



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Interim COVID-19 Transportation Guidance

Updated April 8, 2021

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

CAROLYN STANFORD TAYLOR, STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MADISON, WISCONSIN

INTRODUCTION

SARs-CoV2 virus continues to circulate in Wisconsin and across the country and new variants of SARs-CoV2 continue to be identified. Currently, levels of community transmission are trending upwards, and are considered at high levels throughout most Wisconsin counties. School districts should work with local health authorities to ensure a plan is in place to minimize health risks to the greatest extent possible.

This interim guidance is developed by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in consultation with the Department of Health Services (DHS). Its purpose is to provide guidance for decreasing the risk to students and bus drivers of contracting COVID-19 during bus transportation. This document should be used in conjunction with DPI's [Interim COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures for Schools](#). These are not requirements but state-level guidance, meant to provide you with what is considered promising practices at the current time based upon what is currently known and understood regarding COVID-19. Promising practices and recommendations are based upon information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and DHS. It is understood that both CDC and DHS guidelines may change based upon new scientific information and epidemiological data and this guidance will be updated to reflect that information. On March 31, 2021 the Wisconsin State Supreme Court overturned Wisconsin's public health emergency, which also ended the statewide mask order. The DHS [continues to recommend](#) the wearing of face masks. This guidance is reflective of the [federal order](#) requiring masks on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States.

It is understood that districts have situations that may not fit with aspects of this guidance. Operators of school transportation services and school districts should work with their local and tribal health department to best implement this guidance in order that the measures implemented meet your district's unique circumstances. Further, it is understood that no guidance or mitigation measures will completely remove the risk of exposure to COVID-19 while the SARS-CoV2 virus is still in wide circulation. It is recommended you work with your local health authority, insurance carrier, and legal counsel in determining to what degree your district is able to implement mitigation measures.

The CDC does not recommend universal symptom screening (screening of all students K-12) be conducted by schools. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on educating parents and families not to send ill children to school, nor place ill children on school or mass transportation to be transported to school.

INDIVIDUAL GUIDELINES

Continue To Practice Good Hygiene

- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.
- ✓ Avoid touching your face.

- ✓ Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Sneeze into mask, if wearing one, rather than removing mask before sneezing. Change mask after sneezing into it.
- ✓ Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.

People Who Feel Sick Must Stay At Home

- ✓ Do NOT go to work, school, or any other public place.
- ✓ Contact and follow the advice of your medical provider.

EMPLOYER GUIDELINES

- ✓ All employers are encouraged to use federal, state, and local regulations and guidance, informed by [DHS](#) and the [Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation](#), to develop and implement appropriate policies regarding:
 - ✓ Physical distancing and protective equipment
 - ✓ Symptom screening
 - ✓ Testing, isolating, and contact tracing
 - ✓ Sanitation
 - ✓ Usage of common and high-traffic areas, and their regular cleaning and disinfection
 - ✓ Business travel
- ✓ Do NOT allow **symptomatic** people to work. Send them home if they arrive at work and do not allow them to return until they have [completed home isolation](#).
- ✓ Work with local public health staff, develop and implement policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing following an employee COVID-19 positive test result.

General Behaviors to Decrease Risk of Transmission of COVID-19

School bus companies and school districts should consider these strategies to encourage healthy behaviors and hygiene practices to decrease risk of transmission including:

Staying Home

Educate students, staff, and parent/caregivers about when to stay home. For example, if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days and they themselves are not vaccinated against COVID-19. Educate all on when they can safely [end their quarantine or isolation period](#). Note [quarantine guidance has changed](#) for those individuals fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

- Students who have fevers (100.4°F) as monitored by their family should not get on the bus.
- Visibly ill students should not be transported by bus.
- See DPI's [Interim COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures for Schools](#) for what to do if they arrive at school and appear ill.

Physical Distancing

- Taking measures to separate individuals (students and bus driver) by a distance of at least six feet decreases the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This is recommended by public health officials. Students from the same household or living unit may sit together.
- Create distance between children on school buses (for example, seat children one child per row, skip rows), when possible. [Masks are required](#) by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States. Open windows to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard. More information about school transportation and prevention is available.
- Encourage families to drop off children at school using their own cars, or walking to school, if feasible, which creates less demand for riding the bus and lowers the risk of children inter-mingling in confined spaces.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Encourage all students and bus drivers to and cover their coughs and sneezes. Encourage frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol). Supervise use of hand sanitizer in younger students.

Cloth Face Coverings

- [Masks are required](#) by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States.
 - Work with those who are uncomfortable or unable to wear a cloth face covering- due to health or racial discrimination concerns-to develop an appropriate alternative. See [DPI's PPE Considerations for Schools](#) chart.
 - See [Cloth Face Coverings in Schools](#).
- Cloth face coverings do not replace physical distancing or other safety precautions.
- Face coverings are **most** useful when physical distancing is difficult.
- Face coverings slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus from spreading it to others.
- DHS recommends adults and students over age 2 wear cloth face coverings, if they can properly wear and remove them.

