

Choice School
Transportation Procedures

New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Student Transportation
November 2013

General Provisions

The district in which the student resides shall provide transportation or aid in lieu of transportation to eligible choice school students in accordance with *N.J.S.A.* 18A:39-1 et. seq. and *N.J.A.C.* 6A:27-4.1.

The district in which the student resides shall provide transportation to eligible students within the maximum per student expenditure established by *N.J.S.A.* 18A:39-1a. If the cost of this transportation will exceed that amount, then the parents or legal guardians of the student may pay the amount over the maximum or receive the amount established by the statute as aid in lieu of transportation. If no transportation bid is received, the parents or legal guardians of the student shall receive the amount established by the statute as aid in lieu of transportation. Aid in lieu of transportation may be adjusted for late registration or early withdrawal from the choice school. Boards of education are not required to pay aid in lieu of transportation when vouchers for payment are not signed and returned before the close of the fiscal year. (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:27-4.4)

Eligibility Criteria

The choice school must be located within the State.

Regular Students

To be eligible for transportation services, choice school students must reside remote and 20 miles or less from their choice school. Students who live less than remote from their choice school are eligible for courtesy transportation services in accordance with the policies of the district board of education in which they live. The cost of transporting choice school students must not exceed the per student maximum expenditure established by *N.J.S.A.* 18A:39-1a.

Special Education Students

Special education students must reside remote and 20 miles or less from their choice school of attendance. Those students who reside less than remote from their choice school are eligible for courtesy transportation in accordance with the policies of the district board of education in which they live. Special education students are also eligible for transportation services as specified by the student's individual education plan (IEP).

Remote is defined by *N.J.A.C.* 6A:27-1.2

The words, "remote from the schoolhouse" shall mean beyond 2 ½ miles for high school students and beyond two miles for elementary school students.

Measurement shall be made by the shortest route along public roadways or public walkways between the entrance of the student's residence nearest such public roadway or walkway and the nearest public entrance of the choice school.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians of the choice school student to:

- provide the student's name, date of birth, address, grade, one-way mileage between the student's home and the choice school, and the name of the last school of attendance to the administrator of the choice school at the time of enrollment in the choice school and whenever there is a change of the student's address.
- submit a signed "Request for Payment of Transportation Aid" voucher in the manner prescribed by the district board of education in which the student resides, in order to be eligible to receive aid in lieu of transportation.
- notify the district board of education in which the student resides, in writing, of their decision regarding whether they wish to pay for transportation costs which exceed the maximum permitted expenditure. Once the district board of education has been notified that the parents or legal guardians agree to pay the amount over the maximum, the parents or legal guardians are no longer entitled to receive aid in lieu of transportation for that school year. If the parents or legal guardians of the choice school student do not submit a written request for transportation services within seven days of receipt of the district's notice that the cost will exceed the maximum permitted expenditure, then the student shall not be entitled to transportation, but the parents or legal guardians shall receive aid in lieu of transportation.
- pay for transportation services in the manner prescribed by the resident district board of education in which the student resides when transportation is provided at a cost exceeding the maximum permitted expenditure.

Choice School Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the administrator of the choice school to:

- submit to each district board of education in which a student resides, on forms prescribed by the Commissioner, the student's name, date of birth, address, grade, one-way mileage from the student's home to the choice school, and the name of the last school of attendance. In the case of special education students, any special transportation needs required by the student's IEP must also be included. This information shall be submitted at the time of each student's enrollment in the choice school or by March 15 preceding the school year in which transportation services are being requested, whichever is later.
- ensure the accuracy of the information contained in the applications (except for the one-way mileage from the student's home to the choice school).
- notify the district boards of education in which the students reside in writing when a student eligible for transportation or aid in lieu of transportation has a change in address or withdraws from the choice school by submitting a new application for transportation.
- submit a new application whenever a student has a change in address.
- submit the choice school calendar to the district boards of education responsible for providing transportation services by May 15 preceding the school year in which transportation is being requested. The school calendar must include the opening and closing times of the school day, days when school is closed, and any schedule which is less than or extended beyond the regular school day.
- certify, on forms prescribed by the Commissioner, that the students who receive transportation services or aid in lieu of transportation were enrolled for each semester of the academic year. The certification forms shall be completed and returned to the district board of education in which each student resides as prescribed by the that board.
- notify the parents of students attending the choice school of their responsibility to complete and return any documents necessary for transportation services or the payment of aid in lieu of transportation required by the district board of education in which the student resides.
- immediately notify the student's resident district board of education in writing when there is a change in the school location.

Resident District Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the district board of education in which the choice school student resides to:

- determine eligibility for transportation services and provide transportation or aid in lieu of transportation to eligible choice school students in accordance with *N.J.S.A.18A:39-1 et. seq.*
- provide transportation to eligible students within the maximum per student expenditure. District boards of education shall not be required to bid for transportation services but may instead pay aid in lieu of transportation when the request for transportation is received after the start of the school year.

If the cost of this transportation will exceed the maximum permitted expenditure, then the parents or legal guardians of the student may choose to pay the amount over the maximum or receive aid in lieu of transportation. Once the district board of education in which the student resides has been notified in writing that the parents or legal guardians agree to pay the amount over the maximum permitted expenditure, the parents or legal guardians are no longer entitled to receive aid in lieu of transportation for that school year.

Aid in lieu of transportation may be adjusted by the district board of education in which the student resides for late registration or early withdrawal from the choice school.

- prepare routes and determine the method of transportation to be provided to the choice school student.
- notify, by August 1, the parents or legal guardians of the choice school student and the administrator of the choice school regarding the transportation services to be provided.
- submit forms to the administrator of the choice school for the January and May certifications.
- send the “Request for Payment of Transportation Aid” voucher to the parents or legal guardians of the choice school student after each semester in order to pay aid in lieu of transportation.
- establish transportation agreement and payment procedures for transportation services for students whose parents have chosen to pay the cost exceeding the maximum permitted expenditure.

FINDING THE DOE STUDENT TRANSPORTATION WEB SITE

The DOE Student Transportation web site is located at:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/finance/transportation/>

This document explaining choice school transportation procedures, as well as the forms necessary to apply for such transportation, can be found on the web site under the heading “Procedures and Related Documents”.