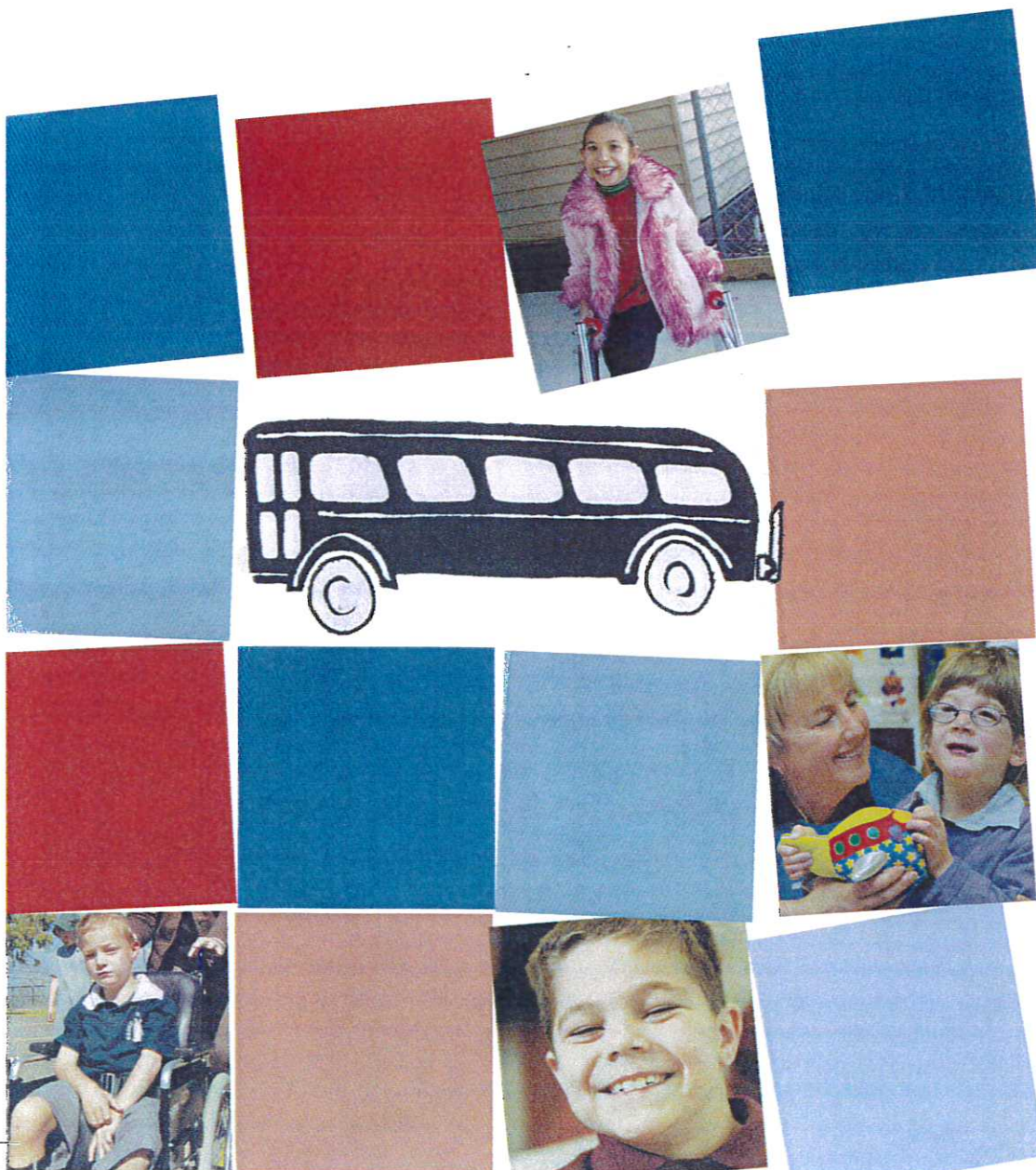




Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Transport Assistance to Specialist Schools

Information for families



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What transport assistance is available if my child attends a specialist school?

Whilst families are primarily responsible for ensuring their children attend school, the Department has a number of options available to assist families in accessing a specialist school.

- **Conveyance allowance** is financial assistance provided to parents through the school in the form of cash. It can be used to assist with the costs of:
 - o driving a student to school in a private car
 - o private bus
 - o the cost of a public transport fare if the student is able to travel on public transport
- The Department has a network of **transport services** operating to specialist schools every day. If eligible, you can apply to access one of these services. Students may need to attend a central pick-up point to access a transport service.
- Many schools encourage the inclusion of **travel training** in a student's individual learning plan. The school will consider the suitability of travel training for each individual child and discuss this with the child's family if it is appropriate for them.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for access to a conveyance allowance, a school transport service or travel training support, a specialist school student must:

- Be approved under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)
- Be eligible for enrolment at the school they attend
- Reside within the Designated Transport Area (DTA) of the school attended
- Be enrolled at the special school three days a week or more

What is a designated transport area (DTA)?

