



2017 -2018

TRANSPORTATION

HANDBOOK

**Transportation Procedures for Students,
Parents, Guardians & Program Providers**

**Assabet Valley Collaborative Transportation
28 Lord Road, Suite 125
Marlborough, MA 01752**

508-460-0491, ext. 11 Fax: 508-460-0493

The Assabet Valley Collaborative ensures equal employment/educational opportunities/affirmative action regardless of race, color, creed, national origin or sex, in compliance with Title VI and Title IX, or handicap, in compliance with Section 504.

Updated June 2017

Providing joint programs and services for the school districts of: Assabet Valley Region. Berlin/Boylston Region. Berlin. Boylston. Grafton. Hudson. Marlborough. Maynard. Millbury. Nashoba Region. Northborough. Northborough/Southborough. Southborough. Shrewsbury. Westborough

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your school district contracts with the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) for transportation services for students going to and from school. AVC contracts with a transportation vendor for this service; the vendor owns the fleet, employs drivers and establishes routes. Throughout this handbook, the term “vendor” refers to the transportation company that transports students. Provider’s names and telephone numbers are listed at the end of this handbook.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with important information for your student’s transportation through AVC, which provides special education transportation for our districts’ students.

The Collaborative will be coordinating transportation services for your student this year. A representative from the vendor will contact you to discuss details of pick-up and drop-off times at your home. Please share any information you feel will help your student’s transportation to go smoothly. As you do so, please be aware that all changes to student’s transportation must be initiated by the Special Education/Pupil Services Office in your district. **Neither driver, vendor nor Collaborative can make any change to your student’s transportation schedule unless directed to do so through your district’s office.**

As an enhanced safety measure for students and drivers, our vendor’s vehicles are equipped with video cameras. These devices record both audio and video and are the property of the vendor. The files (tapes) recorded are also the property of the vendor and hold up to 380 hours of route footage (approximately 2 months of driving). After this time, the footage is recyclable and overwritten.

If your student is ill or cannot attend school on a particular day, please contact the transportation vendor directly. If you choose to bring your student to school, please contact the vendor so that they will know to provide transportation home, if needed. If you choose to pick-up your student from school, please notify the vendor and the driver will be informed not to pick-up your student. If you call the vendor after business hours, an answering machine and emergency numbers are available.

Problems or concerns relating to any aspect of your student’s transportation should be brought to the attention of the Collaborative as soon as possible. Keeping all lines of communication open between districts, parents, transportation providers and the Collaborative will enable us to provide safe, specialized and dependable transportation for your student. We rely upon your feedback to do so.

Please contact me at the telephone numbers listed below with any questions or concerns. Wishing you and our students a Happy and Healthy School year!

Sincerely,

Janice L. Gallon

Janice L. Gallon, Transportation Coordinator

508-460-0491, ext. 11 — during business hours 774-285-3645 — after hours and emergencies

jgallon@avcollaborative.org

PARENT / STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

We ask that you review the following vehicle safety and behavior responsibilities with your student.

1. The following is an excerpt from the Code of Massachusetts Regulations Chapter 90 Section 7AA: **A passenger in a motor vehicle in any way who is under the age of 8 shall be fastened and secured by a child passenger restraint, unless such passenger measures more than 57 inches in height. The child passenger restraint shall be properly fastened and secured according to the manufacturer's instructions.**

In most instances the vendor will provide a car/booster seat when required. Provision of specialized car/booster seats based on a student's specific physical needs, will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Physician documentation for specialized seating may be required.

2. ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR SEAT BELTS

3. Students should be ready for pick-up ten (10) minutes before the vehicle is due to arrive. Please wait with your student until the vehicle arrives.

4. Please notify the vendor if you drive your student to school but expect him/her to be transported home by the vendor at dismissal.

