

# District Pupil Transportation Operations Evaluation Criteria

(updated January 2019)

- A. It is a fundamental principle of management that, in the absence of control, any organization will degrade to the lowest level of productivity or efficiency and the highest level of disorder. There are four elements to the successful control of an organization. First, there should be a statement of the ultimate goal or objective of the organization. Second, there should be a measurement of the present performance of the organization. Third, the present performance of the organization should be compared to the goals and objectives of the organization. Finally, if the goal has not been achieved, action should be taken that enables the organization to move closer to its goals and objectives.
- B. In pupil transportation, the ultimate objective is to provide children with safe transportation to and from school in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible. The data and records gathered during the normal course of business provide a part of the information necessary to determine the present status of the pupil transportation program. The following criteria are means of relating this administrative information together to establish just how effective the program is. The criteria are intended for self-evaluation purposes but should be carried out in as impartial a manner as possible. Remember, the evaluation is intended to lead to an improvement in the program, not justification of present practices. Perfection will probably never be achieved but should be continuously pursued. Although a favorable comparison with the performance of other districts and records of improvement in recent years are commendable, they are not justification for complacency. For the evaluation to be worthwhile, it must result in either (a) recommendations that result in improved policies and procedures, or (b) a determination that no change is necessary.
- C. To be effective, a pupil transportation program should be safe, economical, and adequate. The evaluation criteria can be divided into these same three areas of consideration:
1. Safety. A good method of analyzing the safety record of a school bus fleet is to prepare documented answers to the following questions:
    - (a). How many accidents (or injury-producing incidents) did the pupil transportation system experience during the last year? How many during the past three years?
    - (b). Were any fatalities or serious injuries sustained by transported pupils or others?
    - (c). What is the estimated cost of the accidents experienced during the year?
    - (d). What was the average number of bus miles per accident? How does your district's value compare with the state average?
    - (e). Has the district's accident record improved during the past three years?

- (f). What do the accident investigations disclose as to the responsibility for pupil transportation accidents?
- (g). How many drivers have perfect safety records? How many have more than one accident?
- (h). How many drivers have citation-free driving records? How many have received more than one traffic citation?
- (i). Are the bus driver recruitment policies effective in obtaining reliable and competent persons?
- (j). Does bus driver training include sufficient emphasis on safe operation?
- (k). Are bus riders adequately trained in safety practices when boarding, riding, and leaving the bus?
- (l). Are the school buses adequately maintained?
- (m). Are bus routes designed and periodically reviewed to avoid traffic hazards?
- (n). Are the bus loading and unloading facilities at the schools adequate?
- (o). What is the frequency and nature of complaints received from parents, the motoring public, railroads, etc.

2. Economy. The answers to the following questions will furnish information on the efforts being expended and the achievements made in the area of economic pupil transportation:

- (a). What does pupil transportation cost per pupil, per year, per bus mile?
- (b). How do transportation costs compare with other school expenditures?
- (c). Is there a discernable trend in pupil transportation costs during the past three years?
- (d). How do bus prices compare with those experienced by other districts?
- (e). How many students are transported in comparison to the capacity of the bus, i.e., what percent of the bus capacity is utilized?
- (f). How many miles are buses operated without passengers? What percentage of the route mileage is this?
- (g). Are bus drivers and maintenance personnel kept aware of bus operating costs?
- (h). Are competitive bidding and wholesale purchasing used in securing equipment and supplies?
- (i). What cost-saving measures have been implemented during the past three years?
- (j). What explanations are there for operating costs that appear too high or too low?

3. Adequacy of Service. The adequacy of the transportation services provided is another important aspect of the pupil transportation program that requires constant evaluation. The following questions should serve as a guide for examining the adequacy of a district's pupil transportation program:

- (a). What is the maximum time spent on a bus by a student in traveling to school in the morning? What is the average riding time for transported pupils? How

- many students must ride on a school bus for an hour or more to reach school or return home?
- (b). Are educational experiences provided for the students while they are on a school bus?
  - (c). How long before classes start do students arrive at school and how long must they wait after school is out to board a school bus?
  - (d). What is the frequency with which trips are completed on schedule?
  - (e). What is the frequency and nature of road failures? How does this years' experience compare with that of the previous year?
  - (f). What is the frequency and nature of bus driver complaints of equipment difficulties and pupil-generated disturbances?
  - (g). How does the number and capacity of the district's pupil transportation vehicles compare with other districts on a geographical size or pupil population density basis?
  - (h). How does the number and length of bus routes compare with other districts on a geographical size or pupil population density basis?
  - (i). How many stops are there on each route and what is the average distance between stops? Is there a limit placed on the walking distance from a pupil's home to a bus stop? If yes, what is the basis for the limitation?
  - (j). Are pupils transported who do not meet state eligibility criteria? If yes, is there a written district policy setting forth which pupils are eligible for transportation at district expense? What factors other than distance are considered?
  - (k). What is the district policy concerning the transportation of extremely isolated pupils?
  - (l). What were the frequency and nature of requests for additional pupil transportation services received during the past year and the last three years? What additional services were initiated as a result of these requests?
  - (m). In what ways have pupil transportation services increased or improved during the past year and the last three years?

#### Summary:

The proceeding questions are intended to elicit some of the information that a district pupil transportation supervisor will need to determine the quality or the shortcomings of the district's pupil transportation program. It is expected that the answers to these questions may elicit other questions and their answers, which will be useful to the evaluation. The success of the evaluation will ultimately depend on how creative the pupil transportation supervisor is at (a) recognizing the goals and objectives of the pupil transportation program, (b) identifying the areas where improvement is justified, and (c) developing the policies and procedures that will result in the needed improvements in the pupil transportation program. It should also be noted that the evaluation questions call for quantitative data that can only be obtained if complete and detailed records have been kept. It should be recognized that accurate data is the cornerstone of defensible conclusions -- and improvements in the pupil transportation system that can be justified on the basis of factual information will more than offset the effort expended in accumulating and maintaining the required records.