Wisconsin School Talk **Call-to-Action** Wheelchair Transportation Alert

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In an effort to prevent claims involving wheelchairs, it is recommended that all transportation departments take immediate action to determine the status of special needs students now and before students return to classes after an extended break. If wheelchair-dependent students will be transported, it is recommended that the transportation department engage in proper planning and give proper consideration to the following:

- The transportation department must find out what type of wheelchairs will be transported, manual or motorized. Families of students should be contacted and asked to provide any special instructions in writing. Special transportation instructions should be maintained on the bus that will be used to transport the student in case of any change in staffing during the school year.
- Wheelchairs should be checked to determine if they qualify to be transported. Each wheelchair should have the correct markings (WD18-19 securement standards) and should be crash tested. Parents should bring the wheelchairs to the transportation department or a home check should be completed before transport. It may be advisable to request a written certification or representation from the student's family that the wheelchair is fit for transportation on a district bus. Where applicable, the transportation department should review, with the parents, any special transportation considerations recommended in the wheelchair operator's manual. These considerations may include removing the student from the wheelchair during transport.
- The bus transporting the student should be evaluated to ensure proper spacing for the restraints, and the retractors should be regularly maintained per manufacturer guidelines. Some retractors may become difficult to move due to time and weather conditions. The number of ports or spaces for each wheelchair should be determined in advance of each transport, and they should be adjusted to the size and angle of each wheelchair.
- All new bus drivers and aides must go through an initial training. Bus drivers and aides should complete semiannual training on proper securing of applicable restraint systems and specific wheelchairs. Specific restraint manufacturers' videos should be incorporated if possible, along with hands-on training on each specific wheelchair.
- Bus drivers are responsible for the overall safety of the riders. They should be involved with the transfer on and off the bus, as well as checking restraints after they are secured to the wheelchair. Where possible, at a minimum both the aide and the driver should verify that the wheelchair is properly restrained at all times, and should recheck if the wheelchair is moved after the initial restraints are in place.

- Headrests and harnesses also need to be checked prior to departure. If the wheelchair has a braking system, it should be verified that the brake has been set before the bus is moved. The flip foot plates should also be secured before transporting.
- Students should be properly secured in their wheelchairs with a lap belt and/or vest that is clipped in with chest straps. If all the straps/restraints for the wheelchair and student cannot be properly attached/secured, dispatch must be called for additional help. The bus should not move until the wheelchair is properly secured, the parent comes to pick up the student, or the student is moved to a different bus for proper transport.
- It is recommended that signs be posted on the bus to remind aides and drivers that the bus should not move until all students are properly secured, along with simple instructions to follow regarding the proper restraint adjustment for a wheelchair, if necessary.
- Wheelchair lap trays should be removed and stored in a secure place on the bus; pouches that can be secured to the backs of seats may be helpful so they don't become airborne in the event of an accident.
- Drivers/aides should make sure that the power is off on motorized wheelchairs while on the lift.
- There should be no bags or backpacks on the back of wheelchairs when loading or transporting (they make the wheelchair back heavy and may lead to tipping).
- Oxygen should be properly secured on the bus.
- Drivers and aides must also be trained on other types of securement, such as STAR restraints, BESI seats and safety vests.

Contracted bus service

- Agreements should be reviewed to determine proper training is complete and what the scope of responsibilities are. The above should be reviewed with the contracted bus service.
- If a district aide is working on a contracted bus, all the above must be followed.
- Current certificates of insurance must be obtained from any contracted transportation company. Recommended insurance requirements, limits and wording are included below.

