

Travel Support to Specialist Schools – Information for Families

What travel support 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 support families in accessing a specialist school.

Conveyance allowance is a financial support provided to parents through the school. It can be used to assist with the cost of:

- Driving a student to school in a private car
- Private bus
- The cost of a public transport ticket 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 education** programs in a student's individual learning plan. The school will consider suitability of travel education 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 support of a conveyance allowance, school transport service or travel education support, a specialist school student must:

- Be approved under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) or Disability Inclusion Tier 3 student-level funding
- Be eligible for enrolment at the school they attend
- Reside within the Designated Transport Area (DTA) of the school they attend
- Be enrolled at the special school for three or more days per week

What is a designated transport area (DTA)?

A DTA is a geographical area in which the Department provides travel support to a school. Travel support is only provided to a student whose primary place of residence is within the school's DTA. DTAs are not enrolment areas. Students residing outside the DTA are able to enrol at any school however travel supports will not be available to them.

Who do I contact to find out about travel support?

Each school can provide advice on travel support prior to enrolment. You will be asked about your intentions for travel when you complete the school enrolment process. It is important to provide the school with as much information as possible and that you ask lots of questions regarding what travel supports may be available to you. All schools will require you to participate in your child's travel 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 travel support 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 travel arrangements?
- If you are in rural or regional Victoria, can you access a mainstream transport 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 travel support is not a right. The school will focus on providing the best travel support and also encourage the development of important skills that may help your child beyond their school years.

More information on Conveyance Allowance

The amount of financial support provided through the conveyance allowance program 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 can be found via: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/conveyance-allowance/policy>

More information on transport services provided by the Department

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

A number of Department transport services have supervisors. These staff are engaged by the service provider and are trained in basic first aid that includes cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and anaphylaxis training and is obtained from a recognised training provider. 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 outside of their first aid qualification.

School transport services cater for many 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 interest of ensuring the service is best for all student's individual requests cannot be accommodated. All families are welcome to transport students directly themselves if they do not wish to use the services available.

Can transport services change throughout the year?

Yes, 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 students and families. As such the Department and schools make every effort to minimise changes. Large scale change is only undertaken when absolutely necessary.

The safety of student travellers

Safety of students is a primary concern of the Department and schools. Most schools considerate it appropriate for all students to be accompanied to and from transport services by a responsible adult. Information on further safety and emergency management procedures can be provided by the school principal. You can expect that the principal will discuss with you the importance of appropriate student behaviour on transport services.

Important things to keep in mind

- Contact the school to ascertain if your child is eligible for travel support
- New students are enrolled throughout the year, so your child's travel times may change
- Transport services provide transport to a large number of students, any alterations to arrangements will impact on other families

Parents/guardians/carers must assist the school when travel supports are established in the following ways:

- Be involved in regular discussions around travel supports
- 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 (as 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:
 - In the event of absence of their child from the morning transport service run
 - 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 parent/guardians/carers to communicate with their child about appropriate behaviours 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 a student 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 staff, will a student be removed from a transport service until such time as the issue can be resolved. The Department's Student Transport Unit 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 Department of Education website via the link:
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transport-students-disabilities/policy>