all times while on the bus/SUV.
4. The bus/SUV Monitor will help children on and off the bus/SUV if necessary.
5. The bus/SUV Monitor is responsible for assisting children with the appropriate child height and weight safety restraints.
6. The bus/SUV Monitor is responsible for handing out parent notices to and from parents or responsible adults at each destination stop.
7. The bus/SUV Monitor shall not use their personal cell phones on the vehicle at any time, unless absolutely needed for means of communication with the center.

III. School Routes:

1. The school route has been set to ensure that children spend the least amount of time as possible, not to exceed a reasonable amount of time in the vehicle, while accommodating all requests for transportation.
2. School stops have been set according to requests by the parent or guardian based on designated stops established by the agency.
3. Requests for change in designated stop for a child may be made only by parent, guardian or other legal entity. The only changes that will be accepted are those that are long-term and permanent. Multiple stop changes will be considered only in extenuating circumstances.
 - a. If a change is being requested, parents/guardians must notify and submit a written letter of request two (2) days prior of the change to the Center Director/Manager for approval.
 - b. The bus/SUV driver, monitor, or Head Start center staff may not authorize a change in the designated stop. Only the Center Director/Manager, I.T./QA Manager, and Director of Support Services/Operation are authorized to approve any changes that are within flexibility of all regulations.



Please be advised that not all transportation change requests can be approved due to the maximum time that children can spend on the vehicle and the maximum occupier per vehicle

4. Please keep phone numbers up to date as the drivers use these to communicate with parents or guardians.

IV. Drop Off and Pick Up of Children:

1. Parents/authorized adults should be waiting outside their designated bus/SUV stop **five (5) minutes before/after their scheduled pick up and drop off time.**
 - a. For both drop off and pick up, the driver shall not wait longer than five (5) minutes for students or designated adult unless they are observed trying to reach the vehicle or unless otherwise specified and justified in the students' Individual Education Plan (IEP).
 - b. Bus/SUV monitors will not accept a child who becomes violent to get on the vehicle. Should this occur, the child must be transported privately to or from the Head Start center.
 - c. An authorized individual 18 years or older will be required to sign the child off the vehicle and must be listed on the Vehicle Route Form.
 - d. Child will not be released to any authorized individual who is or showing signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - e. When departing from the school, once vehicles are loaded and the first vehicle has begun to move, no child from any vehicle may be unloaded from the vehicle except at the designated stop.



In the Morning: If your child will not be attending school or will not be riding the vehicle, please call the center 30 minutes prior or leave a message.

In the Afternoon: If you wish to pick up your child from the center, please call the center 30 minutes prior to the end of class or leave a message.

If you have an Emergency: Call as soon as you know that you cannot meet your child at the stop. The child will be taken back to the center for pickup for parents or authorized adults.

If you wish to pick up/drop off your child at the center, please make sure to inform the front office staff, bus driver, or the classroom teacher. This process is needed to ensure the safety of your child and attendance purposes.

2. Head Start is authorized to release children only to authorized parents/guardians and/or those who are 18 years of age and listed on the Vehicle Route Form. **Anyone picking up a child may be asked to show identification.**
 - a. If a parent or guardian wants to authorize an individual not listed on the **Bus/SUV Route Form**, the authorization must be first made in person at the center. Prior to a child being released to the individual, all changes must be made on the **Transportation Form**.
3. **Please do not flag down the vehicle or chase after it. If the driver feels a person is endangering the safe operation of their vehicle, they will report the incident to the local law enforcement.**
 - a. Children who do not have a parent or authorized adult waiting at the designated stop will be returned only to the Head Start center at the completion of the route.
 - b. The school bus/SUV monitor will call the Head Start center when a child is being returned to the Head Start center.
 - c. The Head Start center front office staff will contact an authorized adult listed on the child's Emergency Contact Form to pick up the child at the Head Start center.

- d. The Center Director/Manager, or designated staff, will file a report with the New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) if the child is not picked up by close of business.

V. Attendance:

1. To maintain consistency on daily routes it is important that your child utilizes transportation services on a regular basis.
 - a. After three (3) consecutive absences or no call/no show, your transportation services will be placed on hold until the parent/guardian contacts the office staff.
 - b. If your transportation services are placed on hold, you will then be required to schedule a meeting with the office staff to develop a Transportation Plan.
 - c. If Transportation Plan is not met or carried out your child's transportation privileges will be revoked.

Attendance tracking is vital to the program. This helps ensure that all children in need of transportation receive transportation services. If a child is not utilizing the request, the child will be removed from the transportation roster to give the opportunity for another child to utilize the transportation services.

