

(i) Adherence to a requirement in this part would create a safety hazard in the circumstances faced by the agency; and,

(ii) For preschool children, compliance with requirements related to child restraint systems at §§1303.71(d) and 1303.72(a)(1) or bus monitors at §1303.72(a)(4) will result in a significant disruption to the program and the agency demonstrates that waiving such requirements is in the best interest of the children involved.

(2) The responsible HHS official is not authorized to waive any requirements of the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) made applicable to any class of vehicle under 49 CFR part 571.

§ 1303.71 Vehicles.

(a) *Required use of schools buses or allowable alternative vehicles.* A program, with the exception of transportation services to children served under a home-based option, must ensure all vehicles used or purchased with grant funds to provide transportation services to enrolled children are school buses or allowable alternate vehicles that are equipped for use of height- and weight-appropriate child restraint systems, and that have reverse beepers.

(b) *Emergency equipment.* A program must ensure each vehicle used in providing such services is equipped with an emergency communication system clearly labeled and appropriate emergency safety equipment, including a seat belt cutter, charged fire extinguisher, and first aid kit.

(c) *Auxiliary seating.* A program must ensure any auxiliary seating, such as temporary or folding jump seats, used in vehicles of any type providing such services are built into the vehicle by the manufacturer as part of its standard design, are maintained in proper working order, and are inspected as part of the annual inspection required under paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section.

(d) *Child restraint systems.* A program must ensure each vehicle used to transport children receiving such services is equipped for use of age-, height- and weight-appropriate child safety restraint systems as defined in part 1305 of this chapter.

(e) *Vehicle maintenance.* (1) A program must ensure vehicles used to provide such services are in safe operating condition at all times.

(2) The program must:

(i) At a minimum, conduct an annual thorough safety inspection of each vehicle through an inspection program licensed or operated by the state;

(ii) Carry out systematic preventive maintenance on vehicles; and,

(iii) Ensure each driver implements daily pre-trip vehicle inspections.

(f) *New vehicle inspection.* A program must ensure bid announcements for school buses and allowable alternate vehicles to transport children in its program include correct specifications and a clear statement of the vehicle's intended use. The program must ensure vehicles are examined at delivery to ensure they are equipped in accordance with the bid specifications and that the manufacturer's certification of compliance with the applicable FMVSS is included with the vehicle.

§ 1303.72 Vehicle operation.

(a) *Safety.* A program must ensure:

(1) Each child is seated in a child restraint system appropriate to the child's age, height, and weight;

(2) Baggage and other items transported in the passenger compartment are properly stored and secured, and the aisles remain clear and the doors and emergency exits remain unobstructed at all times;

(3) Up-to-date child rosters and lists of the adults each child is authorized to be released to, including alternates in case of emergency, are maintained and no child is left behind, either at the classroom or on the vehicle at the end of the route; and,

(4) With the exception of transportation services to children served under a home-based option, there is at least one bus monitor on board at all times, with additional bus monitors provided as necessary.

(b) *Driver qualifications.* A program, with the exception of transportation services to children served under a home-based option, must ensure drivers, at a minimum:

(1) In states where such licenses are granted, have a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL) for vehicles in the

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same class as the vehicle the driver will operating; and,

(2) Meet any physical, mental, and other requirements as necessary to perform job-related functions with any necessary reasonable accommodations.

(c) *Driver application review.* In addition to the applicant review process prescribed §1302.90(b) of this chapter, a program, with the exception of transportation services to children served under a home-based option, must ensure the applicant review process for drivers includes, at minimum:

(1) Disclosure by the applicant of all moving traffic violations, regardless of penalty;

(2) A check of the applicant's driving record through the appropriate state agency, including a check of the applicant's record through the National Driver Register, if available;

(3) A check that drivers qualify under the applicable driver training requirements in the state or tribal jurisdiction; and,

(4) After a conditional employment offer to the applicant and before the applicant begins work as a driver, a medical examination, performed by a licensed doctor of medicine or osteopathy, establishing that the individual possesses the physical ability to perform any job-related functions with any necessary accommodations.

(d) *Driver training.* (1) A program must ensure any person employed as a driver receives training prior to transporting any enrolled child and receives refresher training each year.

(2) Training must include:

(i) Classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel instruction sufficient to enable the driver to operate the vehicle in a safe and efficient manner, to safely run a fixed route, to administer basic first aid in case of injury, and to handle emergency situations, including vehicle evacuation, operate any special equipment, such as wheelchair lifts, assistance devices or special occupant restraints, conduct routine maintenance and safety checks of the vehicle, and maintain accurate records as necessary; and,

(ii) Instruction on the topics listed in §1303.75 related to transportation services for children with disabilities.

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(3) A program must ensure the annual evaluation of each driver of a vehicle used to provide such services includes an on-board observation of road performance.

(e) *Bus monitor training.* A program must train each bus monitor before the monitor begins work, on child boarding and exiting procedures, how to use child restraint systems, completing any required paperwork, how to respond to emergencies and emergency evacuation procedures, how to use special equipment, child pick-up and release procedures, how to conduct and pre- and post-trip vehicle checks. Bus monitors are also subject to staff safety training requirements in §1302.47(b)(4) of this chapter including Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

§ 1303.73 Trip routing.

(a) A program must consider safety of the children it transports when it plans fixed routes.

(b) A program must also ensure:

(1) The time a child is in transit to and from the program must not exceed one hour unless there is no shorter route available or any alternative shorter route is either unsafe or impractical;

(2) Vehicles are not loaded beyond maximum passenger capacity at any time;

(3) Drivers do not back up or make U-turns, except when necessary for safety reasons or because of physical barriers;

(4) Stops are located to minimize traffic disruptions and to afford the driver a good field of view in front of and behind the vehicle;

(5) When possible, stops are located to eliminate the need for children to cross the street or highway to board or leave the vehicle;

(6) Either a bus monitor or another adult escorts children across the street to board or leave the vehicle if curbside pick-up or drop off is impossible; and,

(7) Drivers use alternate routes in the case of hazardous conditions that could affect the safety of the children who are being transported, such as ice or water build up, natural gas line breaks, or emergency road closing.