

August 14, 2020

Dear LEA Leaders,

This memo includes important updates to the busing and student transportation section on pages 16 and 17 of *Back to School RI: Health and Safety Guidance to Reopen Rhode Island's Elementary and Secondary Schools* released on June 19, 2020. Highlights of the changes include:

1. A change to the maximum occupancy for school buses from one student per seat to a maximum of **50% of vehicle seating capacity** (not to exceed 36 passengers) for all vehicles used for student transport (e.g. school bus, van, or other vehicle).
2. Reformatted the section to reflect that that the guidance is the same for all reopening scenarios (Full, Partial, and Limited In-Person).
3. Added reference to a planning resource that can be used to determine the number of close contact passengers who will need to quarantine in the event of a passenger testing positive.

## Busing and Student Transportation

It will be necessary for all LEAs to consider multiple solutions for student transportation, and no one solution will work statewide given the unique circumstances of each district and school. Each LEA will need to outline how it is going to address the transportation needs of its community.

For use of traditional school buses, the following required guidance must be followed for each of the three in-person reopening scenarios. To ensure student compliance with the health-and-safety guidelines for buses, additional bus monitors are strongly recommended for every bus.

### In All Reopening Scenarios:

- All students on buses are required to wear masks (with the exception of children younger than age two and anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance).
- Students using the bus are scheduled as a stable group, and the bus group is considered its own stable group.
- Hand sanitizer must be available and used when entering and exiting the bus.
- Students are screened for symptoms when getting on the bus. Options for screening include screening by parents prior to students boarding the bus.
- All students have assigned seats on the bus and ride the same bus to and from school.
- Students are seated to physically distance as much as possible with a maximum occupancy of 50% of vehicle seating capacity (not to exceed 36 passengers).
- Students should— to the greatest extent possible— refrain from talking on the bus, in order to minimize respiratory droplets.
- Students on the bus all sit facing forward.



- Since each bus is its own stable group, the same group of students is assigned to the bus every day. Locations for drop-off and pick-up are the same every day, with the same group of students every day. As much as possible, drivers and staff helping with busing should be the same for each bus, each day.
- Bus windows should always remain fully open in order to improve air flow and ventilation; all passengers should dress for inclement weather so that windows can remain open regardless of weather concerns,
- LEA plans must include specific considerations for differently-abled students and specific protocols identified on a student's Individual Education Program (IEP).
- Along with mask-wearing, physical distancing at bus stops and during drop-off and pick-up is strongly recommended. All measures must be taken to physically distance to the greatest extent possible.
- Signs should be posted on buses to remind students of protocols. Reminders about screening prior to boarding buses should also be posted for families.
- Drivers, monitors, and other staff must be screened daily. Face coverings are required for all drivers and staff.
- High-touch surfaces such as handrails should be cleaned and disinfected between bus runs. All buses should be disinfected at the end of each day.
- To ensure student compliance with the health-and-safety guidelines for buses, additional bus monitors are strongly recommended for every bus.