

MSBOA Return to School Roadmap for School Bus Operations

This guidance outlines some potential options for contractors to implement at their school bus terminals when school resumes. While this guidance is only a starting point, contractors are highly encouraged to creatively come up with solutions on how to increase physical space between your staff in order to protect their health and others that they may have contact with. Our goal as an industry is to offer a clean safe ride to our passengers.

Driver Health and Safety

Drivers should wear a mask and vinyl gloves. Face shields should not obstruct vision and can be used in conjunction with a mask or for those that are unable to wear masks due to health conditions. Plexiglass bus partitions that are approved by DPS may be installed.

Consider private daily health screenings for drivers with a temperature check and questionnaire regarding symptoms. While protecting the confidentiality of the document to comply with employment laws, employers could utilize a [daily sign off form](#) documenting any of the following **new** symptoms:

Fever, chills, a new cough, shortness of breath, a new sore throat, muscle aches, headache, loss of smell or taste.

Drivers who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 must be instructed not to report to work until their isolation or quarantine period is completed. Drivers should be encouraged to stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care. Policies should be developed for a safe return to work for those who have a positive test or are exhibiting symptoms and address when a test could be required. Refer to [CDC guidance](#).

Continue to promote social distancing to avoid exposures. An exposure is being within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more. Consider staggered times to enter the terminal and eliminate bottlenecks to avoid large groups gathering before their route. Discourage community food sharing.

Determine how you will operate during times of high absenteeism by cross training employees and utilizing work from home policies.

Train drivers to do a quick cleaning procedure in the event of a bus breakdown or route deviation to avoid cross contamination issues.

Drivers should be reminded that safe transportation must take priority over all distractions, especially during the loading and unloading process.

Safe Environment for Students

High touch areas, including the handrail, door assembly, dash, driver compartment and school bus seating, should be wiped or sprayed with [EPA registered household disinfectant](#) or with a bleach solution (1/3 cup per 1 gallon of water) following each route. (Check with your manufacturer on the effect of bleach on seat belt webbing.)

Students should comply with masking requirements. Provide hand sanitizer on the vehicle mounted for students as they enter the vehicle. Develop expectations and discipline guidelines for non-compliance.

Students should be seated with family members or distanced to the fullest extent possible in the exterior seating positions or skip rows when possible.

Seating charts should be implemented and enforced. Consider that camera footage may need to be reviewed through the contact tracing process.

Roof hatches should be raised (weather permitting) to keep airflow exiting the vehicle.

Students should be loaded from the rear of the vehicle to the front and unloaded from front to rear to prevent incidental contact.

Routes should be limited whenever possible to reduce contact time between students.

Students should be encouraged not to sit in the seat behind the driver. Seats that are to remain open should be visually indicated with tape.

Parents should be educated regarding daily health checks of their students and sign off on guidelines or issue consent to ride the bus.

No water or food/gum/candy should be consumed on the bus.

Students should be educated to maintain social distancing at school bus stops.

Identify students that are medically fragile or may be unable to comply with masking or other social distancing requirements.

When schools are in hybrid mode - capacity should be restricted to 50%. Maintaining social distancing will be a priority despite the learning model. Stickers or visual aids can help students determine where to sit.

Students should not ride the bus with friends to sleepovers, birthday parties or other social activities.

Protocol for Terminals

Develop and share with all employees a [COVID Preparedness Plan](#).

Encourage all staff to practice good hand hygiene and adhere to [face covering requirements](#). Have hand sanitizer, personal protection equipment and cleaning supplies in stock and ready to be used by staff.

Eliminate shared workspaces. Clean high touch surfaces frequently, if staff must share a computer keyboard to punch in, the area should be wiped down following use.

Consider protocols to alert parents and school administration of a potential exposure and how contact tracing may be implemented. Establish protocols on how to notify staff of potential exposures should be established.

Review school bus stops to reduce the number of students gathering in a single location.

Track bus ride times in order to comply with [MDH guidance](#) on handling a suspected case.

Discuss with school building officials the capability of staggered loading and unloading times to reduce the number of students entering a single entrance or exit at one time.

Review and be familiar with [quarantine guidance](#) for employees who may be a close contact and/or live with someone who tests positive or is a close contact.

Discuss with school officials procedures that they can help implement to help with contact tracing. (ie - have coaches take attendance and implement seating charts on activity buses, make coaches aware of capacity restrictions, have teachers track who rides the bus daily.)

Consider revamping school bus rules and transportation policies to reflect operational and social changes. Bus passes could be issued to make sure students ride the correct bus.

Educate employees. Post information regarding COVID-19 symptoms. Develop and document policies regarding proper cleaning procedures and worker protection. Consider online training and meetings when possible.

Follow [CDC guidance](#) on cleaning procedures following a positive test.

Train HR staff on [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) so that quarantined employees or those that are caring for family members are able to access sick pay.

Discuss with school administration regarding billing - distance learning, route quarantine and hybrid pay should be included in the discussion. Develop corresponding policies on how you will pay and retain your drivers.

Resources-

MN Department of Education

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/casehandle.pdf>

CDC Guidance

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>

OSHA

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>