



## OFFICE OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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### Procedures to Request OPT Services

The Office of Pupil Transportation is responsible for coordinating transportation services for students who attend approximately 3,000 public and nonpublic schools located in New York City and in surrounding areas. Transportation to and from these schools is available to eligible New York City pupils according to the Department of Education's eligibility requirements. For general education pupils, eligibility depends upon and varies with the student's *grade level* and the *distance from home to school*. Information on pupil eligibility can be found on OPT's website at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/OPTResources/default.htm>

In addition, Chancellor's Regulation A-801, found at the following link:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/9D0069A0-EF43-416C-A4D1-7B3A13334896/40303/A801.pdf>

delineates the specific criteria used to determine a pupil's eligibility. It is the goal of the Office of Pupil Transportation to arrange for the provision of safe and reliable transportation services to and from school for New York City children. However, part of this responsibility rests with the administrators of the schools that use these services and on whom we rely for critical information. To this end, there are procedures that must be followed by the school to guarantee comprehensive and continuous service. These are explained below.

Before service can be initiated, a school must submit the following to the Office of Pupil Transportation:

1. **Request for Service form** – **All schools** must complete this two page form that includes space for the name, address, and phone and fax number of the school, the name of the Principal, the grade range, the number of students attending the school, the type of school, the school's session time, the names and contact information for the school's transportation coordinators, and other information important for transportation.
2. **Certificate of Occupancy** – **Non-public schools**, including charter schools not housed in NYC school buildings, must submit a copy of a current Certificate of Occupancy (or its equivalent) for the building in which the school is housed, or a "letter of no objection" from the appropriate municipal Building Department, indicating that the building has been approved for use as a school or a facility with classrooms. In addition, non-public schools must remain in compliance with all building codes during the period when transportation services are provided by OPT.

### Procedures to Request OPT Services (con't)

3. Curriculum Certificate – **Non-public** schools must also have a curriculum that has been certified as meeting New York State standards prior to the provision of any transportation service and must maintain an approved curriculum during the period when transportation services are provided by OPT. Curriculum certification may be accomplished in either of two ways:
  - Non-public schools may contact the Community Superintendent of the district in which the school is located and request that the curriculum be reviewed for certification. When the curriculum has been certified, a copy of the certification letter must be forwarded to OPT.
  - In lieu of a certification letter, non-public schools may provide OPT with their “BEDS” number, which will also satisfy the curriculum certification requirements. The “BEDS” (Basic Educational Data System) number is issued by the New York State Education Department (see material at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/beds/home.shtm> for more information).
4. List of Pupils – **All schools requesting transportation services** must provide a list identifying the pupils for whom transportation is being requested. This must be submitted electronically using either of the two computer systems provided by the DOE for the purpose. Non-public schools use the NPSIS (Non-public School Information System) Website to document each pupil's name, address, date of birth, and grade. Public schools provide these data using ATS (Automate the Schools). **If service is being requested for the following September, indicate the pupil's grade for the following September.**

Upon receipt and review of the items above, OPT will determine the school's eligibility to receive transportation services. If all documentation is correct and complete, a five-digit school code will be assigned by OPT. The first two digits identify the geographic district in which the school is located and the following three digits will identify the school itself. The OPT code assigned is unique to each school, is location specific, and is how OPT identifies the school for transportation purposes. As such, it is essential that you employ this code whenever you contact OPT.

After an OPT code has been assigned, the distance eligibility of each child for whom transportation is requested will be determined using computer software provided by the Department of City Planning. This is our “official” database for distance determinations and is taken as definitive in any dispute about distances based on references to other mapping applications such as MapQuest, Google, etc. Once pupil eligibility for transportation is established, OPT will attempt to provide the type of service as indicated on the Request for Transportation Service Form.

For schools that request yellow bus transportation, OPT will construct routes for pupils in grades K through 6, based on Chancellor's Regulation A-801. A minimum of eleven pupils is required to create a route. Each route is limited to five miles in total length, as measured through all stops to the school. Stops are established along a route at a minimum of one quarter mile apart (an average 4 to 5 blocks) and are located at a point central to a group of pupils. Once a route or routes are established, the school and bus contractor are notified and given copies of the computer printout of routes reflecting the location of each stop and the number of pupils to be picked up at each stop.