5. A parent or authorized person should be at home to receive your student. Students are not allowed to be picked up or dropped off anywhere except at their own homes unless the **DISTRICT** has authorized a different arrangement. Parents are required to provide Emergency Contact information for their student in the event we cannot reach the parent in an emergency. Changes in transportation require a minimum of **48 hour notice**.

6. Drivers are not responsible for articles left in the vehicle. Students must carry personal belongings in a bag clearly marked with their name on it.

7. Pets are not allowed on vehicles.

8. Medications cannot be transported on the vehicle. Per the Department of Public Health CMR 210.008 requires, "a parent or parent/guardian-designated responsible adult shall deliver all prescription medications to be administered by school personnel or to be taken by self - medicating students, if required by the self-medicating agreement, to the school nurse or other responsible person designated by the school nurse." Therefore, if your child requires medication during the school day, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to deliver it directly to the school nurse. If your child is in a residential program please make the necessary arrangements to have adequate prescription medication at home as Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) Transportation cannot transport medication. ***Neither AVC drivers nor students may carry any medication (except Epi-Pens and inhalers - see below) to be administered by school personnel on the van for transport to school.***

PARENT / STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES - *continued*

Management of students with Life-Threatening Allergies

If your student has a life-threatening allergy, you are required to follow the protocol outlined below:

- Inform the School District and the AVC Transportation Office of your student's specific allergy prior to the start of the school year (or as soon as diagnosed).
- Provide the School District and AVC Transportation Office with your student's Allergy Action Plan and current medication order for Epi-Pen from licensed provider.
- Ensure that an up dated twin pack Epi-Pen is in your student's backpack each and every day and attached the provided yellow twist tie to the backpack.
- Provide emergency contact information.
- Provide update as needed on student's allergy status.
- If your student is developmentally able, teach them to recognize the first signs of an allergic reaction and to communicate as soon as they feel a reaction starting.

Please do not hesitate to contact AVC Transportation at 508-460-0491, ext. *11.

9. Whereas drivers/monitors are not allowed to escort student to/from home or school entrance, parents or other authorized personnel must assist the student on and off the vehicle. If you wish to allow your student to be dropped off without an adult present, you must notify your district in writing. You may also send an email giving permission for this to the Transportation Coordinator at: jgallon@avcollaborative.org

10. Parents/Guardians will be held financially responsible for damages to the vehicle caused by their student.

11. Parents/Guardians must notify their **SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE** of all changes of address at least **one week** in advance to allow the vendor time to make any changes necessary in routing.

12. Cell phone usage by students is not allowed on the vehicle.

13. Transportation vendor staff may assign seats to students being transported. Program staff may request seating changes by contacting the vendor's office.

14. Weapons of any kind are not allowed on the vehicle.

PARENT / STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES - *continued*

15. NO SMOKING, USE OF TOBACCO OF ANY TYPE, FOOD or DRINK is allowed on the vehicle.

16. If the student will not require transportation due to illness, appointment, or other circumstances, parents should contact the transportation vendor first and then the Collaborative to cancel transportation as soon as possible.

17. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 90, Section 16 prohibits any person from unnecessarily idling the engine of any motor vehicle on school property for a foreseeable period of time longer than 5 minutes.

SCHOOL / STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

1. School staff/personnel will be present when students are dropped off and picked up. Drivers may drop off and pick-up students no later than ten (10) minutes before or after the designated program time. Please contact the Collaborative Office if problems occur with inconsistent arrival and/or departure times.

2. Make sure seat belts are securely fastened and students are orderly.

3. Periodically review rules and regulations of passenger safety with the students throughout the year.

4. Do not send student home with sharp objects, loose toys, balloons or other large items.

5. Please consider preparing the student for their ride home. If the student has a challenging day which may impact the ride home, please convey information to the driver that may help with the ride home. We appreciate your assistance and welcome your feedback and communication to resolve challenges that may arise on the vehicle.

6. If a student is dismissed from school early as a result of illness, suspension or any unexpected reason, please call the transportation vendor to cancel transportation.

