



Appendix G

Rules & Regulations for Specialized Transportation

2012 - 2013

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1) Philosophy of Transportation Service

STEO, the Upper Canada District School Board and the Catholic Board of Eastern Ontario cover an area in excess of 12,000 square kilometres. Most exceptional pupils attend their neighbourhood schools. Some attend special programs in out-of-boundary schools. A few students attend Provincial or Demonstration schools.

Special Transportation

The first consideration for transportation of exceptional pupils is a regular school bus. Specialized vehicles (i.e. mini-buses, cars/vans, or wheelchair accessible vehicles) are provided when required. Given the wide dispersion of students, scheduling is a major concern. A special effort is made to plan schedules which benefit both the child and maximize transportation efficiencies.

Some students with special needs are eligible for special transportation:

- Students with physical disabilities which prevent them from accessing the regular school bus.
- Students who are placed in a system-designated class in a school other than their community school.
- Students identified with behavioural disorders, developmental disabilities or autism whose disabilities are of such severity that, for safety reasons, they are unable to walk to school or access the regular school bus.
- Students in care and/or treatment facilities outside their communities.
- Students attending Provincial and Demonstration schools.
- Students attending summer school who have physical disabilities which prevent them from accessing the regular school bus.

During STEO's peak periods (September and February) special transportation could take up to five working days to organize.

2) PURPOSE

This document is for instruction and information for the specialized transportation operator and drivers who operate all vehicles excluding regular yellow buses. Passenger safety and comfort are STEO's first priority. STEO is committed to the safe and efficient transportation of all students. To be effective, it is important that personnel have an awareness of the unique challenges faced by students with special needs. Our objective is to support the development of self-esteem, independence, self-discipline and responsibility in a climate of respect and caring.

If in doubt about the exact meaning of any part of this document, consult with your immediate supervisor or the operator can contact STEO.

Arrangements are made regularly for students with very high needs (i.e. medical, physical) or mental difficulties. These arrangements will be made in cooperation with STEO, Special Education Department, school principal or designate, family and operator.

Guiding Principles

- Drivers must have training that is necessary to transport a particular student which may include First Aid.
- All vehicles must be equipped with a two way radio or cell phone.
- Drivers must never give food or drink to a student, or allow students to consume food or drink in the vehicle.
- Never leave a passenger who is lost, confused or unable to communicate alone. Should this situation occur, notify your supervisor immediately and follow instructions.
- When arriving to pickup a student at home or at school and the student cannot be found the driver must contact dispatch immediately.
- With special needs students there may be a need for contact with someone at home or at school before the school vehicle or driver leaves the area.
- Car and vans will be required to have signage on the back stating "School Children being transported" and the company name on both sides of the vehicle. The **route number must be displayed on the vehicle, ensuring that the driver's vision is not obstructed.**
- All medical forms forwarded by the school, STEO or parent must be kept in a binder or folder and located close to the driver's station on the school vehicle. The medical forms must be kept confidential and visible by the driver only. The operator must also keep a copy on file in a secure and confidential location. All forms must be removed from the vehicle at the end of the work day.

Mandatory Requirements for Vehicles Transporting Special Needs Students

Item	Purpose
Call-in card with phone numbers and coins	To call for help.
Blunt end scissors or seat belt cutters	To cut seat belts or restraining straps.
Length of rope	For students to hold onto during evacuation.
Blanket or tarpaulin	To spread on ground in assembly area.
Skid cloth	To pull or slide student along school vehicle aisle to exit.
First Aid Kit	In case of injuries.
Blanket	To cover students if required.
Axe	Used to assist in evacuating the school vehicle if required.
Reflectors	To alert other motorists.
Misconduct Book	To report student misconduct to their school.
Log Book	To record daily vehicle inspections.

3) STUDENT/DRIVER RELATIONS

It takes a lot of care and understanding to work with high needs students. The work is very demanding, and it is also very rewarding in that you are both appreciated and respected by those whom you serve.

Developing proper attitudes, good communication skills and working together will provide a successful experience for all. At the beginning of the new school year or when new students are assigned to a route, operators are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the driver, and school principal to review and discuss transportation needs and risks of individual students.

A driver of special needs students will need to possess awareness of the students and their needs. Drivers must have extra patience, mental alertness, flexibility, resourcefulness, enthusiasm, emotional stability, personal warmth and understanding, be polite and courteous. A driver should be able to exercise mature judgement in relation to both the care of high needs students and the responsibilities of driving. Drivers of high needs students need to recognize that the students and their parents have placed a great deal of confidence in their abilities. **Greet the student with a smile.**

All drivers should know something about students with severe disabilities, as some of these students will not be able to communicate verbally with the driver. Communication is the driver's link with the students, the parents and the school. If this communication link is not maintained, the driver may have difficulty solving any problems that arise. The purpose is to acquire the special skills needed to know when there is a problem and what the problem is without being told verbally.

It is vital that the driver communicate regularly with the parents and school to ensure the needs of the children are met.

Discourage students from teasing one another, hitting or throwing anything at another student. Emotional stress may be an influencing factor in a passenger's comfort. Attempt to provide a secure transit environment in which the student feels relaxed. Special methods of imposing discipline:

- a) Set the rules.
- b) Be firm - but gentle.
- c) Be patient - but persistent.
- d) Always be consistent day after day.
- e) Report any unusual actions in detail to the principal or principal designate.

