



Student Transportation During Distance Learning

4/28/2020

The following provides information regarding student transportation for the Distance Learning Planning Period, March 18-27, 2020; the Distance Learning Period, March 30, through May 4, 2020; and the Extended Distance Learning Period, May 5 through the end of the school year. The following instructions are in regards to [Governor Tim Walz's Emergency Executive Orders 20-02, 20-19 and 20-41](#) and current state statutes. If the Executive Order is extended to next school year, it is anticipated that these same reporting procedures would continue.

These reporting directions pertain to the Distance Learning Planning Period, Distance Learning Period and Extended Distance Learning Period in the executive orders. During the Distance Learning Periods, all public schools must provide continuous education based on the distance learning plans developed during the Distance Learning Planning Period directed by Executive Order 20-02.

Special Education Transportation

For questions regarding special education transportation look to the document [Special Education Funding Changes Due to COVID-19](#). In addition to the transportation reporting instructions in this document, it should be noted that the bills from contractors should reflect savings such as reduced fuel and other liquids expenses.

Special Transportation

For questions regarding Homelessness and Care and Treatment please look to [Special Education Funding Changes Due to COVID-19](#) as these same principles reiterate for Special Transportation as well. For additional information on Care and Treatment look to [Q & A: Care and Treatment Placements and Transportation](#).

Nonpublic

A district that had an existing agreement with a nonpublic school to provide the nonpublic student transportation on their behalf should continue to pay the nonpublic school as originally agreed upon. The bills should reflect savings such as reduced fuel and other liquids expenses. Continue to report these expenses with Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards Finance Code (UFARS FIN) 720 unless the student qualified for disabled (723), ineligible (737) or special (728) transportation services.

Schools should continue to pay the nonpublic school for transportation services that were scheduled to be provided during this time even though services are not being provided or have been changed to address the closure, cancellation or distant learning, so long as the nonpublic school pays their workers. Schools could base payments on weekly average invoices that they have incurred during this year or on the contract rates for the services that were to be provided on scheduled school days. Nonpublic schools could continue to bill schools based on services that were being provided prior to March 18 for the time schools were closed or providing

instruction through a distant learning model. Nonpublic schools would only be able to bill for days that the school was originally scheduled to be in session. They would not be able to bill for spring break or any other day the school was not originally scheduled to be in session.

The legislature has two bills that are intended to clarify many of these issues. Watch the status of [HF 4415 and corresponding SF 4369](#).

Foster Care

Districts are still obligated to follow the written agreements they have with the counties for transportation of foster care students to and from a foster home to their school of origin when a student is placed in a foster care setting outside the school of origin's boundaries as if the transportation was provided. Districts should report the cost in UFARS Finance Code 715, Foster Care. The student's would be reported in Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) as Transportation Category 00-Walker or transportation does not apply. School districts and the local child welfare agency must have a written interagency agreement that describes the local plan for ensuring educational stability for students placed in foster care. Do not include transportation of students experiencing homelessness, students with special education transportation accommodations in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or children residing in a shelter care facility.

Contracted Service

The expectation in the Executive Order is that school districts and charter schools maintain collaboration and contracts with bus transportation providers. However, contract provisions that account for weather-related closures or other short term closures may not be applicable during the distance learning or extended distance learning periods because the closures are not weather related or short term. Please consult your district or school attorney for questions about how to interpret your contract. The bills for contracted routes should reflect savings in costs such as fuel and other liquids. The legislature has two bills that are intended to clarify many of these issues. Watch the status of HF 4415 and corresponding SF 4369.

Transportation Funding

Transportation funding is included in the general education revenue, the primary formula for providing general operating funds to school districts. The transportation portion is earmarked as 4.66 percent of the formula allowance. The formula allowance for fiscal year 2020 is \$6,438 and the transportation portion is \$300.01 based on the student's grade level and pupil unit weighting. Districts receive this funding regardless of their reported transportation expenditures. In other words, as long as students remained enrolled for distance learning, the district will continue to receive transportation funding via the general education formula.

In addition to the general education aid, there are a few funds paid by the state to school districts and designated for specific purposes, such as non-public, special education and special transportation.

Transportation Reporting

Each year districts and transporting charter schools report the number of nonpublic school students transported to and from school, bus ownership, and miles, hours or routes by category. This information is submitted to the state on the Pupil Transportation Annual Reporting Form.

Independent school districts will report the number of eligible nonpublic students that were provided transportation in the normal manner.

Pending legislation will determine whether changes will be required to the Pupil Transportation Annual Report, e.g., identification of actual miles, hours or routes needed for the Distance Learning and Extended Distance Learning Periods and/or actual costs identified on UFARS.

Transportation for Child care of Essential Workers

For questions regarding transportation for child care for essential workers please look to [Minnesota Distance Teaching and Learning Implementation Guidance](#).

Charter School

Districts and charter schools should work together to provide the transportation for child care for essential workers and for delivery of food and instructional materials.

Charter schools that have elected for the local district to provide transportation should continue to use the district's transportation services.

If a charter school has a contracted bus service, they should work with their contractor to provide transportation for child care for essential worker's children and for food and instructional material delivery

Reimbursements for Parent-Provided Transportation

The document [Reimbursements for Parent-Provided Transportation](#) provides information on reimbursing families for contracted transportation to nonpublic schools and low-income transportation reimbursement for postsecondary enrollment options (PSEO) and for out-of-district open enrollment and nonpublic schools.

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Resources

The resources are updated continuously, as new information comes in and as we find answers to the most frequently asked questions. We ask that you check the [COVID-19 Updates page](#) daily.

[Kelly Garvey](#), 651-582-8524 or PupilTransportation.MDE@state.mn.us for assistance in reporting for student transportation.