



## COVID-19 Transportation FAQs

July 27, 2020

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### Reopening Transportation Webinar, July 1, 2020

**Question:** Can we have 100% capacity?

**Answer:** Yes, IF all students are wearing face masks, hand sanitizer is being given, students have assigned seats and temperatures are taken before they get into the school. Some schools are considering 2/3 capacity vs the 100% capacity, keeping the number of students around 40-50 on the bus vs 66-72.

**Question:** Who is required to wear masks?

**Answer:** All students and staff in the 1st grade and above, unless a medical waiver is provided. Pre-k guidance will be coming out separately as this guidance is K-12.

**Question:** Can drivers wear face shields?

**Answer:** Yes, if they can see and their view is not obscured as if they weren't wearing masks. Many drivers haven't driven in over six months. Districts will want to get them in before school starts to get them behind the wheel wearing the mask and/or shield. Have them practice so that they are not struggling on the first day of school. Consider having the drivers run their routes several times with the mask and remind them they need to wear it whether students are on the bus or not.

**Question:** I haven't found a place to mount the hand sanitizer; where can I put this? Per the guidance, it is not recommended to have the hand sanitizer kept on the bus during the hot season. Drivers should be removing it at the end of the shift due to how hot it gets on the bus.

**Answer:** Mounting locations are very limited, especially for the larger containers. Consider using a smaller pump style vs the larger bathroom style.

Other ideas have been to mount the sanitizer in the first seat behind the driver. Since this seat is not being used, this may be an option. We have seen some brackets that may be able to fit over the seats; we will see how that works out.

A monitor or driver can remind all students to use it.

**Question:** Can we use nonalcoholic hand sanitizer?

**Answer:** At this time, 60% alcohol is the only thing that is authorized for COVID-19. If this changes, districts will be informed.



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**Question:** If we have mixed loaded students and we drop off students and then pick up more before going to the high school and middle school, what do we do about cleaning?

**Answer:** You will need to think about how the buses are loaded. We want you to load back to front to limit the amount of possible spread. You may need to consider either doing separate elementary runs to not have mixed loads or look at where the younger students are sitting. Ideally you want back to front, but you may find that the first 10 seats are for elementary and to middle to front for them.

**Question:** How do we know drivers are cleaning/sanitizing their buses?

**Answer:** First, you need to make sure you express the importance of it. Talk to them about the spread and how kids can take it home. Talk to them about integrity. This is part of their job duty to keep themselves and others safe.

Watch videos. Do spot checks on your video systems to make sure they are being done. Watch them when they bring the buses in after the route. Do they get right off or do they go right to cleaning? Watch them at the schools. Do they leave right away or is your policy to clean before leaving the schools?

It's important for them to understand the need and the requirement by the department for public health. If cases start to rise or if kids start getting sick, we may have to cancel school or do non-traditional instruction (NTI) and that means they won't be working. We need to be diligent and make this part of our routine.

**Question:** Who can we use as monitors due to costs?

**Answer:** Older students and possibly students from the nursing program can be used as monitors. In some cases, a driver may be able to have a monitor on immediately and in other cases, they may need to pick up a monitor on their way to the first stop, if possible.

Districts also can reach out to the local colleges or workforce development/unemployment offices to see if there are adults that can be hired. Districts can work through a local staffing agency.

COVID-19 designated funding also may be used. If you are hiring someone, make sure they are temporary for COVID. Temporary staffing can turn into permanent in the future if you are able to hire on later.



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**Question:** How are we going to get all the kids to school and temperature checked and get them in the school in time for class?

**Answer:** The first option is to have the temperature checked as the students get on the bus. Separate any student that has a fever greater than 100.4 degrees.

Staggering the start times of high school, middle and elementary schools to allow the extra time needed at each school to do temperature checks if they aren't done as you are getting on the bus. (This has been a common question and bell times need to be considered in order to give more time between runs to unmix loads).

Take the temperature of the students as they get off the bus; this way they can go straight to the door.

What we don't want is kids standing and waiting around if possible. We need to have orderly drop offs and loading. Districts will need to help facilitate social distancing and mask wearing. It's not going to be easy, but you will have to do the best you can. You do a fantastic job already and transportation always gets it done. Think outside of the box.

