

Field Trip Guidelines:

Thanks to Jim Reitmeier, former Transportation Supervisor of The Lancaster Central Schools for this info.

The following article appeared in "School Executives Bulletin:"

"Several recent charter bus accidents involving fatalities have caused many school districts to examine their procedures to charter bus trips. If requested by the school district, the Division of Program Regulation of the Department of Motor Vehicles will provide factual information regarding the compliance and qualification status of the motor carrier and bus driver. The information will assist districts in its choice of a motor carrier and help avoid:

- booking charter trips with bus companies that were not in compliance with Article 19A of the Vehicle and Traffic Law or were currently under suspension;
- assigning a driver with a less than clean driving record to the district's charter trip; and
- assigning a not-qualified or unreported driver to the district's charter trip.

The following are suggested guidelines districts may wish to use in screening motor carriers and drivers to be used for charter trips.

BEFORE BOOKING A CHARTER TRIP:

- Ask the prospective bus company if it is in compliance with Article 19A (intrastate) and federal Department of Transportation regulations (interstate).
- Require the bus company to provide three or four names and a recent driver license abstract for a "pool" of drivers that can be assigned to your charter trip.
- Be sure the drivers are "school bus qualified" (fingerprinted and criminal history cleared) as required by Section 509 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law.
- Review each of the prospective driver's Article 19A files.
- Contact the Bus Driver Certification Unit of the Department of Motor Vehicles to request the compliance status of the bus company and the driver qualification status of each of the prospective drivers. Allow adequate time to enable the Bus Driver Certification Unit to transmit its findings to you.
- Check with the New York State Department of Transportation regarding the bus company's equipment and maintenance record.
- Develop guidelines and protocols the adult chaperone/school official assigned to the trip will follow both before starting out and during the trip. This individual must be authorized to take definite steps to ensure the safe transportation of the children, including terminating the trip if the condition of the equipment or the driver (fatigue, speeding, etc.) pose a significant threat to the safety of the children.

ON THE DAY OF THE TRIP - BEFORE STARTING OUT:

The chaperone/teacher/school official assigned to oversee the trip should:

- A. Verify the identity of the driver by requesting to see the driver's license. This will ensure that only drivers you have already checked through the Bus Driver Certification Unit actually show up to drive the trip:
- B. Evaluate the condition of the vehicle (properly inspected and appears to be in safe operating condition);
- C. Evaluate the condition of the driver (not fatigued, etc.); and
- D. Repeat steps B and C each day of the trip.

ON THE ROAD - DURING THE TRIP:

The chaperone/teacher/school official assigned to oversee the trip should:

- A. Monitor the driver's driving performance (speed, safe lane changes, proper following distance etc.);
- B. Monitor the driver's physical condition, particularly on long trips, to ensure the driver is not fatigued; and
- C. Take decisive action to eliminate any threats to safe operation of the bus (request/require the driver to slow down, pull over at rest stop or exit).

AT THE END OF THE TRIP:

Send a written report detailing any safety concerns that came about during the trip to the school official responsible for booking charter trips."