DRIVER / VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Drive all routes prior to the start of school. It is your responsibility to arrive at your destination at the designated time. This is only possible by knowing route directions.

2. Contact parents with pick-up and drop off times. Do not wait more than three (3) minutes at each stop. Driver must direct parents to call their **SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE** to request any changes in these times.

DRIVER / VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES - continued

3. Drivers are responsible for arriving no sooner than ten (10) minutes before and after designated program times.
4. Contact the Collaborative when students do not use transportation services for more than 2 days.
5. Drivers are required to attend all training events required by the vendor and Collaborative to meet the needs of students transported.
6. **NO SMOKING, USE OF TOBACCO OF ANY TYPE, FOOD or DRINK is allowed on the vehicle.**
7. Drivers are **PROHIBITED** from transporting medications to or from the school as per Department of Public Health CMR 210.008.
8. No refueling will take place with students on the vehicle.
9. Drivers/monitors will check to see that seat belts are securely fastened before putting the vehicle in motion.
10. Drivers operating wheel chair vehicles will follow all safety guidelines outlined in wheelchair transportation training.
11. Drivers are not allowed to leave the vehicle with students on board. If an emergency occurs, the driver will secure the vehicle in Park, turn off the engine, remove keys from the ignition and secure emergency brake.
12. Only authorized school or collaborative personnel and assigned students will be allowed to ride in the vehicle.
13. Drivers or monitors do not escort students to/from the vehicle to school or home entrance.
14. Windows can be opened at the discretion of the driver. They should not be lowered more than four (4) inches to prevent personal injury and property loss.
15. If a behavior problem arises, inform the dispatch office and if necessary find a safe location to stop the vehicle. Instruct students the vehicle will remain stopped until the behavior stops. **A behavior/incident report is due to the Collaborative by the end of the business day for incidents that occur before noon on that day. For incidents that occur later in the day, the report should be sent to the Collaborative no later than 10:00am the next business day.**
16. If a student shows symptoms of illness, including seizures, the driver will inform the dispatch office and if necessary, find a safe location to stop the vehicle. The driver shall observe symptoms and call 911 as necessary.

DRIVER / VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES - continued

17. Drivers should check for personal belongings left behind on the vehicle.

18. State law prohibits the use of cell phones while driving.

19. Radio will be played at the discretion of the driver while students are in the vehicle. Driver should be aware of any noise sensitivity a student on his/ her vehicle may have before doing so.

20. As required by AVC, appropriate and respectful attire is required at all times of drivers and monitors. T-shirts with offensive pictures or writing are not allowed.

21. All incidents/accidents must be reported to your supervisor or dispatcher immediately using communication radio or phone as warranted. AVC should be notified of accidents immediately by phone and after emergency personnel are dispatched. **An incident / accident report must be completed and faxed to the Collaborative by the end of the business day for accidents that occur before noon on that day. For accidents that occur later in the day, the report should be sent to the Collaborative no later than 10:00am the next business day.**

22. Drivers and transportation staff are required to attend problem-solving meetings when scheduled to address routes that have been unsuccessful or unsafe.

23. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, Section 51A-E places an important responsibility on those who work with students to report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they have reasonable cause to believe that a student under the age of eighteen years is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse, including sexual abuse or neglect. This is a mandated responsibility which AVC takes very seriously. If a driver/monitor suspects abuse or neglect, you are mandated to report your suspicion. If you have any concern that a student may be suffering from any form of abuse, please contact the Collaborative office immediately.

24. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 90, Section 16 prohibits any person from unnecessarily idling the engine of any motor vehicle on school property for a foreseeable period of time longer than 5 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED ON VEHICLES AT ALL TIMES:

Student lists containing names, addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact, pertinent medical information and program destination.