**Question:** How do you separate the sick students?

**Answer:** We recommend leaving the two front seats open. The seat behind the driver should always be left empty if possible so that students are not coughing/breathing on the driver from behind. This will leave the seat on the door side available for sick students. They should wear a mask and sit near the window as opposed to the aisle.

It's not a perfect remedy, but it is safer to transport students than to leave them at the bus stop, especially younger students.

Each district is going to need to have a plan in place regarding when to call parents and what procedures to take with sick students. In some cases, the parents might be at home and can come get the students; in other cases, they may need to pick up the student at school. It probably will be like the procedure of pre-k hand-to-hand service. If a parent or guardian is not available, do not leave the student behind.

**Question:** What about the required evacuations?

**Answer:** Evacuations are extremely important. Students have not been in school in over 6 months and some students have never been to school, so it will be extremely important to do these evacuations. Evacuations are not waived for the school bus because it is an extremely important factor of what we do. All students from the youngest to the oldest is required to receive this training.



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You will need to do them in the best, safest way possible. Maybe give gloves to the person that is helping the student off the bus if you are doing back or side evacuations.

The only students that should be exempt, as always, are medically fragile immune deficient students. These students should be given explicit instructions of what is going to happen, what to expect and what they should do, and it should be documented that they were given the training.

By doing the evacuations by classroom, you are keeping students that already are together in a room from comingling with others.

This item is on my list to at further, but as long as students are being transported, it will not be waived.

**Question:** Do we have flexibility on how we seat students?

**Answer:** Students need to be loaded back to front. You can consider how many elementary students you have and load them from the middle front. What should not happen is front-to-back loading. Also, you may need to consider having separate buses for elementary students. Bell times are going to be important to consider.

**Question:** How do we do back-to-front loading in the afternoon? We would have to dismiss groups of students per their bus stop. This is just not feasible for many reasons, one of which is the time required to do so.

**Answer:** This is something that districts are going to have to work through. You may have to line up by bus and then load. Therefore releasing a few buses at a time. The ability to even be able to provide transportation has been a big change from a few weeks ago.

**Question:** Is full bus capacity three to a seat (where possible), or is the guidance two to a seat only?

**Answer:** Per Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) guidelines, full capacity is allowed. However, each school is going to need to determine if that is the best scenario. Three students to a seat with students wearing a mask is going to be more uncomfortable and even harder to manage. Students that have to be the third person are going to be quite upset as there are rows of empty seats in front of them. They are not going to sit where they are assigned.

**Question:** PreK and kindergarten students will not be masked. How far apart are they to sit from 1st- through 12th-graders?

**Answer:** Put a seat between them.



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**Question:** Can pre-k and kindergarten students sit together, two or three per seat?

**Answer:** You should have a seat separating pre-k and kindergarten from the other students. Then pre-k and kindergarteners can sit together. Per the DPH, best practices on the bus are temperature checks and social distancing if feasible. All students shall receive hand sanitizer upon entry to the bus.

**Question:** What is the recommendation for social distancing at bus stops with masks and without?

**Answer:** Students need to social distance a minimum of 6 feet. There should be no crowds of students, especially if some are masked and some are not.

**Question:** Can we put signs inside the bus to remind students to wear their mask and to stay seated?

**Answer:** There is an 8x10 area above the bulkhead where you can put your school bus rules. This would be the most ideal area. There should not be signs and magnets throughout the bus.

**Question:** Can kindergarten and pre-k students be asked to wear a mask on the bus so we can have higher capacity allowances?

**Answer:** The reason behind not making pre-k and kindergarten students wear masks is because they might not be developmentally aware that they aren't breathing properly and need to remove the mask.

**Question:** What is the status on bus evacuations during the first full week of school? What is the guidance around this if the district is in a hybrid model or NTI? Can there be allowances made for a district that doesn't transport all students (for example, only do evacuations with students that ride regularly)?

**Answer:** No. If there is an A/B schedule, then you must do it with those students when they come to the school. Those that are 100% at home will not be able to do it.

**Question:** What capacity and guidance is offered around special education buses where load counts are lower and spacing (aisle way) is much greater?



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**Answer:** There is lower capacity for these buses and if they are not wearing masks, students must be spaced every other seat. If everyone is wearing masks, then students can be seated closer.

**Question:** If one special education student cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, does the rest of the bus have to socially distance?