If belts/harness or tie-down systems are required, drivers must ensure students are strapped in the seat assigned to them on first entering the school vehicle, and it must remain fastened for the complete trip.

The Canadian Standards Association recommends that trays that have not been specifically designed for crash safety should be removed and secured separately; or if they are absolutely necessary for positioning of the student, secure the tray to the wheelchair and position it away from the student with energy absorbing padding placed between the tray and student (this second option does not prevent injury to other occupants of the bus).

When students are placed on the vehicle, if they are carrying any heavy articles such as a heavy school bag, take them and place them in a safe storage area.

Wheelchair unit, car or van pickups and drop offs should be made in front of the residence, so that students are not required to cross the street. Where applicable, ensure that each student is delivered into the care of a responsible adult both at the school and home. In the event that a responsible adult is not available, the driver shall radio his/her dispatch for instructions. Check your vehicle to ensure the student has not forgotten any personal items or equipment.

4) DISABILITY AWARENESS

In order for drivers to effectively carry out their responsibilities, they require a reasonable understanding of the various disabilities of the passengers.

The attitude of the driver will have a significant impact on the overall effectiveness and utilization of the specialized transportation service. It is important therefore that the driver have a sensitive and knowledgeable attitude toward students with disabilities, unbiased by possible misconceptions developed through stereotype images or plain ignorance of the facts. He/she should fully appreciate that a disability is not synonymous with illness, nor should he/she unconsciously equate one disability with a range of disabilities. The driver should be forthright, concerned, understanding and not condescending in communicating with and assisting passengers.

The following provides a brief description of exceptionalities and definitions of various disabilities and suggestions on how to deal with each.

BEHAVIOUR

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

- a) An inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
- b) Excessive fears or anxieties;
- c) A tendency to compulsive reaction; or
- d) An inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

PHYSICAL

Physical Disability

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.

Blind and Low Vision

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects education performance adversely.

MULTIPLE

Multiple Exceptionalities

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments or disabilities.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:

- a) Is not primarily the result of:
 - Impairment of vision;
 - Impairment of hearing;
 - Physical disability;
 - Developmental disability;
 - Primary emotional disturbance;
 - Cultural difference.
- b) Results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:
 - Receptive language (listening, reading);
 - Language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);
 - Expressive language (talking, spelling, writing)
 - Mathematical computations.
- c) May be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:
 - A perceptual handicap;
 - A brain injury;
 - Minimal brain dysfunction;
 - Dyslexia;
 - Developmental aphasia.

A student with learning disabilities is one who has varied learning difficulties, but possesses at least average intelligence.

How to deal with learning disabled students:

- a) Speak slowly, firmly and clearly, but never with anger or impatience.
- b) Keep rules and limits for the student at a minimum. Keep them confined to the issues concerning proper conduct.
- c) Be patient, persistent and consistent. Progress at times may be slow.

Something to think about: If a student has a healthy body, but one that will not do what the he/she wants it to do - if the student has eyes that see but that do not see things the way other eyes see them - has ears that hear, but that have not learned to hear the way others do - the student cannot tell anyone what the difficulty is; it just seems to the student that he/she is always wrong. No one can see that the student is not like everyone else, so the student is expected to act like everyone else. These are the things that happen to the learning disabled student. This is the kind of behaviour you will have to understand if you are to help the student.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DELAYED

Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- a) An inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;
- b) An ability to profit from special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development.
- c) A limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Students with developmental disabilities may exhibit significant impairment of the general cognitive functioning. They experience severe delay in academic skills in all areas when compared to the skills of his/her chronologic peers. They also experience significant impairment of their adaptive functioning (i.e.: in age appropriate standards of personal independence).

How to deal with these students:

- a) These students take time to adapt. Reaction to a new situation may be very slow. Introduce yourself to the parents and student and show them the school vehicle. Explain the rules of behaviour on the school vehicle, and inform the parents about the schedule.
- b) Use of pictures to explain procedures and rules is helpful.
- c) Set your rules and limits early. These students become set in their behaviour. If certain behaviour is expected on the school vehicle, do not try to demand it half way through the year.
- d) Try to keep a calm, even disposition. These students are very sensitive to changes of feelings, moods, changes in weather, etc.
- e) Do not leave students alone on the school vehicle; they are very unpredictable in their behaviour.

BLIND AND LOW VISION

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects education performance adversely.

How to deal with these students:

- a) The driver will find that the student with visual impairments requires verbal cues as the best means of communicating. Remember, never leave this student alone, but let the student become as independent as possible in getting on and off the school vehicle.
- b) Consideration should be given to the visually impaired student when loading and unloading. The stop should be made as close as possible to the sidewalk and make them aware of how many steps they must climb especially if a different vehicle is used.
- c) When walking with a person who is blind/has low vision, let them take your arm if they wish.
- d) Do not hesitate to use words such as “see”, “look” or “read”. A person who is blind/has low vision will use the same vocabulary words as anyone else.
- e) Describe your surroundings.
- f) Give directions clearly and accurately. Pointing or using phrases as “over there” is of no assistance.
- g) Never distract a guide dog working with a person who is blind/has low vision. The guide dog is responsible for the person and your interference could jeopardize the person’s safety.
- h) Avoid the impulse to rush to the aid of a person who is blind/has low vision. If you are not sure if assistance is needed, ask what you can do to be of assistance.

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development of a diminished or non existent auditory response to sound.