### Procedures to Request OPT Services (con't)

In each instance, the original list of pupils submitted is returned to the school. The list will indicate the eligibility or ineligibility of each pupil and, in the case of yellow bus transportation, the bus stop to which eligible pupils are assigned.

Eligible pupils in grades K through 6, for whom there is no contract bus route or who cannot be accommodated on a route devised for pupils attending the school, are eligible for full-fare MetroCards for use on common carriers. MetroCards are **not** provided for parents of general education pupils who may accompany their young children to school. Eligible pupils in grades 7 through 12 will also be provided with full fare MetroCards for use on NYCTA subway, NYCTA bus lines, or franchise carrier bus lines.

Pupils who live one-half mile or more from school, but do not meet the Chancellor's minimum distance criteria for free transportation, may receive a half-fare MetroCard provided as a courtesy by the New York City Transit Authority. The half-fare MetroCard is good **only** for surface (bus) transit: they cannot be used on subways or on MTA Express Buses.

There is a moderate amount of work involved at the school level in order to keep transportation related issues in order and transportation running smoothly. The following are some of the major considerations:

- Before deciding that your school should have yellow bus service, it would be wise to consider the environment and traffic conditions surrounding the school. Narrow streets, one-way streets, high concentrations of residential parking on streets in front of and around the school, all present particular challenges in relation to picking up and dropping off children in front of the school. When school buses cannot turn onto streets that pass in front of the school building, for example, it may prove necessary to pick up and drop off at the nearest street corner. This, in turn, may require that school personnel go to the corner to meet especially young children and escort them to the school entrance.
- Once routes and stops are created for your school, generally in mid-July, the "ridership" will be posted on our website (your school will given a user ID and password to view it and parents will also have the ability to view their child's information on our web site by entering their child's ID number and date of birth). The ridership list will show which students are routed, to what bus stop, and what bus route. Two things need to be done with this information –
  - It should be used as a guide for *someone* to be outside at the end of the day, to know which student is supposed to get on which bus, and
  - The ridership information will need to be entered by *someone* into the individual student's ATS or NPSIS records in September (this is done one time on a large scale, but needs to be updated if a student moves and needs to use a different stop, etc.).
- Also, *someone* may need to be outside the school in the morning to help younger students off the bus and into the building.

### **Procedures to Request OPT Services (con't)**

- Once the initial set of bus stops is created, the school “owns and manages” these stops. This means that it is possible to (a) request creation of a new bus stop when a new student enters the school or a current student moves, (b) change the location of an existing bus stop, or (c) delete a bus stop if no one is using the stop. All of this is done via an on-line application on the OPT web site.
- *Someone* should also be responsible for communicating to OPT any “problems” with busing (e.g. route K1234 was 30 minutes late today, or route K9876 didn’t come in the PM until 45 minutes after school ended, etc.). This may be communicated in one of two ways (or both): OPT has an on line “violations” application where it can be entered, or there is a Customer Service telephone number that can be called (718-392-8855).
- Students who end up NOT being routed for a bus stop, yet are eligible for “transportation” can be issued a MetroCard. OPT sends the MetroCards to the school and *someone* at the school needs to be responsible for distributing the cards to the students and assigning that particular card (each card has a unique serial number) to that particular student in ATS.
- Also, if the student loses the MetroCard card (or if it rips, gets stolen, etc.) that card needs to be deactivated in ATS or NPSIS and a new card assigned. Once any “extra” cards at the school are distributed, more cards can be requested via an email to OPT.
- Lastly, once service to a school has been initiated, student documentation must be maintained on a continuous basis using either NPSIS or ATS for the following:
  - To enter a new student who is eligible for transportation
  - To delete an existing pupil record.
  - To update/correct an existing pupil record.

Once transportation services are established for your school, should you have any questions, contact the office of Pupil Transportation at 718-784-8855.