**Answer:** These students are higher risk; you are going to need to social distance and put a seat between them. You also may want to consider parent transportation for any student that is unable to wear a mask or that is at higher risk for illness.

**Question:** Is there different guidance for buses with and without air conditioning?

**Answer:** No. Unless you are referring to windows being open. We are asking that the windows are open for ventilation as the air conditioning doesn't provide the needed ventilation. You could do every other window and put it on the first notch. I will inquire further for windows up/down.

**Question:** Reading through the manufacturing guidance on cleaning, what is the allowable time for double runs to allow products to be completely dry before next student pickup.

**Answer:** I don't know. We may need some districts to test the drying time and get back to us.

**Question:** Can the bus driver and monitor be in motion during the curing or drying time?

**Answer:** You should be able to drive during the drying time. Read the labels and ensure they are on the EPA listing as well. Some districts are looking at cleaning supplies not listed on the manufacturer websites, so you will just need to be diligent. Also, there is a difference between cleaning and sanitizing. Sanitizing is typically done at the end of the day.

**Question:** Do you have examples of what should be used for contact tracing and employee temperatures?



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**Answer:** There are three items in the appendix we are providing to the districts. The first is a survey to poll parents. The second is a health assessment for employees. This is a sample. You can use whatever your district determines is needed. The last is a seating chart. This will need to be adjusted for each bus. You can have prefilled assigned seats and mark off students that are not on the bus that day. It's important this is completed daily before releasing students in the morning and before taking off in the afternoon. A monitor or the driver can do this.

**Question:** Drivers and monitors must wear a shield or a mask, but not both?

**Answer:** Correct, they only need to wear one or the other.

**Question:** Can the driver or monitor get a medical exemption/waiver like the students can in order to not wear a mask?

**Answer:** That's going to be a district decision. Your district is going to have to determine whether the bus that they're on without a face shield or mask is going to be acceptable.

If it is a driver on a special needs bus, then the district might decide to change the routes for that driver to keep them and the students as safe as possible. The district may feel more comfortable with a driver that has a mask on as opposed to one that cannot wear it.

**Question:** Are there any specific requirements regarding the masks being used?

**Answer:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a cloth face mask.

**Question:** Are all buses required to have bus monitors?

**Answer:** No. Look at your procedures and if you are taking temperatures of the students as they get on the bus, then a monitor is needed. If you are pumping hand sanitizer into every student's hand then a monitor is needed.

You do not want the driver doing all the extra duties and taking their eyes off the road. They need to watch for passing cars, for students who might be standing around and to ensure no students are being left behind. If they are doing the extra duties, they are losing muscle memory of what they have been trained to do in a very specific manner. These are reasons we are recommending monitors.

As students and the driver acclimate to the new requirements, fewer monitors on the buses may be needed, but only time will tell.

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**Question:** What about a sibling of student with fever?

**Answer:** Each district is going to have to make the determination of policy for this. A fever doesn't mean they have COVID; it could be another virus, an infection or something else causing the fever.

**Question:** Will KDE pay for added Monitors?

**Answer:** KDE does not pay for monitors or any staff. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security CARES Act and FEMA funding may help cover some of the costs. Again, you want temporary workers as opposed moving staff around for the FEMA funds.

**Question:** If we don't transport all students, is it necessary to do bus evacuations for all students? Those not transported will not be riding to/from school, field trips or athletic trips during the first semester. Basically, they won't ride at any time during the first semester.

**Answer:** Yes. As with every school year, there may be times students that don't normally ride the bus need to.

**Question:** Do capacity levels have to be health department approved or is it a local decision?

**Answer:** You have a local health department and need to be in contact with them. If you will be using 66 passenger buses, let them know your plan for the use. For example, we have 10 66-passenger buses that are going to be used. Is this acceptable for full load or do we need to have fewer students per seat. Your local health department may have information that you don't have regarding your community.

**Question:** Is temperature the only reason to isolate a student or are we considering other symptoms?

**Answer:** Temperatures are only one symptom for COVID-19. Your district needs to determine what other symptoms you should be looking for. If you are doing temperature checks as students are entering the bus and they are coughing or don't look good, you will want to make sure they sit up front and have a mask. Follow your district procedure for sick students. If they are sneezing from allergies, you may need to bring them closer to the front with the windows up.