Insurance requirements

- **Commercial general liability coverage**
  - » $1 million per occurrence
  - » $1 million personal and advertising injury
  - » $2 million general aggregate
  - » $2 million products/completed operations aggregate
  - » Coverage must be included for sexual misconduct
  - » District should be named as an additional insured on a primary and noncontributory basis
- **Commercial automobile liability coverage**
  - » $1 million combined single limit
  - » District should be named as an additional insured on a primary and noncontributory basis
- **Umbrella or excess liability**
  - » $15 million per occurrence
  - » $15 million general aggregate
  - » Coverage provided should be follow form
- **Workers' compensation coverage**
  - » Statutory limits
  - » Employers liability limits of $100,000/$500,000/$100,000

Above coverages shall be from a company authorized to do business in Wisconsin and with at least an "A VII" rating from A.M. Best. If requested, organization must provide copies of applicable policy endorsements.

The above article is for informational purposes only and may not address nor be suitable for all situations. Each member is encouraged to periodically review its own current practices and to make those changes or modifications that they deem appropriate for their specific transportation program or transportation requirements. When in doubt, members are encouraged to seek the assistance of a wheelchair transportation specialist.

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Please contact your individual Gallagher team member for any questions.

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Wheelchair Securement Checklist

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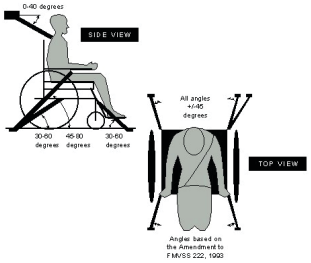
DO NOT MOVE THE BUS UNLESS ALL STROLLERS AND WHEELCHAIRS ARE PROPERLY AND COMPLETELY SECURED. ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN THE EVENT OF ANY CONCERNS REGARDING THE RESTRAINTS.



Wheelchair Installation	Yes	No
Inspect the chair for visual defects or damage prior to loading the chair on the vehicle.	○	○
Engage parking brakes or wheel locks once the chair is in position to avoid rolling.	○	○
Engage anti-tipping devices (if applicable).	○	○
Locate a structural welded frame assembly or designated anchor point on the wheelchair to attach the hook of each retractor. All four (4) retractors must be firmly connected prior to moving the bus.	○	○
Use a direct path with all safety belts, avoiding any crossing or twisting of the belts.	○	○
Try to achieve a 45-degree angle from the retractor to the attachment point of the wheelchair.	○	○
Double-check the securement of the chair by attempting to move the chair from side to side and front to back.	○	○
Child or Occupant Placement	**Yes**	**No**
Prior to installing safety belts, visibly check the child's clothing to ensure that excess stuffing will not affect the ability to securely install safety belts tightly.	○	○
Ensure that the lap belt component is actually resting tightly on the child's pelvis and the shoulder belt is actually resting on his or her shoulder.	○	○
Engage anti-tipping devices (if applicable).	○	○
The release buckle should be tight against the occupant's hip on the aisle side.	○	○
Once the safety belts are installed, double-check their tightness by pulling on the belt webbing.	○	○

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Aide _____ Date _____

Driver _____ Date _____

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Name of School District

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND INFORMATION FORM FOR WHEELCHAIR DEPENDENT STUDENTS – 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

I, _____, as parent and/or legal guardian of_____,
[printed name] [printed child's name]
hereby acknowledge and represent the following:

1. that my child currently requires the use of a wheelchair for mobility to and from school;

2. that my child's wheelchair is adequate and appropriate for transportation on a school bus equipped with a wheelchair restraint system;

3. that my child's wheelchair is in proper working order;

4. that my child's wheelchair has been properly maintained;

5. that the wheelchair my child will be using in the upcoming school year is properly suited for my child's current physical size and abilities;

6. that I will timely notify the school district and/or bus transportation company in the event of any change in the type of wheelchair my child will be using during the upcoming school year; and

7. that I am aware of certain risks associated with transporting my child to school in a wheelchair via bus and I hereby give my permission for the school district and/or bus transportation to transport my child to and from school for the upcoming school year.

_____
Signature of Parent/Guardian

_____
Date

_____
Type/Manufacturer/Model/Year/ Serial Number of Wheelchair

FOR DISTRICT USE ONLY

_____
Date Received