How to deal with these students:

- a) Be gentle though firm and consistent with rules; this student understands more than given credit for. Encourage the student to talk when asking for something. A young child will be very emotional until he/she learns to communicate.
- b) Look directly at the person while speaking.
- c) Speak slowly and clearly; but do not exaggerate and/or overemphasize words.
- d) Body language and facial expression are important factors in communication – try to use both.

- e) Try to maintain eye contact. Eye contact helps convey the feeling of direct communication. If an interpreter is present, continue to talk directly to the deaf person who can turn to the interpreter if the need arises.
- f) Try to re-phrase a thought rather than repeating the same words. If the person doesn't understand you, try to restate the sentence.
- g) Getting the message across is more important than the medium used – do not be embarrassed about communicating with paper and pencil.
- h) The use of pictures is helpful for communicating.

AUTISM SPECTIVE DISORDER

Autism

A neurological disorder that severely affects a child's

- Communication (verbal and non-verbal);
- Social interactions;
- Behaviour (range of interests and activities). (Reference: Wing & Gould 1979)

A student with autism spectrum disorder may also exhibit anxiety, sensory sensitivities and motor coordination difficulties.

Autistic Disorder

Autistic disorder has three major hallmarks: qualitative impairment in social interaction, qualitative impairment in communication, and restricted, repetitive and stereotypical patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. Onset in delays is very early, prior to three years of age. (Reference: DSM IV, 1994)

Rett's Disorder

Rett's disorder is the only subtype of PDD which occurs exclusively in females. In this disorder, development seems normal through the first five months of life, followed by deceleration of head growth, loss of previously acquired purposeful hand skills with subsequent development of stereotyped hand movements, loss of social engagement, appearance of poorly coordinated gait or trunk movements, and severely impaired expressive and receptive language. (Reference: DSM-IV, 1994)

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder is characterized by development that appears normal through the first two years of life. Following this, abnormalities develop in at least two of the following areas: social interaction, communication, and restricted, repetitive, stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. In addition, there is clinically significant loss of previously acquired skills (before age 10), in at least two of the following areas: expressive or receptive language, social skills or adaptive behaviour, bowel or bladder control, play and motor skills. (Reference: DSM-IV, 1994)

Asperger's Syndrome

Asperger's Syndrome is characterized by severe and sustained impairment in social interaction combined with restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests and activities. (Reference: DSM-IV, 1994)

This disorder differs from autism in that “few clinically significant delays in language or cognitive development are apparent and self-help and adaptive behaviours often appear normal.” (Reference: Rapoport & Ismond, 1996)

BEHAVIOURAL STUDENT

A behavioural student may be described as a person who could be:

- a) Very aggressive, loud, argumentative, very active or,
- b) Frequently sullen or quiet and withdrawn.

Behavioural disturbance is usually caused by inconsistency of controls placed on the student by adults. For example: the student may be allowed to do one thing one day and be severely punished the next day for performing the same act. He/she therefore becomes confused and acts out or withdraws.

How to deal with these students:

- a) Maintain a set of clear cut rules, and follow them to the letter. They want to know where they stand at all times. Remember once the student begins to act out he/she cannot stop themselves - you must stop him/her! Any deviation from the rules will only confuse the student and make him/her worse. Be firm, fair and consistent. Be resourceful in discipline areas. These students may have been acting this way for some time, and you will not change their behaviour overnight. With this in mind, it is hoped that drivers will have the patience to perform the job. Where possible, seek advice from the teacher or principal.

EPILEPTIC

There are many types of epilepsy. Some symptoms of epilepsy are sudden repeated attacks of dizziness, with severe abdominal pain, and lost or impaired consciousness. Only a qualified physician can diagnose the presence of epilepsy.

Types of Seizures:

- a) **Grand Mal:** During a Grand Mal seizure an individual loses consciousness, falls down, thrashes around, may bite his/her tongue and may lose control of his/her bladder or bowels. He/she feels no pain and rarely is in serious danger.

Convulsion: The individual cannot swallow his/her tongue and will not choke to death if, when his/her jerking stops, his/her face is turned to the side, so the tongue can drop into the cheek and the saliva can run from his/her mouth. The individual suffering from epilepsy will give the appearance of choking on his/her tongue while actually drowning in his/her own saliva.

- b) **Petit Mal:** During a Petit Mal attack an individual may stare blankly, stumble momentarily, drop an object, or act unconsciously of a few seconds. These seizures may occur many times a day. If you note a student acting in such a manner, do not brush it off as a "clumsy child" but keep an eye open to see if this is a pattern. As a driver, report to a parent or to the principal or school designate for further observation.
- c) **Psychomotor:** During a Psychomotor attack an individual's behaviour is inappropriate to the circumstances. While riding a school bus a student may blink his/her eyes open and shut for a few minutes, stop conversing and just sit smacking their lips or get up and perform useless motions. This behaviour rarely involves violence. A student does not remember what happens during a psychomotor seizure.

