Douglas County School District Special Needs Transportation Parent Handbook



Revision Date 07/27/2026

Welcome to DCSD Specialized Education Transportation

Dear Families,

Welcome! We are honored to be a part of your student's educational journey and appreciate the opportunity to safely transport your child to and from school each day.

We understand that every student has unique needs, and our Specialized Education(SpEd) Transportation team is committed to providing safe, reliable, and supportive transportation services. Our drivers, Transportation Education Assistants (TEAs), dispatchers, and support staff work closely with schools and special education teams to help ensure your student arrives at school ready to learn and returns home safely.

This handbook has been designed to answer common questions about specialized transportation services, including eligibility, safety procedures, communication, what to do if your student will be absent, and what you can expect throughout the school year. We encourage you to review it carefully and keep it as a resource.

We value the partnership we share with families. Open communication is essential to your student's success, and we encourage you to reach out whenever you have questions, concerns, or changes that may affect your student's transportation, this can be done via the Onflo feedback tool.

Thank you for trusting us with one of your most precious passengers. We look forward to serving your family and helping make this a safe and successful school year.

Sincerely,

The Douglas County SpEd Transportation Team

Revision Date 07/27/2026

Special Education Transportation

We are committed to providing safe, reliable transportation for all students. The information below will help families better understand how Douglas County School District Special Needs Transportation works.

Students may qualify for transportation as a related service. Eligibility is determined through the student's educational team and follows federal and state guidelines. If you have questions about special education transportation eligibility, please contact your student's case manager or school staff.

School of Choice & Open Enrollment Transportation Information

Families choosing a school via Open Enrollment typically **do not qualify for transportation services**. This related service is reserved for students whose school placement is mandated by the District IEP process or other district-led decisions, ensuring the student can access their necessary educational programming.

When a family selects a school outside their designated neighborhood area through the choice process, providing transportation becomes the parent or guardian's responsibility. This applies even if the student's IEP includes busing services at their assigned neighborhood school.

In cases where the District determines the educational placement and specialized busing is part of the IEP, services will be arranged following established district transportation protocols and guidelines.

We recognize that travel is a vital factor in school selection. We encourage families to thoroughly review their personal transportation options before finalizing any Open Enrollment choices.

For specific inquiries regarding your student's eligibility for services, please reach out to the Transportation Department or your student's case manager for further assistance.

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SMART tag Parent App

We highly recommend downloading the **SMART tag Parent App** to follow your student's riding activity. The app shows the approximate location of the bus, when your child scans on and off of the bus, if the bus is running behind, or if the bus will arrive early. Signing up for the app allows district transportation to contact you with up-to-date notifications of any transportation issues through the registered email addresses and/or push notifications.

Students who require a new or replacement SMART tag card will receive this through their bus driver or aide.

Students who receive Transportation as a Related Services part of their IEP will not be charged for transportation.

Students must use their SMART tag card to swipe on and off the bus on a daily basis.

Students with disabilities are required to have an adult meet the bus by default. If your student is able to enter the house alone, please make sure that your student's Transportation Service Supplement (TSS) reflects this information. In addition, please contact your Transportation Terminal for your area and ask them to remove the Guardian requirement.

If your student does require a guardian and you need additional guardians added, please add them through the Parent App. We can not release your student to anyone who is not listed within the SMART Tag system.

SMART tag App iOS and Android SMART tag Parent FAQ Link

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Transportation Request Process

The process starts with the school and/or caseworker and an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting. During this meeting, it will be determined if a student is eligible for transportation as a related service.

If it is determined that transportation is a Related Service:

- The case manager will submit the request to DCSD's Transportation Scheduling Department
- Once the Scheduling Department receives the notification, it takes up to **10 business days** to finalize transportation arrangements for your child.
    - If your student is attending their neighborhood school and is able to participate in Least Restrictive Environment Busing (Neighborhood Route) this will be considered first.
    - If attending a Center-Based school, or a Neighborhood Bus is not appropriate, a SPED bus will be considered next.
    - If a SPED bus is not available or is not an appropriate option a Third Party Company will be considered.
    - Parent mileage reimbursement is an option if there is not a district bus available and you choose not to utilize a third party.
- Once transportation is finalized, a transportation scheduler will notify you via email or phone with bus stop information, type of transportation, and the start date for your student.
- Please keep your contact information up to date. Transportation uses this information to contact you in case of emergency, if bus stop times changes, or if routes change. This information can be updated through your school's Registrar.

If your student is not riding, please contact **TEXT or CALL**

Castle Rock 724-952-3308

Highlands Ranch 720-664-7775

Parker 720-664-7790

Please include the following information:

- Student's Full Name And/Or Student ID Number
- School of Attendance
- Date(s) They Will Be Out
- Portion Of The Day (AM, PM, or ALL)

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If you need to contact your Student's terminal, please call **303-387-0415** and select the appropriate option for the area you live. (Castle Rock, Highlands Ranch, and Parker)

Please **DO NOT** ask for your driver or bus aide's personal contact information. All communication should be directed to the School or Terminal staff only.