- Three (3) flares
- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit
- One (1) pair chock blocks

FAILURE TO BE EQUIPPED WITH THE LISTED ITEMS MAY RESULT IN A ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR (\$100.00) FINE IMPOSED BY THE REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLES. .

BEHAVIOR / SAFETY CONCERNS:

AVC vendors are responsible for appropriate supervision and monitoring of students on the vehicle according to the needs identified through the transportation contract. Vendor staff is responsible for supervising the conversations and behavior of students in the vehicle. If students on the vehicle demonstrate behavior or make comments that may predict a real or potential threat to a student, staff, parent or other individual (in the vehicle and beyond transportation), it is imperative that this information be communicated immediately to AVC transportation staff who is responsible for sharing that information with the appropriate parties, including program staff, school district personnel and parents.

All behavior concerns (both physical and verbal) are to be documented in writing through the behavior incident report form, which is to be faxed to the **Collaborative by the end of the business day for accidents that occur before noon on that day. For accidents that occur later in the day, the report should be sent to the Collaborative no later than 10:00am the next business day.**

In the event that behavior or statements made by a student in the vehicle constitute a threat of violence, AVC will follow the discipline policy listed below, which may include suspension from transportation for a period of time. Ongoing safety concerns will warrant a meeting with all parties to determine if additional supervision is required beyond the scope of the current transportation service contract.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Proper student behavior is important. In order to maintain safety in the vehicles, students are expected to maintain proper behavior at all times. If safety is jeopardized because of improper behavior, disciplinary action will be taken. The procedures which follow will apply in most cases when the driver believes the misconduct has created a safety hazard on the vehicle. Some instances may warrant **IMMEDIATE ACTION**.

The driver will handle any minor infractions through discussion with the student (s) and/or the assignment of permanent seats. The driver may wish to consult the dispatcher for instructions regarding communications with parents; in cases where there may be imminent danger the parent/guardian should be informed immediately. If the problem cannot be resolved, the driver will complete an incident report provided by the Collaborative. The driver will note the specific violation and return it to the contractor. The contractor will review the report and contact the Collaborative Office. Depending upon the infraction, i.e. fighting, or threatening, immediate suspension from transportation would be applied. The respective district's Special Education

DISCIPLINE POLICY- continued

office will be notified of the suspension, followed by parent and program notification. Parents/Guardian will be responsible for transportation during this time.

Further infractions may result in a meeting with the student, parent/guardian, driver, appropriate school staff and a representative from the Collaborative Transportation office. A parent/guardian must be present. The primary focus of this meeting is to develop a plan to ensure that AVC can safely provide transportation for the student — each plan will have input from school staff, transportation providers, parents, sending district and student. Individual behavior plans and emergency plans will be developed and implemented as a result of this meeting.

If incidents continue to prevent AVC from being able to safely transport the student because of behavior, the student may be suspended from transportation services for a time to be determined.

PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS

AVC is committed to providing high quality transportation services to our students, families, and districts in order to deliver students to school programs safely and ready to begin programming. In order to maintain high quality services for all students, we rely on parents, schools and students to alert us to problems, concerns, and issues as they arise. If any party has a concern regarding transportation services, please contact our AVC transportation office by phone or email. Our goal is to investigate concerns and respond promptly and thoroughly. Schools, parents/guardians, and other parties are encouraged to submit concerns in writing. Written concerns should be directed to the AVC Coordinator of Transportation, AVC Assistant Executive Director of Finance and Operations and/or the AVC Executive Director who will review and respond to them.

Written correspondence may be addressed to the above staff at:

**Assabet Valley Collaborative
28 Lord Road, Suite 125
Marlborough, MA 01752**

**Telephone: 508-460-0491
Transportation Coordinator ext. 11
Assistant Executive Director of Finance and Operations ext. 15
Executive Director ext. 14**

jgallon@avcollaborative.org (Janice Gallon, Transportation Coordinator)

amahan@avcollaborative.org (Anne Mahan, Assistant Executive Director)

cummins@avcollaborative.org (Cathy Cummins, Executive Director)

SNOW CANCELLATION POLICY

We urge parents/guardians to use their discretion when sending students to school on snowy or icy days. Please arrange to be home or to have another person at home to receive your student in case of early dismissal in bad weather. It is important that we have Emergency Contact information for this purpose.