How to deal with these students:

- a) Stop your vehicle in a safe place, not in a traffic lane; call dispatch; **remain calm**. You cannot stop a seizure once it has started; the seizure must run its course.
- b) **DO NOT FORCE ANYTHING BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL'S TEETH.** More patients have received serious damage from broken pencils, tongue depressors, etc. from the old belief the epileptic would swallow their tongue if you did not open the mouth.
- c) Try to prevent the individual from striking his/her head or body against any hard or sharp object (roll up a coat for a cushion). Do not interfere with their movements. The muscles are very rigid and you can injure them very easily.
- d) Carefully observe the seizure. Check approximately how long in time and how severe the seizure was so this can be reported.
- e) When the individual stops jerking, **TURN THEIR FACE TO THE SIDE.** Loosen tight clothing.
- f) If the individual having a seizure stops breathing momentarily, **DO NOT PANIC**, this is just part of the seizure.
- g) Most seizures will last only 3 to 7 minutes. It will just seem longer.
- h) On very rare occasions, a person may pass from one seizure to another without regaining full consciousness. When this occurs, use your radio and call for emergency assistance.
- i) When the individual regains consciousness let him/her rest. **DO NOT** open windows. Treat the student for shock by maintaining normal body temperature.

Something to watch for and remember: quick flashes of light may set off a seizure. (Example: days when you have electrical storm, lightening, bright sunshine, flashes of sunlight through branches in a wooded area.)

Always remember that discipline will NOT trigger a seizure, however, it might trigger a temper tantrum. The epileptic student needs the same consistent rules and regulations as any other student for a safe and happy school vehicle ride.

Remember the rest of the students in your vehicle will pretty well reflect your feeling toward the epileptic student and his/her seizures. Remain calm. In a practical sort of way your own tranquillity and realistic acceptance of epilepsy will help others to overcome their uneasy feelings about seizures.

If a student takes any type of seizure it must be reported to the principal or his/her designate or parents.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

A person with a physical disability requires special services in order to develop to their full potential. They may have cerebral palsy, polio, muscular dystrophy, heart condition, accident, spinal bifida, etc...

How to deal with these students:

- a) Be open minded. Take suggestions from parents regarding ways of moving a severely handicapped student. They live with the student's problems every day.
- b) Encourage independence in the student to become more self-reliant.
- c) If you have any questions in handling a physically handicapped student, ask for help from a qualified person at the school, or call the office.
- d) Report to the parent and or school any incident (bump or fall) the student may have received during transportation. Vomiting or nausea may occur after the student is home.

LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

A learning disorder characterized by impairment in comprehension and/or use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors and which may:

- a) Involve one or more of the form, content and function of language in communication; and
- b) Include one or more of the following:
 - Language delay;
 - Dysfluency;
 - Voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

5) TYPES OF WHEELCHAIRS AND OTHER ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Manual Wheelchair: This wheelchair has two large wheels in the rear and two smaller front wheels (called casters). Some manual wheelchairs have folding frames and some have rigid frames. Some individuals are able to propel their manual wheelchair by using his/her arms/feet to push/pull.

Standard Folding Wheelchair: This wheelchair has two large wheels in the rear and two smaller front wheels. Almost all wheelchairs will have a brake lever on each side, designed to lock the large wheels. Wheelchair brakes are not positive stopping devices. The brake lever may be out of adjustment, tires may be worn or, in the case of inflatable tires, tire pressure may be low. All of these factors contribute to brakes not holding well.

Tilt in Space Wheelchair: This type of wheelchair is for students who cannot sit in an upright position for long periods of time. The student can be tilted back but they stay in the seated position (hip to back angle stays the same).

Reclining Wheelchair: Some students will not be able to sit erect or, if they can, for only short periods of time. This type of person may be in a wheelchair with a high back that can be lowered partially or all the way to a level position. Footrests may also be adjustable so that the legs may be elevated to any position, up to horizontal.

For tilt in space and reclining wheelchairs you need to refer to the wheelchair manual for the recommended tilt or recline to be used during transport. CSA recommends a seat angle of 30° or less to the horizontal and a back angle of 30° or less to the vertical.

Power driven (battery operated) Wheelchair: The individual propels the wheelchair using a power control which may be activated by limb or chin movements.

- **Conventional model:** Due to mobility restrictions, some students may require the use of an electronically powered wheelchair. The wheelchair itself will resemble a standard wheelchair; however, it will have motors driving each of the large wheels. The motors are usually powered by a battery system. The wheelchair may be controlled by either buttons, a “joystick” type of lever, by mouth switches, or by head-activated switches. Some power wheelchairs may also be equipped with reclining backs and elevating leg rests. Power wheelchairs do not fold.
- **Scooters:** Another variation of the power wheelchair is an electrically powered three-wheel scooter, used by people who have very reduced walking endurance. This unit is front-wheel drive with steering by means of bicycle-type handlebars. These compact units will take up approximately the same amount of space as an open wheelchair.

BASIC FACTS ABOUT WHEELCHAIRS

Brakes: There is usually a separate brake for each side of the wheelchair. Some wheelchairs have an attendant brake and it is usually located at the back of the wheelchair near the floor. This locks both rear wheels. Brakes vary from wheelchair to wheelchair; some are pushed out and some pushed in to activate. They are all located on the large rear wheel toward the front of the wheelchair. The wheelchair should not be left unattended unless the brakes are engaged. Brakes should be secured when a person is moved in or out of the wheelchair. Almost all wheelchairs will have a brake lever on each side, designed to lock the large wheels. Wheelchair brakes are not positive stopping devices. The brake lever may be out of adjustment, tires may be worn or, in the case of inflatable tires, tire pressure may be low. All of these factors contribute to brakes not holding well.