VI. Safe Operation Procedures:



These procedures are mandated by State and Federal law and are intended to ensure that your child is not unnecessarily placed in an unsafe situation.

Per Transportation Law: Drivers are required to stop at least fifteen feet in front or back of a stopped school bus and may not pass the bus while the lights are flashing and the STOP sign is extended.

Parents and community members are encouraged to report any bus driving violations to the local law enforcement and/or Head Start program immediately.

1. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and/or firearm(s) are not permitted on buses/SUV's, or any Head Start property at any time.
 2. Vehicles must not be loaded beyond the maximum passenger capacity at any time.
 3. A complete stop shall be made at all established stops whether students are present or not, unless a parent/guardian, Head Start staff, or transportation provider has notified the driver that the student will be absent.
 4. The vehicle shall be brought to a complete stop with the park brake activated before taking on or letting off students.
 5. The driver shall not impede traffic unnecessarily.
 6. School buses shall not be backed up or make U-turns on school grounds or on the bus routes, unless absolutely necessary, and then only with assistance from the bus monitor.
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7. School buses shall not turn right at a red traffic light even though a complete stop is made, and the intersection is clear of cross traffic.
8. New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) 6.41.4.12 G: (1) When students are on board school buses drivers will, before crossing any railroad track/tracks, activate four-way hazard lights and bring the bus to a complete stop not less than 15 feet or more than 50 feet in front of the rail nearest the front of the bus.
 - a. The service door and the window to the bus driver's immediate left shall be open
 - b. The bus driver shall look and listen in both directions along the track/tracks for approaching trains or other vehicles.
 - c. The service door and window shall remain open, and all noisy equipment (radios, fans, etc.) shall be shut off until the rear of the bus clears the track/tracks.
9. No stop will be made at a railroad grade crossing where a traffic light controls the movement of traffic.
10. Music shall be educational and school related. It must be approved by the Center Director/Manager.

VII. Transporting School Projects/Objects:

1. No items shall occupy a vehicle seating space.
2. No items shall be placed in the bus driver's compartment.
3. Items such as children's artwork are to be in the child's backpack and/or with the driver. Items are to be in complete control of the child at all times and carried on the child's lap or in the trunk of the SUV, to include children's jackets, when not wearing them.
4. Drivers are authorized to disallow the transportation of any objects that can become a danger while the vehicle is in motion.
 - a. Parents must make arrangements with the Center Director/Manager or designated staff for any other items not listed that need to be taken from home to school or school to home.



VIII. Children with Disabilities:

1. Mid-West NMCAP Head Start must specify any special transportation requirements for a child with a disability when preparing the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and ensure that the requirements from the IEP are being provided.

The IEP must include any of the following:

- a. Special pick-up and drop-off requirements, i.e., wheelchair services, walking to the door;
- b. Special seating requirements;
- c. Special equipment needs;
- d. Any special assistance that may be required; and
- e. Any special training for drivers and monitors.



IX. Transportation of Medication:

1. Medication can only be transported on the vehicle once the child has established a Health Plan with the Health Specialist/Manager. Once a Health Plan has been established, the Health Specialist/Manager will arrange a meeting with the appropriate staff members. At this time the parent/guardian may be present to give any specific instructions or concerns about administering the child's medication.
2. If possible, please have a duplicate set of medication for your child. One that can be left at the center and one that can be left at home.
3. The driver will sign out the medication from the office staff for the morning route and will sign it to the child's teacher once they return to the center. The child's teacher will return the medication back to the driver for the afternoon route. Once the driver returns back to the center after the afternoon route, he/she will return it back to the office where it is placed under lock and key and sign the medication back in.
4. Some medication may require a trained emergency responder to administer. The following will happen while on route:
 - a. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will be called out to the location of the vehicle to administer aid.
 - b. The parent/guardian will be notified.
 - c. The child will be removed from the bus/SUV if EMS is called out and may need to be transported to the child's hospital.

X. Red Flagged

1. Children may be refused transportation services if they show any visible illness symptoms or if there is a major change in their behavior/demeanor. Parents can bring their child to the center for further evaluation by the Health Specialist/Manager or designee to determine if the child is well enough to attend school.

XI. Field Trips

1. **Each field trip must have prior approval by the Center Director/Manager.**
2. If transportation is being requested, staff must fill out the Transportation Request Form and submit it to the Center Director/Manager.
3. Field trip permission form for each field trip must be filled out prior to children attending field trip.
4. If a parent or guardian wants to take their children from the field trip, they must fill out a field trip release form before leaving the field trip.
5. The Head Start school buses/**SUV** will be used for field trips in transporting the children.

6. Parents who are participating in school field trips and are providing their own transportation must follow the last bus/**SUV**.

