



James Fazzino, Ed. D.  
*Interim Superintendent*

October 29, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Mercer County Special Services School District is contracted by the sending districts to transport most of the MCSSSD students to and from school each day. We take our responsibility to ensure that all our students have a safe and efficient way to get to school seriously. As you may know, we are experiencing a widespread shortage of school bus drivers impacting thousands of school districts across the country. As a result, we have experienced disruptions in providing transportation.

We want to thank you for demonstrating incredible patience and for working with us as we continue to manage this unprecedented bus driver shortage. We continue to work with our contractors, local legislators, as well as the State office of Education, as we try to improve the situation for our students and their families. We know that this is an incredibly difficult and frustrating situation, and we will continue to do everything in our power to overcome these challenges.

For more information regarding transportation and the driver shortage, please check out the Frequently Asked Questions below and feel free to contact the transportation office if you have further questions or concerns.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Why is there a shortage of school bus drivers?**

After schools were shut down due to Covid-19, some drivers chose not to return citing Covid related and/or other health concerns. Other drivers do not feel comfortable being vaccinated and/or tested weekly, so they resigned. The other issue that contractors are facing is CDL testing issues at the DMV. Bus companies can have potential drivers trained and ready to take their tests (CDL knowledge and road tests) but cannot get appointments for months.

#### **Why is my child's bus extremely late?**

Right now, bus companies are running 3 different scenarios to combat the frequently changing staffing issues.

- Combining routes (adding 2 routes from nearby areas going to the same school on 1 bus) will cause a fluctuation of pick-up times because the bus is covering more area. The contractor will only combine both routes if all students can fit safely on a shared bus.
- Having a driver "piggy-back" routes. In the scenario, the driver will pick up route "A", bring them to school, then go back to another area to pick up route "B" and bring them to the same school resulting in the students on the 2nd route being picked up later than their usual time.
- Pulling a driver that has finished their route assigned by another school district to cover a MCSSSD route (usually due to the last-minute call out of the originally slated driver) which results in a delay that can be anywhere from 10-40 minutes based on the area that the driver is coming from.

**My child left something on his/her regular bus. How do I check the lost and found?**

Check with the driver the next day. Because the driver may change daily, drivers are instructed to leave lost items on the bus so students can retrieve them the next day. If after checking with the driver, the item wasn't found, please call 609-631-2121.

**If my child's bus does not arrive on time in the morning, what should I do?**

Please call 609-631-2121 to speak with the transportation department. Under most circumstances, they can call the bus company to determine their location.

**If my child misses their bus, what should I do?**

Students should be outside and ready for the bus 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. With buses frequently running late, parents are encouraged to call the transportation department if they believe their student missed the bus. The transportation department can call to confirm if the bus has passed by the stop already.

**We have moved. How do I get my child assigned to a new bus?**

Please inform your child's sending district of the new address immediately. The transportation department will need an updated address or transportation request (if changing school districts) as soon as possible. Failure to do so will result in a delay in setting up new transportation.

**How do I share a concern, complaint, question or compliment regarding a bus, a bus driver, or children on the bus?**

Feel free to contact your child's school, their MCSSSD case manager, their sending district case manager, or call the transportation coordinator at 609-631-2121.

Sincerely,



Dr. James A. Fazzone  
Interim Superintendent

JF/cm