Bus Stops

- Students should be ready 5 minutes prior to scheduled bus pick up times
    - As a courtesy, bus drivers will wait up to 3 minutes past the scheduled bus pick up time. After that time the bus will proceed. Once the bus leaves the stop the bus will **NOT** return. The parents will now be responsible for transporting their own student(s) to school that day.
    - In the afternoon if the parents are not at the stop to receive their student at the drop off time, the driver will wait at the stop for 3 minutes and then proceed on their route while communicating with their dispatch office for further instructions regarding student drop off.
        - Dispatch will attempt to contact family to make arrangements
            - If dispatch can not get a hold of anyone the driver will complete their route, or wait five minutes, if your stop is the last stop.
            - If the family is still not home the driver will contact dispatch and proceed to the terminal, at that the dispatch or a supervisor will contact the Department of Human Services.
            - When the driver returns to the terminal the student will be released to DHS

School Bus Routes

Douglas County Transportation takes great pride in our trained staff and specialized equipment for students with special needs. Our bus drivers and

bus assistants go through several weeks of intense training in order to provide the best service for all students.

Transporting Unsafe Items

CDE Regulations 4204-R-223.01 School transportation vehicles shall not transport any items, materials, or equipment which in any way would endanger the lives, health, or safety of the students and school transportation vehicle operator.

- The item may not take up an entire seat.
- The item may not protrude into the aisle at all.
- The item may not protrude above the back of the seat.
- The item may not lay on the floor unsecured without tie-downs.
- Skateboards and portable scooters are prohibited.
- Flags are prohibited unless they can be broken down and fit completely in a closed bag.
- The item may not be made of glass or be a sharp object, that could be a danger to others in the event of a sudden stop or accident.
- No item that could be used as a weapon or turn into a projectile is allowed
- Student must be able to hold securely in their lap without obstructing their face and upper torso

Weather Delays and Closures

For information regarding Douglas County Policy on Weather Delays and Closure Click Here

Third Party Transportation

For general questions or to report any issues with a third party company, please contact the District third party team at **303-387-0584** or through email at trans-sped-tpc.usergroup@dcsdk12.org.

These companies are thoroughly vetted through our strategic sourcing department and must have additional insurance, provide background checks, pass drug and alcohol testing, and must meet the same standards of training as our own staff**.**

- Third party transportation is offered when there is not a district school bus available to transport your student.
- Third party vehicles run on the same premise as school buses. They transport students to school in the morning and transport home in the afternoon following a set schedule. Any changes to your student's transportation must be initiated through their IEP team and may take up to 10 business days to implement once the corrections are received by the TPC team.
    - Third party transportation is not an on-demand taxi service.
- **If your student needs to arrive at school later or leave school early, i.e. for testing days, for a doctor's appointment, illness, or family outing, the family will be responsible for transportation at that time.**
- If your student does not need their car service ride for any reason, **please contact the correct company to cancel the ride** for the specific days that are not needed. This helps to avoid unnecessary trips to your home and will keep your transportation from being put on hold for three consecutive non-cancelled/not utilized rides.
    - CTI- **(303)923-3788 EXT 2**
    - Noah Cares- **(303)960-0039**
    - Hop Skip Drive- **844-467-7547, presione el 8 para español, or cancel in the Hop Skip Drive app.**
    - EverDriven- **1(855)589-6178 or cancel in the VIP app**
- Please have your student ready five minutes before the scheduled pick up time to expedite transportation. Wait time for students to get into the car is company specific- please contact your company for questions.
- If the driver waits the specified amount of time and the student does not get into the car, they will continue on with their route.

- **If the driver leaves after their wait time, the family will be responsible for transportation. Cars are not able to return.**
- If Douglas County School District is closed due to inclement weather, no students will be transported to any schools regardless of their open/delayed status.
- If your student is offered a district bus route, they are not eligible for third party transportation. If your student is not offered a bus route, and you choose not to use a third party company, we can offer parent mileage reimbursement.

Parent Mileage Reimbursement

If you choose to transport your own special needs student rather than utilizing a third party car service and would like to be reimbursed for mileage, please contact your student's IEP team to have the transportation request updated.

- Mileage is reimbursed at the current rate determined by the IRS- it can vary.
- A spreadsheet is mailed to the parent email on file and needs to be filled out and resubmitted to the correct district email by the 5th of the month following the request.
- Mileage can only be reimbursed from the home to the school and then back home for AM and PM. (Mileage to additional schools, or errands on the way to school or back home do not count.)

Student Not Riding School Bus

If your student is not riding, please contact **TEXT or CALL**

Castle Rock 724-952-3308

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