A DTA is a geographical area in which the Department provides transport assistance to a school. Transport assistance is only provided to a student whose primary place of residence is within a school's DTA. DTA's are not enrolment areas. Students residing outside the DTA, who meet the school's enrolment criteria are able to enrol at any school however transport assistance will not be available to them. It is very important that every family understands that the Department is unable to provide transport outside the school's DTA.



Who do I contact to find out about travel assistance?

Each school can provide advice on travel assistance prior to enrolment. You will be asked questions about your intentions for travel when you complete the school enrolment form. It is important that you provide the school with as much information as possible and that you ask lots of questions regarding what options may be available to you. All schools will require you to participate in your child's transport arrangements. You will need to be prepared to either:

- meet a transport service at a pickup location
- deliver your child to a transport service
- transport or accompany your child to school.

Please ask the school what will be expected of you when you are enrolling your child so that you are able to plan ahead.

The Principal is required to consider a number of things when assessing the transport assistance options available to your child. When you approach the school to enrol your child the Principal will ask you:

- Can your child travel independently?
- How do you plan to assist in the transport arrangements?
- If you are in rural and regional Victoria, can you access a mainstream transport

service that travels to the local school?
Does the child have brothers, sisters or friends travelling on these services that might assist them on this service?

- Do you support your child's participation in a travel education program aimed at developing independence that may assist them in later life?

The type of travel assistance provided to each student will depend on individual circumstances, arrangements established within the school community and the student's learning goals. It is important to know that transport assistance is not a right. The school will focus on providing the best transport assistance available and also encourage the development of important skills that may help your child beyond their school years.

More information on Conveyance Allowance

A student that is eligible for transport assistance may apply for a conveyance allowance when:

- The student's family arranges private travel
- The student travels on public transport

The amount of financial assistance provided through the conveyance varies. You should speak to the school principal

about the eligibility requirements for conveyance and the amount of support that may be available to you.

More information on transport services provided by the Department

The Department acknowledges that independent travel is not always possible for students attending specialist schools. Eligible students who cannot independently get to and from school may be granted access to a school transport service.

A number of Department transport services have supervisors. These staff are engaged by the service providers and are trained in basic first aid. These staff have a role in ensuring student safety whilst onboard and are not qualified nor can be directed to perform medical procedures or administer medication.

School transport services cater for a large number of students with varying requirements. Door to door transport is not an entitlement. Families of students accessing a transport service should expect to meet the transport service at a designated pick-up point. In the interests of ensuring the service is best for all students individual requests often cannot be accommodated. All families are welcome to transport students directly themselves if they do not wish to use the services available.

Transport services can change throughout the school year. Alterations are generally unavoidable at the start of a school year as new students are accommodated and old students leave the school. The Department is aware that changes to transport services can disrupt families. As such the Department and schools make every effort to minimize changes. Large scale change is only undertaken where absolutely necessary.

The safety of student travellers

Safety of students is a primary concern of the Department and schools. Most schools consider it appropriate for all students to be accompanied to and from a transport service by a responsible adult. Information on further safety and emergency management procedures will be provided to you during your discussions with the school principal at the time of enrolment. You can expect that the principal will discuss with you the importance of appropriate student behaviour on transport services during this same meeting.

Important things for families to keep in mind

- Contact the school to ascertain if you are eligible for transport assistance

- New students are enrolled throughout every year, so your child's travel times may alter
- Students are only allocated one type of transport assistance. If this is transport service this is limited to one seat on one service.
- Transport to secondary locations is not provided
- Transport services often provide transport for a large number of students, any alterations to arrangements will impact on other families

Parents/guardians/carers must assist the school when transport assistance arrangements are established in the following ways:

- Be involved in regular discussion around the transport assistance
- Prepare your child for travel in the morning, giving consideration to toileting, hydration and medical needs
- Offer support to your child and the school when any issues arise
- Assist your child on and off the school transport service (if required)
- Be available to meet your child when they return from school

- Support the school's policy of communicating primarily with them on all transport related matters.
- Service providers are only able to take instructions from parents/guardians/carers:
 - o in the event of absence of their child from the morning transport service run
 - o in the event of an emergency

It is crucial that the school is the first point of communication in relation to all transport issues or concerns.

The Department requires parents/guardians/carers to communicate with their child about appropriate behaviour during transit. Any concerns related to a transport service or a child's travel arrangements should be reported immediately to the appropriate person at your child's school.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Department, school and service provider may remove students from a transport service if their transport poses a risk to safety. When an incident occurs the school will be involved and will communicate with the student's family as every effort is made to manage/resolve the situation. Only in cases where a student's behaviour cannot be managed or there is ongoing risk to other students or transport service staff, will a student be removed from a transport service until such time as the issue can be resolved. DEECD must be advised and the situation must be formally documented and communicated. Risk management procedures should be followed.

Further information can be located on the DEECD website via the link

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/studenttransport.htm#3>