- a. According to State Regulations buses must drive in convoy
- b. For you and your child's safety, do not tailgate or drive between school buses.



7. Except for monitors assisting children, all vehicle occupants must be seated and wearing an appropriate safety restraint.
8. Parents will be allowed to ride the bus on field trips only if the room is available for all students and accompanying staff.
9. Any rescue medications needed for any children going on a field trip will need to be signed out by the driver and taken with them on the field trip in a lock box. Rescue medications must be returned to the designated area at the center upon return from field trip and signed back in by the driver.

XII. Safety Education

1. Head Start will provide training for parents and children in pedestrian safety.
 - a. This is to include street crossing, harness usage, loading and unloading, bus evacuations, and danger zones.
 - b. Safety training will be done within the first 30 days of the program year.
2. Head Start staff will conduct one (1) emergency evacuation drill from the bus/**SUV** within the first 30 days of school and two (2) more within the program year.

XIII. Bus and Transportation Emergency Policies

1. Evacuation:
 - a. The staff member on the bus/**SUV** shall lead the children from the vehicle and to a safe location at least 100 feet (40 paces) from the vehicle. The children shall be led away from the vehicle and away from the road as quickly as possible, without running.
 - b. The driver shall follow the children from the vehicle and ensure that all the children have evacuated the vehicle.
2. Motor vehicle accident/stalled vehicle:
 - a. The children shall not be evacuated from the vehicle unless there is a fire or there is a significant risk of further injury due to other vehicles crashing into the vehicle or other life-threatening situations.

- b. The bus/SUV monitors shall inspect each child for injuries, calm the children on the vehicle, and administer first aid, if necessary. The children shall not be left alone in the vehicle for any period of time.
 - c. If the bus/SUV monitor is incapacitated, the bus driver shall inspect the children for injuries, calm the children, and administer first aid, if necessary.
 - d. The driver shall use the onboard radio to call for emergency assistance. If the communication device is not operational, the bus driver shall try to get someone passing by to call for emergency assistance.
 - e. If the driver is incapacitated, then the bus/SUV monitor shall call for emergency assistance or get someone else to call for emergency assistance.
 - f. The driver shall inspect the vehicle to ensure it is safe and resting in a secure location. If the placement of emergency triangles is necessary, the driver shall place the emergency triangles. When the bus is secure, the driver shall assist the bus/SUV monitor in administering first aid and in calming the children.
 - g. The driver shall call for the emergency back-up vehicle to transport the children. The back-up bus/SUV is available from Head Start by calling the center.
 - h. The driver shall be the spokesperson for the children when emergency assistance arrives.
 - i. The bus/SUV monitor shall take the emergency contact information with the children to hospital.
 - j. The driver shall remain with the bus and complete a seating chart for the police and Director of Support Services/Operations.
 - k. Driver must report any accident or incident immediately. Vehicle shall remain unmoved unless directed by law enforcement or in immediate danger.
3. School vehicle hijacking:
- a. The driver shall comply with the demands of the hijacker.
 - b. The bus/SUV monitor shall keep the children calm and in their seats.
 - c. If allowed to leave the vehicle, the bus/SUV monitor shall lead the children from the vehicle and the driver shall follow behind the children.

XIV. SCHOOL DELAYS AND CANCELLATIONS

- 1. The final decision regarding school closure and/or delays are approved by the Center Director/Manager.
 - a. **Head Start center will also follow local Public Education Department (PED) on school delays and cancellations if due to weather or emergency situations.**
 - b. **The television stations, KRQE (channel 13), KOAT (channel 7) & KOB (channel 4) will announce school closures. If not posted on the television stations, please look online on the following websites posted below if possible.**

Websites: www.koat.com www.krqe.com www.kob.com

XVI. Agency's Liability:

1. Mid-West NMCAP Head Start is responsible for children from the time they board the vehicle, and while they are in the care at the Head Start center or participating in Head Start functions and/or until they are signed off the vehicle and released to parents or authorized adults.
2. Mid-West NMCAP Head Start is also responsible for and must ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and HHS Regulations and Head Start Performance Standards.
3. All questions and/or concerns relating to transportation should be directed to the Director of Support Services/Operation or IT/QA Manager by calling at 505-450-9600, 505-814-4669
4. New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) **6.41.4.8 B**: Transportation services is a privilege. **Services may be revoked for students or families who do not adhere to the policies and procedures or whose behaviors endanger others.** Transportation privileges will be revoked after
every effort has been made to find a resolution with a family. **You have received a copy, read, understood, and asked any questions that pertain to the Transportation Handbook for your child. After full review of this handbook you acknowledge the policies and procedures of Transportation Services.**