Armrests: These may be removed in order to give the person more room to grasp the wheel for movement. Transportation personnel should not remove arm rests or other parts of the wheelchair without authorization from the principal and permission from the parent. Never lift a wheelchair by its armrests as this may cause the armrests to come out or cause the chair to tip.

Footrests: The footrests may be out of the field of vision of the person pushing a wheelchair. Therefore, caution must be exercised to avoid bumping people.

Wheels: Loose clothing, scarves, etc., must be kept away from the wheels. The rim of the centre of one of the large wheels and any stationary part of the front of the chair should be held to lift it into a trunk.

Security Belts: Students who cannot sit unsupported, or who are in danger of serious injury from a fall, should always wear security belts when in wheelchairs/mobility aids or school vehicle seats. If there is a security belt in the chair, it is meant to be used. The security belt must never be used to substitute for a motor vehicle seat belt.

Seating Systems: Seating systems have many components that help position the student in the wheelchair. They have their own belts that are for positioning only, they are not safety straps for frontal vehicle impacts.

Tilting Rods: Most chairs have two rods close to the ground in the rear that serve as foot pedals for the pusher. To tip the chair backward the pusher grasps the chair handles firmly and puts downward pressure on the rod with one foot. This procedure is used on inclines, stairs, or curbs.

Folding: Inserts must be removed from chairs before they are folded. Chairs should not be folded by using the arms. After the footrests are up, the chair can be closed by lifting up on the flexible seat.

Mobility Aids:

- Crutches
- Canes
- Walkers
- Braces

6) GENERAL RULES IN WHEELCHAIR HANDLING

Never leave a student who is lost, confused or unable to communicate alone. Should this situation occur, notify your supervisor immediately and follow instructions.

When arriving to pickup a student and they cannot be seen, every attempt must be made to find them, if the driver cannot find the student the operator should be contacted.

With special needs students there should be contact with someone at home or at school before the driver leaves the area.

- a) Make sure the occupant's arms are clear of the wheels and spokes and the feet are on the footrest. Approach from the front so the passenger knows you are there.
- b) Always inform the passenger before moving the wheelchair. Ensure the occupant's hands are clear of the wheels and spokes. Check for anything that could get caught in the wheels.
- c) In order to reduce the risk of injury to vehicle occupants, mobility-aid-mounted trays not specifically designed for crash safety should be removed and secured separately in the vehicle; or be secured to the mobility aid but positioned away from the occupant with energy-absorbing padding placed between the tray and the occupant.
- d) The rotation of a wheelchair's small front wheels can easily be stopped by any small obstacle (a stone or ridge in the sidewalk). Hitting such an obstacle can abruptly stop the chair, causing the occupant to pitch forward. On rough roads, it is easier to pull the chair across than to push.
- e) Operators must ensure that drivers are fully aware of proper methods for tipping wheelchairs at curbs, and moving chairs up and down ramps and hills.
- f) Tipping electric wheelchairs may result in spilling acid resulting in severe burns. Do not tip the chair more than a few inches unless the batteries have been removed.
- g) When attempting to lift a wheelchair, be sure to obtain a firm grip on the chair and not a removable component of the large wheels.
- h) Only the drivers should be assisting the wheelchair occupant in and out of the vehicle.
- i) On rough ground, pull the wheelchair by tipping it up and running on the big wheels (if possible), rather than pushing it.
 - Advise the student before tipping a wheelchair backwards.
 - Place your foot on the tipping lever at the lower part of the chair and apply a pushing motion. At the same time, pull back and down on the hand grips and continue to tilt the chair back until it requires little or no effort to stabilize it. It will then be at its balance point and can be manoeuvred on its rear wheels quite easily.
 - Advise the student of the intention to return the wheelchair to the upright position; then simply reverse the procedure.
 - Keep your foot on the tipping lever until the front wheels are on the ground. The front wheels should be prevented from dropping the last few inches as this will jar the student or cause him/her to pitch forward out of the wheelchair.

- i) The circle check of the lift-equipped vehicle is identical to that of a regular school bus, except that the lift operation must also be checked and it must be established that all equipment is on board.

In conducting a circle check of the lift, the operator must:

1. Open and secure the lift door.
2. Check that the lift light is on.
3. Unfold and lower the lift, checking for smooth operation.
4. Check the end gate on the lift to ensure that it locks and folds correctly.
5. Check the lift belt for security and serviceability.
6. Visually inspect the floor area around the lift for fluids leaks.
7. Raise the lift approximately 15 cm (6 in.) and check the lift end gate to ensure it has locked securely.
8. Raise and attempt to fold the lift into its stored position, with a minimum of 25 kilograms positioned in the centre of the platform (if the lift folds, the safety mechanism should be repaired before it is used).
9. Fold the lift into its secured position and check securement of the entire assembly.
10. Check the hydraulic cylinders for leakage and security.

7) LIFT OPERATION

The parent or guardian, teacher or educational assistant can assist the student to and from the vehicle and when necessary assist the driver with the loading operation but should not operate the lift controls.

The actual loading and unloading should proceed as follows when powered platform types of lifts are employed:

- a) Park the vehicle where unobstructed access will be available, i.e. reasonably flat ground, clear of hydrants, signposts, trees, benches, curbs etc...
- b) The vehicle gear shift lever should be in park with emergency brakes on and hazards lights engaged.
- c) To prevent vehicle battery drain the engine should be idling when the lift is in use.
- d) Open and secure the doors and lower the lift until it just touches, and is level to the street surface. Beyond this point, it will begin to push against the weight of the vehicle, causing possible damage to the lift.
- e) Lower the end gate. The lift belt must always be used.
- f) Wheelchair passengers should place their hands and arms in their laps and wear a seat belt in order to avoid any possible injuries.

