

Getting to School Safely

Whether our students walk, ride a bike, take a school bus, or are driven to school, the biggest test they face may not be in the classroom, but on the journey to and from school. When school is in session, each day between 6:45 and 8:45 a.m. and again between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m., it is critical for everyone, motorists, parents, educators, and students to be alert and aware as students make their way to and from school. Teaching and reviewing important safety guidelines with our students will help keep our children safe.

Walking

Walking to school can be an enjoyable way for children to exercise while talking with friends and mentally preparing for the school day. Teach your children pedestrian safety rules and lead by example.

- Choose the safest route between home and school and practice walking it with your children. Point out any hazards they should watch out for.
- Walk the route several times with them, until they know how to do it safely.
- Always cross at the corner and in the crosswalks. Do not cross in the middle of the block or between parked cars. Remember, a flashing "walk" signal does not mean it's safe to cross.
- Stop at the curb before crossing. Look left, right, and left again to make sure no cars are coming. Cross when the traffic is clear, and continue to look left and right for cars while crossing.
- Whenever possible, cross where crossing guards are posted, and instruct your children to obey and cross with the guard.
- Walk on sidewalks, if available. If there are no sidewalks, walk on the far left-hand side of the road, facing oncoming traffic. Beware of cars pulling out of driveways. When sidewalks are not available, use well-worn paths.
- Using mobile devices while crossing busy intersections is dangerously distracting. Don't text, talk on a cellphone or other mobile device, or have ear buds in listening to music.
- Don't speak to strangers; if a stranger approaches, tell a trusted adult, such as a parent or teacher.
- Walking to school with a parent, sibling, neighbor, or friend increases student safety.

Riding a Bicycle

Bicycle riding is a great way to get to school, while getting exercise at the same time. When planning the most direct route for riding to school, choose a route with the fewest number of streets to cross and one that avoids streets with heavy traffic. Ride the route several times with your children, until they know how to do it safely.

Teach your children bicycle safety rules. Remember to be a good role model by following the same rules.

- Always wear a helmet. Make sure your children wear them correctly positioned on their head, with the straps secured under their chin.
- When riding on the street, ride on the far right-hand side of the road, with the traffic. Follow the traffic signals and stop signs.
- Before entering or crossing a street, look left, right, and left again to avoid traffic and pedestrians.
- Avoid riding in the dark. If your child needs to ride in the dark, make sure he or she has reflectors on his or her bicycle, helmet, and clothes.
- Avoid the automobile drop-off and pick-up zones and school parking lots.
- Know and use appropriate hand signals.

Driving

Even though it may seem safest to take your children to school, motor vehicle accidents are a leading cause of injury-related deaths among children age 14 and under.

- Always use child safety seats and seat belts correctly.
- Have children ride in the back seat until they are more than 12 years old.
- Don't start the car until everyone is buckled in.
- Allow enough time in your schedule so you don't need to drive too fast or go through yellow lights to get there on time.
- Drop off and pick up children at a safe location.

- Make sure children exit and enter the car by the curb.
- Exercise extreme caution in and around school grounds.
- Always remember to lead by example, using safe practices.

Taking the Bus

Although bus travel is one of the safest ways to get to and from school, injuries can still occur, and most of them take place when children are getting on or off the bus.

- Be on time at your designated bus stop.
- Do not play in the street or on private property. Wait for the bus in a safe place – well off the roadway.
- Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before entering.
- After leaving the bus, cross at a designated street crossing, where possible. If a designated street crossing is not available, walk ten feet in front of the bus and wait until your driver ensures that it is safe and instructs you to cross. Do not cross behind the bus.
- Follow all instructions from the school bus driver.
- If seat belts are provided, be sure to use them.
- Do not extend objects, hands, or head out the bus window.

Reviewing Your Transportation Options

School Bus

- Riding the D-11 school bus is the safest way for your child to get to and from school. An overview of the policy concerning transportation eligibility can be found at: <https://www.d11.org/Page/1031>
- You can find information concerning your child's eligibility for district provided transportation services at: <http://routing.vmaxcompass.com/Infocator/Info.aspx?OrgGuid=ORG-CSSD&ProfileGuid>. If your child is eligible for the school bus route, stop locations and AM departure and PM arrival times will also be provided. If your child is eligible, have them ride the school bus.

Not Eligible for District Provided Transportation Services?

- Walking and/or riding bicycles to and from school are always healthy alternatives. You may want to consider organizing adult supervised "Walking School Buses" or a "Bicycle Trains" for your school/neighborhood. For more information and safety tips on walking and riding bicycles, click on <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>.
- Too far to walk or bike?
 - **Space Available Transportation:** If your child is not eligible for district provided transportation services, you live close to an existing bus stop, and there is space on the school bus, you may request space available transportation services. Information on space available transportation can be found at: <https://www.d11.org/Page/1018>
 - **Drive your child to school:** A parent driving their children to school by car has become more and more prevalent. The reasons for this are many-fold. Many of our older schools were designed as walk-in schools. Driving children to school is a major part of our traffic problems and congestion in and around our schools. This problem exists even at newer schools that have been designed to manage pedestrian, car, and school bus traffic patterns. Ironically, the risk of children being run over near their schools is much higher than in the past, due to all the parents driving their own children to school and parking in unsafe places near the school.
 - **City Bus:** Mountain Metropolitan Transit (MMT) is the primary source of public transportation services in the Pikes Peak region. Information on routes and rates can be found at <https://coloradosprings.gov/mountain-metro>
- **High School Students Driving Themselves to School:** Careful consideration should be given when making the decision to allow your teen driver to transport their friends, or allow your teen to ride with other teen drivers. (Is the teen a responsible driver? Does the teen's license have any restrictions?) There are restrictions regarding the ages and the number of passengers a teen driver

may transport. Information on Colorado's teen driving restrictions may be found at:
<https://www.codot.gov/safety/colorado-teen-drivers/parent/teen-driving-restrictions.html>

Whatever choice you make for your child's means of getting to and from school, their safety should always be your first priority. For more information on student safety to and from school, click on the following links:

<https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/kidsandbikesafetyweb/index.htm>

<https://www.nsc.org/road-safety>

<https://one.nhtsa.gov/nhtsa/everyoneisapedestrian/index.html>