1. **SNOW CANCELLATION:** Your student will NOT be transported if the district in which you reside cancels school or the district in which the program is located cancels school. Here are two examples:

a. Student “A” lives in Hudson and goes to school in Westborough. Hudson cancels school - student “A” will not be transported.

b. Student “A” lives in Hudson and goes to school in Westborough. Westborough cancels school - student “A” will not be transported.

If a district cancels school due to weather/road conditions, but the specific program your student attends chooses to remain open, road conditions are a priority and transportation will not be provided due to unsafe conditions presented

All cancellations of AVC programs will be transmitted via automated messaging, local TV and radio stations:

Channel 4, WBZ-TV, and Channel 5, ABC WCVB,-TV;

WBZ News Radio, 1030 AM

Internet

avcollaborative.org

www.WBZ1030.com; www.WBZTV.com

<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/weather/grid.html> —click on
“Closings”

www.vanpooltransportation.com

2. **DELAYED OPENINGS:** On days when weather is poor but is expected to improve during the day, school districts may announce a delayed opening. If the program the student attends or the school district in which the student resides is starting one or two hours later, the student will be picked up approximately one or two hours later than usual.

In some cases, the student’s program may NOT be delayed on a particular day but your driver may drive for more than one program and may need to make an adjustment in the pick-up time of the student. In this case, drivers will call parents/guardians to discuss the pick-up time.

All students will be released at their regular dismissal time on those days when the program starts later.

If you have any questions about this policy or need clarification, please call the Collaborative office at 508-460-0491, ext. 11.

As a parent/guardian you may decide not to send your student to school on a day with a delayed opening. Please contact the vendor as soon as possible.

It is possible that delayed openings may cause transportation delays. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we strive to provide safe transportation for your student throughout the year.

VEHICLE BREAKDOWN POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. The driver will contact the dispatcher as soon as possible. The driver will remain with the student (s) at all times.
2. The dispatcher will work to solve the problem. When necessary, a replacement vehicle will be provided in a timely manner.
3. The vendor will notify the Collaborative office as soon as possible. Programs, parents and guardians will also be notified by the vendor and/or AVC.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURE

1. When an accident occurs, the driver must contact his Supervisor immediately.
2. The Vendor will notify the Collaborative office. Programs, parents and guardians will be notified by the vendor and/or the Collaborative.
3. When an accident occurs, the driver may not leave the vehicle until the proper authorities have arrived.
4. Make sure all necessary information is exchanged between drivers involved in an accident.
5. Complete the Collaborative approved accident form as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. A copy must be faxed to the Collaborative office upon completion. Such report is due to the Collaborative by the end of the business day for accidents that occur before noon on that day. For accidents occurring later in the day, the report should be sent to the Collaborative no later than 10:00am the next business day.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Our students and families have a right to privacy. Disclosure of confidential information to unauthorized parties is prohibited. Drivers/monitors/dispatchers should communicate openly with school staff, special education administrators and AVC, and should be very careful not to disclose personally identifiable information regarding students and families with unauthorized parties.

Assabet Valley Collaborative has been providing special education transportation services for more than 25 years and is dedicated to providing safe and reliable services. Our highest priority is to provide a safe and comfortable ride for students to insure they arrive at school, ready to learn. We understand that our students are traveling with us for a variety of unique reasons and we rely upon parents, students, program staff and district personnel to partner with us in developing the best options to meet each student's needs.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy school year!

Contact Information

**Assabet Valley Collaborative
Transportation Coordinator
508-460-0491, ext. 11**

**Transportation Vendor:
Van Pool
508-919-5054**