- g) Back the occupied wheelchair onto the lift, i.e. with the passenger facing the street. The driver should stand on the ground with a hand on the wheelchair beside the lift while raising and lowering the passenger. The driver must always be with the passenger. Make certain that the rear wheels, handgrips, or any extension at the rear of the chair are clear of the edge of the vehicle floor.
- h) Set the brakes on the wheelchair before raising or lowering the lift. The power switch on electric chairs should be off while the chair is on the lift. (Some solid-wheel type electric chairs do not have brakes). On these chairs, the drive mechanism, when engaged, acts as a brake.
- i) Raise the end gate. The lift belt must always be used.
- j) Advise the passenger that the lift is about to be activated.
- k) Operate the lift mechanism with one hand, holding the wheelchair with the other.
- l) Check that the lift platform is level with the vehicle floor.
- m) Release the brakes or disengage the drive mechanism in the case of some electric chairs.
- n) Pull the wheelchair into the vehicle from behind ensuring that you have adequate head clearance. When moving wheelchair passengers in or out of the vehicle, make sure there is adequate headroom. If necessary, ask the passengers to bend their neck. If the passenger cannot bend his neck then carefully tilt the chair.
- o) Locate the chair as required and secure it in such a manner that it cannot move in any direction. With a separate seat belt secure the passenger. Use all belts supplied. When loading or unloading, attempt to identify with the student and treat them with typical courtesy and dignity. Some may experience a certain level of anxiety in being moved in and out of the vehicle - anticipate this and give reassurance. Enquire what assistance is required and explain what procedure is going to be followed. Think about it from the student's perspective.

Be courteous and friendly, but avoid emotional involvement or favouritism with the students. Employ empathy - not sympathy.

Never load or unload a student with his/her feet facing the body of the vehicle. The person loading must also never face the body of the vehicle in order to have firm control over the wheelchair.

Never leave a passenger unattended on a lift.

No one other than the driver should be opening doors or activating the lifts.

WHEELCHAIR AND PASSENGER SECUREMENT IN VEHICLE

There are numerous types of wheelchair securement devices available for use in physically-disabled-passenger vehicles. It should suffice to say that the wheelchair drivers should be familiar with the application of all types of devices installed on vehicles.

Wheelchair brakes must be on in transit.

The power switch on electric chairs must be off and the drive mechanism engaged.

Few, if any, securement devices generally available will fit all wheelchairs. Wheelchairs with large pneumatic tires or four small wheels, electric wheelchairs are more difficult to secure. Nevertheless, no wheelchair passenger should be transported unless the chair is securely fastened in the vehicle. More and more wheelchairs have brackets attached, at the factory, at the correct securement location for the tie downs.

Provincial legislation requires that, where an occupant restraint assembly is provided, a passenger shall wear that assembly unless he/she holds a certificate signed by a legally qualified medical practitioner certifying that the person is unable for medical reasons to wear same. Provincial legislation requires the pelvic component of the occupant restraint should be used. The CSA standards recommend that both the pelvic component and upper torso component be used.

While a passenger over the age of sixteen years is legally responsible for wearing the occupant restraint assembly in a properly adjusted and securely fastened manner, the driver should acquire the habit of reminding the passengers and offering assistance as required.

Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. Bear in mind that people with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies, as do people with guide dogs and help dogs. Never distract a work animal from their job without the owner's permission.

When it is necessary to lift a student, transportation personnel should:

- Let the student know that he/she is going to be lifted.
- Be sure the wheel chair brakes are on.
- Establish a broad base of support, keeping feet apart, with one slightly ahead of the other.
- Make maximum use of a low centre of gravity.
- Use the leg muscles to lift and bend the knees.
- Get assistance, if necessary.

Each lift must have the capacity to be manually operated should the electrical system fail. Instructions for the manual operation of each lift should be affixed to the vehicle wall near the lift. The manual operation of the lift should be fully explained during a training program. The driver must ensure that they are familiar with these instructions at the time of receiving the vehicle. The driver must also be familiar with the pre-trip procedure to determine the safety of the lift assembly. If training or assistance is required, notify the transportation co-ordinator immediately.

The following diagram shows the proper tie down and chair placement procedure which is used by the Q'Straint System.

SAFETY FEATURES AND PRECAUTIONS OF THE SPECIAL TRANSIT FACILITY

The driver must be aware of the safety features and precautions built into the operation of the special transit facility:

- The lift will operate only if the park brake is applied.
- The lift belt must always be used.
- The security of the lift end gate must be checked each time the lift is used.
- The driver must not wear open-toed shoes.
- The driver must ensure that his or her feet are clear of the lift and the wheelchair wheels.
- Wheelchairs must always be positioned on the lift so that the passenger is facing outwards from the vehicle.
- The brakes on the wheelchair *must* always be applied while on the lift, or the power turned off on an electric wheelchair.
- Drivers must use caution when manoeuvring wheelchairs to ensure that they reduce the potential of personal injury or injury to passengers.
- Only qualified personnel are to operate the lift.

OXYGEN CYLINDERS

All respiratory related equipment must be securely mounted or fastened to a wheelchair, bus seat or bus floor during transit.