Signs and Messages

- Post highly visible [signs](#) about [stopping the spread](#) of COVID-19, including how to [properly wash hands, using everyday protective measures](#), and [properly use a cloth face covering](#). For example, post signs on the door of the bus or on the back of the seats.
- Share messages about how families can stop the spread of COVID-19 in emails, websites (for example, posting online [videos](#)), and through [social media accounts](#).
- Tell students that they are not to pass or share any items such as books or personal papers with other students while riding the bus.
- Tell students that they should not eat or drink while riding the bus.

School Transportation Specific Recommendations

School bus companies and school districts should consider these strategies to decrease risk of transmission. See CDC's [Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs](#) for more information. Drivers do not need to wear a mask if they are the only person on the bus.

Ensure that drivers are not also expected to monitor proper hand hygiene, use of cloth face coverings, or physical distancing of others. Assign this responsibility to a bus monitor or another qualified individual, if available. This individual is recommended to wear a facial covering.

It may be difficult to maintain physical distancing by school bus drivers and attendants who are required by state regulation to exit the bus to help students cross the street or assist students while on the bus. A balance for crossing streets safely, caring for the student, and keeping a safe physical distance is encouraged. Use of facial coverings would help decrease risk of transmission.

Physical Distancing, Barriers and Suggestion for Creating Space

Creating space between students riding the bus is important to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Measures to create an optimum distance of at least six feet or physically separate students should be implemented to the full extent possible. Examples of ways to create physical distance may include:

- Closing every other row of seats.
- Providing physical guides to ensure that students remain at least six feet apart while on buses. For example, floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate where passengers should not sit or stand can be used to guide passengers.
- Teach students to always be two arms lengths apart (e.g. if you spread your arms out you should not touch the other person's arms).
- Reducing maximum occupancy of buses and increasing the number of buses available to service crowded routes.
- Establishing a buffer zone behind the driver where the first row is left empty.

- Assign seating on the bus following physical distancing guidelines. Allow students from the same household or living unit to sit together.
- Maintain physical distancing at bus stops by students and their families/caregivers
 - Mark sidewalks at bus stops to indicate where people should wait.
 - Instruct students and families/caregivers to always be two arms lengths apart (e.g. if you spread your arms out you should not touch the other person's arms)

If districts find physically distancing on school buses not practical, then along with the use of facial coverings, measures should be taken to keep consistency among those riding together so contact tracing can more readily be accomplished if cases of COVID-19 are reported among students, bus drivers, or school staff. Use of assigned seating will also assist in contact tracing measures.

Cleaning and Disinfecting School Buses

To clean school buses or other transport vehicles, see guidance for [bus transit operators](#).

- Conduct a high-touch audit to identify surfaces that are touched frequently and can become contaminated easily.
- Clean and disinfect each bus after each run, including the morning run, afternoon run, and any special runs.
- Wipe down driver controls, such as the steering wheel, mirrors, and device used to open entry door.
- Use disinfectants properly.
 - Use disinfectants for surfaces listed under the [EPA's Products with Emerging Viral Pathogens AND Human Coronavirus Claims for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#).
 - Disinfectants should always be diluted per the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Do not mix chemicals unless proper documentation advises otherwise.
 - Use one set of towels for cleaning and another for disinfecting. Always ensure towels are clean and free of oils, dirt, debris and/or residue from other chemicals.
 - Use gloves, eye protection, and other necessary personal protection equipment to prevent direct contact with chemicals.
 - Ensure proper ventilation when cleaning and disinfecting the vehicle.
- [Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants](#) and keep products away from children.
- Provide training to staff on proper safety and/or disinfection procedures for school buses, following CDC disinfection guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html>). At a minimum, training should include:
 - All safety protocols;
 - Proper methods for cleaning and disinfecting;
 - Proper use and disposal of and tissues;

- How to properly put on and take off cloth face coverings;
- Safe product usage guidelines (chemical safety); and
- Proper methods for emptying and disposing of trash.
- How to maintain proper physical distancing
- Proper use of hand sanitizer stations for themselves and students.
- Consider conducting training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained.

Ventilation

- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods.
- Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to passengers.
- Avoid using the recirculated air option for ventilation.

Communications

Operators of school transportation services and school districts should consider partnering with program directors of out of school time programs and community learning centers (CLC) in order to align and best implement transportation guidance. Put systems in place for:

- Notifying staff, families/caregivers, and students of any route cancellations or significant delays.
- Notifying local health officials, staff, bus drivers, and families immediately of a possible case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Providing opportunities for training and ongoing school district support for transportation staff to increase knowledge and understanding of the district anti-bullying policy so that transportation staff know the protocol for consistently responding to both witnessed and reported incidents of bullying.

Illness Protocols

Develop protocols and train staff for what to do if a passenger or bus driver develops symptoms.

- Establishing procedures for drivers who become sick while on their route.
- Establish procedures for safe removal, disposal, and cleaning of body fluids when students are sick on the bus.
- Establishing procedures for contacting parents or guardians and safely transporting children and youth who become sick.
- See DPI's [Interim COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures for Schools](#) for further information.