

Current state guidance with regards to the transportation of **students with disabilities** from home to school and school to home is discriminatory and inconsistent with practices for regular education students in the state of Pennsylvania. Furthermore, the guidance issued on October 1, 2004 is costing taxpayers more money than necessary for the transportation of these public-school students.

The primary flaw of this guidance is that home school districts do not have to be responsible for transporting special needs students, who by their IEP, are in need of accommodations in how they travel to and from school.

Many students with disabilities require personalized transportation options, especially in urban areas where home school districts normally expect students to use public transportation to travel from school to home and home to school.

These students with disabilities are not capable of displaying essential safety skills needed to responsibly travel using public transportation. If these students were enrolled in their local neighborhood public schools, the home school district would be responsible for transporting them in vans or other more personalized transportation accommodations to ensure their safe transport.

The guidance issued in 2004 states, "although schools are required to provide transportation for the students, school districts are not required to provide the modifications or accommodations (such as specialized equipment or personnel to accompany the student) for such students. Provision of modifications or accommodations in a student's IEP or Section 504 plan are the obligation of the charter school because it is the charter school that owes the student a free and appropriate public education."

However, the reimbursement formula for special education does not provide for transportation of special needs students. Furthermore, if the home school district utilizes its existing fleet of contracted or district owned transport vehicles, the cost of this transport would be significantly reduced to whoever would pay the bill and ultimately the taxpayers of Pennsylvania.

Simply stated, the home school district should provide for the transportation of students with disabilities from home to school and school to home when that student travels to their charter school. This is another unfunded cost passed on to Charter Schools that could be alleviated in a more cost-effective manner if the home school district is required to provide the transportation and, if necessary, charge the charter school a portion of that specialized transportation cost depending upon the number of students being transported by a given vehicle.

The October 2004 Basic Education Circular (BEC) includes the following language that supports the above as follows, "the Department strongly recommends that, because school districts have expertise and capacity to provide specialized transportation, school districts should provide the specialized transport of students with disabilities and section 504 students, if requested by the charter school, and bill the charter school, for such modifications or accommodations above and beyond the normal cost of transportation."

This lack of cooperation and apparent discrimination is both unfair to our special needs students and costly to the taxpayers of Pennsylvania.

For more information or to further discuss this issue, please contact Ana Meyers, Executive Director, at a.meyers@pacharters.org



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