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Transportation Staff Responsibilities

Important Points

The transportation staff should be trained to identify the signs of breathing difficulties and be able to respond appropriately.

Emergency plans and communication systems should be established.

The school nurse is a resource to learn more about asthma and its management, especially the school's asthma emergency plan.

Bus drivers and the aides who assist them are vital links in helping students with asthma as they are transported to and from school, on field trips, for athletic events, and in connection with any of a variety of school activities. This is true whether a school system employs its own transportation staff or uses the services of a licensed bus company. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 24 million children ride school buses everyday and spend an average of 1-1½ hours on the bus each week. Like all members of the school staff, members of the transportation staff should be prepared to assist students who have asthma.

Bus drivers and bus aides need to be able to identify students with asthma and know how best to help them manage any problems that might occur. This means that at the beginning of the school year, transportation staff members need to talk with the school nurse and obtain a list of the students who might be needing help. Emergency action plans are essential as an asthma episode can potentially occur anywhere and at any time. These plans should be reviewed very carefully with the school nurse annually. Drivers and aides should know how to assist students in using inhalers and taking needed medications. First Aid and CPR training are highly recommended. Emergency contact numbers should be readily available to provide backup assistance for transportation staff.

Transportation staff should not be expected to relay messages regarding health care needs between home and school. Nor should they be expected to transport medications to and from school. Such communications should occur directly between parents and the school health or teaching staff members.

Allergen Free Buses

Buses should be kept clean and free of potential asthma triggers.

Buses need to be kept clean and as allergen free as possible. Floors should be swept and damp mopped regularly and litter on the bus should be kept to a minimum. Reasonable indoor bus temperatures should be maintained and opening and closing windows will need to be considered during heavy pollen seasons. Requests to transport pets on buses should be diplomatically denied. Smoking cannot be allowed.

Exhaust fumes should be kept to a minimum.

School bus engines need to be well maintained to avoid irritating exhaust fumes. Idling of bus engines should be avoided whenever possible. Some school district have chosen to post NO IDLING signs to alert all members of the school community to the respiratory dangers associated with exhaust fumes. Diesel and gas fumes are frequent asthma triggers and should be kept to a minimum. The EPA announced project grants for a Clean School Bus initiative in February 2006, www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus. Other information and resources are available at www.asthmaregionalcouncil.org/about/BusToolkit.htm.

Emergency Care Algorithm

ASTHMA/WHEEZING OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING