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**Question:** Can drivers take temperatures if no monitor is present? I thought the guidance was not in favor of this because of the driver's responsibilities.

**Answer:** Drivers should not be taking temperatures.

**Question:** Will temperatures be taken by schools before loading the bus to go home?

**Answer:** No, this is not required. Students who were sick throughout the day should not be riding the bus home. The district will need to have policies in place.

**Question:** Just to clarify, pre-k and kindergarten students will be allowed to ride the bus without masks and this will not affect the bus being able to run at full capacity?

**Answer:** We ask that a seat is put between pre-k and kindergarten. Per the DPH, best practices on the bus are temperature checks and social distancing if feasible. All students shall receive hand sanitizer upon entry to the bus.

**Question:** Earlier, we were talking about taking the temperature of students before they get onto the bus. Are we sticking with this?

**Answer:** No, student temperatures do not have to be taken at the bus, but a district certainly can implement this policy if they are able to do so.

**Question:** To be clear, if a kindergarten student doesn't wear a mask and you're saying it's not required, can we claim 100% capacity if the kindergarten student isn't wearing one?

**Answer:** We ask that a seat is put between pre-k and kindergarten students and the rest of the students on the bus. Per the DPH, best practices on the bus are temperature checks and social distancing if feasible. All students shall receive hand sanitizer upon entry to the bus.

**Question:** What about a special need child who cannot wear a mask and requires a chewable object at all times so they do not bite themselves or the monitor. How can I handle this type of situation?

**Answer:** This is a very specific situation. You will want to reach out to your Admissions and Release Committee team and KDE's Exceptional Children's Division for additional assistance.

**Question:** Did I understand pre-k and kindergarten students not wearing masks will need to follow distancing?



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**Answer:** You should have a seat separating pre-k and kindergarten from the rest of the bus. Then they can sit together. Per the DPH, best practices on the bus are temperature checks and social distancing if feasible. All students shall receive hand sanitizer upon entry to the bus.

**Question:** Would it be wise to have the attendance charts turned in to schools daily for their use with contact tracing?

**Answer:** This is acceptable. This way it is at the school already. It is going to be up to each district to have some type of policy on where to keep these.

**Question:** What are we going to do about students that have a note to go home with someone else?

**Answer:** This is going to be a district decision. Any student that is on the bus will need to follow all policies and procedures. This is why all students need to do evacuations. The bus driver also will need to ensure the attendance is taken and add the student that is going home with someone else.

**Question:** How do we handle large stops and temperature checking without holding traffic up for an extended period of time?

**Answer:** Temperature checks are not required to get on the bus. However, if they are done, consider spreading out the stop to have fewer students at each one. You could have one stop at the entrance of an apartment complex and one at the end of the complex.

**Question:** Who is it that KDE recommends take temperatures and doing the daily ridership?

**Answer:** A monitor should be taking the temperatures. A monitor or driver can do the daily ridership. It can be done before they leave the school or after they get to the school, depending on if it is an afternoon or morning route.

**Question:** If kindergarten students ride the bus with students of other grades, will the kindergarten students be required to wear a mask?

**Answer:** No, it is not recommended for kindergarten students to wear a mask.

**Question:** What about buses that don't have air conditioning regarding opened windows?



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**Answer:** Windows are for ventilation. They should be opened to allow for the air to flow. Also, it may be possible to do every other window. Talk to your health department to determine if this is enough for the size of bus you are going to be running.

**Question:** We already are utilize taking attendance daily. We keep attendance sheets on file at the bus garage for the school year.

**Answer:** Great. This will be easy for your district if contact tracing is required.

**Question:** If you select a high school student to act as a monitor, will parental permission be needed due to the fact that they are a minor?

**Answer:** Yes, this should be done any time a student is a monitor. They also should receive additional training regarding their responsibility, possibly include CPR and first aid.

**Question:** Just to clarify, if a student gets sick at school during the day, they should not be allowed to ride the bus home in the afternoon? What if school cannot reach a parent to come and pick them up?

**Answer:** Correct, they should not be riding the bus. The school should have a policy in place regarding not being able to reach parents.

**Question:** On temperatures, do we record it or just the ones over 100.4 degrees?

**Answer:** This is a district decision.

**Question:** Just to clarify, we do not have to use these exact forms if we have the needed information?

**Answer:** Correct, you can use any form you wish. These are not mandated

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