Compressed gas oxygen cylinders should be secured to prevent movement.

Liquid oxygen containers should be secured in an upright position to prevent leakage.

All oxygen containers should be secured in a location that would allow all passengers free access to and from emergency exits.

The student should be seated so that the oxygen is not in the proximity of any heater or motor.

8) AMBULATORY PASSENGERS

Never leave a student who is lost, confused or unable to communicate alone. Should this situation occur, notify your supervisor immediately and follow instructions.

When arriving to pickup a passenger and the student cannot be seen, every attempt must be made to find the student, if the driver cannot locate the student the operator should be contacted.

When transportation personnel are assisting students the following should be done:

- Ask if help is needed or wanted.
- Let the student or guardian explain how to help.
- Stay close by and be ready to assist if circumstances warrant.
- Secure walker and other aids, if any, before proceeding to the next stop.

Follow behind the ambulatory passenger when going up the steps and precede the passenger when alighting. Alternate your steps with those of the passenger. In this manner your feet will be firmly planted and you will be able to give maximum assistance and support while the passenger takes his steps.

If a lift and boarding chair process is employed the procedure would be as described under the heading Lift Operation.

If the lift is used without a boarding chair, the procedures are similar; however, as a replacement for maintaining contact with the chair, the passenger should be supported during the boarding and de-boarding process. Also careful attention should be given to the degree of head clearance in the doorway to avoid any possible accidents in this regard. When in the vehicle, the driver must ensure that ambulatory or walk on students are seated. However, it is highly recommended that a boarding chair be used, check with STEO for instructions.

9) VEHICLE OPERATION

Smooth operation of the vehicle is extremely important in transporting students with severe disabilities. Many disabled passengers have poor balance, slow reflexes and weak muscle control and are therefore especially vulnerable to sudden starts and stops. They may not be able to brace or protect themselves under aggravated situations which non-disabled individuals could accommodate. Braking and acceleration should be as slow and smooth as possible.

In traffic, a wide margin should be maintained between the specialized transportation and other vehicles. When stopping, the driver should stop well back from the vehicle in front; a guide to follow is to ensure you can see the preceding vehicle's rear tire.

A passenger's perception of the vehicle's speed must be such that he/she feels no anxiety or discomfort with regard to the possibility of sharp evasive actions or potential accidents.

The driver should consciously avoid sharp turns especially when turning left. The latter manoeuvre is a particular problem for passengers facing the wall with the service door due to pressure being applied to the wheelchair.

Strict obedience of traffic regulations and signs is self-evident and in the operation of his/her vehicle the driver should exercise full care to make his/her intention known to other drivers on the road by the proper and timely use of turn signal indicators.

In parking, the driver should select the most appropriate boarding/de-boarding location, preferably a relatively level area free of obstacles which might hinder entry or exit of passengers.

As a general point, the vehicle should be driven on the most even pavement surface in order to minimize bumpiness and provide the most comfortable ride. If possible, the driver should attempt to avoid pot holes and drainage grates.

It is also important that the driver exercise special care and take appropriate precautions in instances of rush hour traffic, during inclement weather conditions when road conditions become more hazardous and risk of accident potential increases.

All special needs vehicles should stop only at the approved pick-up and drop-off points. If the stop becomes unsafe for loading the wheelchair, an alternate stop site should be selected with due regard for the safety of the school vehicle, its occupants, and the passengers being picked up.

10) RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENT AND GUARDIAN

To provide a service which is safe, efficient and trouble free requires the close cooperation and understanding of everyone involved.

Parents can expect to:

- a) Know their child's specialized vehicle number and driver's name.
- b) Have their child ready for pick up at the same time each day in order that a regular pick-up time can be maintained. If the specialized vehicle is delayed all students will be late for school. If a student is regularly late it causes problems on the vehicle, the driver will make a report which will be given to the school principal.
- c) Realize that students must behave appropriately while on the specialized vehicle as per the "Transportation Information and Guidelines for Students and Parents" booklet.
- d) Assist the student from the place of residence to the vehicle and on return from school assist the student from the vehicle to the place of residence. When necessary, assist the driver as requested.
- e) Impress upon the student the need for good safety practices, including the use of the seat belt at all times when in the vehicle, and to remain in the seat that is assigned to them.
- f) Place names on articles that belong to a student, such as lunch boxes, hats, mittens, scarves etc. to avoid loss.
- g) Be aware of the procedures followed in cases of storms or emergencies and to make the appropriate arrangements for supervision, should the student be brought home earlier than normal.

Drivers are to inform the office if passengers are tardy in their punctuality or fail to call in when they are absent. STEO will then be notified.

11) SPECIAL EDUCATION ROUTE CHANGES

Changes are common occurrences on special needs routes. When a change alters the distance of time on a route an updated time and mileage must be submitted by the operator to STEO. This must be done immediately in order to expedite month end billing. Any change of address, of pick-up or drop-off points must be authorized by STEO.

12) ALLERGIES

The operator must provide Epi-Pen training for any new driver, or existing driver who may have a student with life threatening allergies assigned to their route. This training must take place before the student is transported. If a student starts to develop signs of physical distress the driver should check the emergency medical form pertaining to the student for any instructions. The driver must notify the dispatch immediately when a student shows signs of physical distress.

13) GENERAL EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Use **SIMPLE COMMANDS**, voice and hand.

Face the students and say **CALMLY**:

- a) "We are going to get off the vehicle."
- b) "I will tell you when it is your turn"
- c) "Take off your seat belt and stay in your seat."

Render necessary assistance.

REPEAT these simple commands often, some students tend to forget easily.

14) IF SCHOOL VEHICLE EVACUATION IS NECESSARY

To provide a service which is safe, efficient and trouble free requires the close cooperation and understanding of everyone involved.

- a) If possible, move the school vehicle out of traffic or away from hazards.
- b) Radio for assistance.
- c) Put the vehicle in the proper gear.
- d) Set the emergency brake.
- e) Turn off the engine.
- f) Engage hazard lights.
- g) Get your First Aid Kit and Evacuation Kit.
- h) Begin your Emergency Evacuation procedure.
- i) Determine which door to use for evacuation.

If both exits are operable, consider which is the safest in view of vehicle position, hazards, traffic and the capabilities of students on the vehicle.

- j) Remove the blanket and rope from the Emergency Kit (where applicable).

15) CAR SEAT EVACUATION

- a) If a student is mobile, remove them from the car seat and evacuate with ambulatory students. Non-ambulatory students should be left in their special apparatus.
- b) For speed you may need to **CUT** seat belts. Scissors are in the emergency kit, or use belt cutters which should be on the vehicle key ring.
- c) Carry students to the assembly area.

16) AMBULATORY EVACUATION

- a) For speed, **AMBULATORY** students should be evacuated **FIRST**.
- b) Many students are familiar with holding onto a rope and moving together. As students exit tell them to **HOLD** onto the **ROPE**. You can keep your students in a group by using the rope from the Emergency kit.
- c) The driver should lead students to a safe place at least **100 FEET** from the school vehicle. Spread the blanket. Instruct students to **REMAIN ON THE BLANKET**.

17) WHEELCHAIR EVACUATION

- a) If possible, leave the student in the wheelchair.
- b) Bus restraining straps may need to be cut (use belt cutters if necessary).
- c) Roll the wheelchair to the best exit.
- d) If a student must be removed from the wheelchair, **PROTECT** the student's **HEAD** and **LEGS**.
- e) Move the student to a safe area.

It is **EASIER TO PULL** a wheelchair than push one on some surfaces.

- f) In an emergency situation the safest method of transfer is a two person carry. Each lifter transfers the person from the wheelchair by crossing an arm behind the persons back and grasping the waist of his/her pants (not the belt loops); the lifter then places his/her other hand under the leg, behind the knee, and transfers the person out of the wheelchair.

18) CAPABLE HELPER

- a) The **HELPER** should be placed on the rope **FIRST**.
- b) The helper may be given the blanket.
- c) You may direct the helper to lead the students to a safe spot.

Be very **SPECIFIC** with your **INSTRUCTIONS** such as: under the big tree, on the grass, etc.

- d) The helper may spread the blanket.

Instruct the helper to remain with the students on the blanket.

YOU must decide if the helper can assist you in the actual evacuation of students from the school vehicle.

- A helper may be handed a car seat to carry to the designated area.
- A helper may assist you with moving wheelchair children.

19) IF ADULTS STOP TO HELP

- a) **EMERGENCY CALL** should be made immediately if this has not been done.
Emergency phone numbers are on a card in the Emergency kit.
- b) Remember **YOU** are in charge.
- c) Give positive, **CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS** as to the assistance you desire.
- d) Adults may be used to assist student helpers, or in place of them.

20) AFTER EVACUATION IS COMPLETE

- a) Are all your students **ACCOUNTED** for?
- b) Has dispatch been notified?
- c) Have the proper school authorities been notified?
- d) Do you have your First Aid Kit and Evacuation Kit?
- e) Is **FIRST AID** necessary?
If so take care of the most serious injuries first.
- f) Have you made the students as **COMFORTABLE** as possible?
- g) Have you **REASSURED** the students that they are safe and that help is on the way?

21) EMERGENCY EVACUATION KIT CHECKLIST

ITEM	PURPOSE
Cell phone/dispatch radio/payphone calling card or coins, and a list of emergency phone numbers.	To call for help.
Blunt end scissors or seat belt cutters.	To cut seat belts or restraining straps.
Length of rope.	For students to hold onto during evacuation.
Blanket or Tarpaulin	To spread on ground in assembly area.
Skid cloth.	To pull or slide student along vehicle aisle to the exit.

OPTIONAL ITEMS

Cards for each student

I.D. tags

Toys

Pen

Air pillow

22) IN AN EMERGENCY, REVIEW OFTEN

REMAIN CALM

You are in command and must make decisions quickly and calmly.

DETERMINE

If it is necessary to evacuate the students.

KNOW

The capabilities of the students.

DO NOT

Move seriously injured students unless absolutely necessary.

23) REFERENCES

Canadian Standards Association:

1. D409-02 Motor Vehicles for the Transportation of Persons with Physical Disabilities.
2. Z604-03 Transportable Mobility Aids.
3. Z605-03 Mobility Aid Securement and Occupant Restraint Systems (MASORS) for Motor Vehicles.
4. D250-03 School Buses.

Highway Traffic Act (legislation):

1. Regulation 629 – Vehicles for the Transportation of Physically Disabled Passengers (not a passenger car but does mean buses and vans).
2. Regulation 612 – School Buses.

Wheelchair University: www.wheelchair.org

Ride Safe Brochure: www.travelsafer.org