

A NATIONAL STUDY OF HEAD START TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

The primary goal of the study is to promote safe and effective transportation programs for Head Start Preschool Children. The principal objectives of the study were twofold: (1) to establish transportation management procedures, driver training standards, and a driver training manual for Head Start Agencies, and (2) create [The National Transportation Center for School Children \(NTCSC\)](#).

Read [The Transporter](#) - Premiere Edition, dedicated to the safe transportation of our children.

Our Goal

To develop educational materials and publications for school transportation program personnel

Elements of a Safe Transportation System for Preschoolers

- Safe Vehicles
- Certified Drivers
- Availability of a Strategic Plan
- Periodic Evaluations
- Exemplary Customer Service
- A Transportation Manager
- Safety-minded Drivers
- Monitors who back-up Drivers
- Knowledgeable staff and parents
- Adequate Budgets
- Policies and Procedures
- Training Programs
- Well-behaved Children who Understand Transportation Safety
- Education Materials
- Knowledge of Local, State and Federal Regulations and their Impact



Eight Points on a Compass for Transportation Safety

This presentation was given at the National Head Start Association conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. What follows is a brief abstract of the presentation which was intended to raise the audience's sights on transportation safety.

1. **Setting the bar higher for transportation of pre-schoolers.** Standards for transporting preschool children should be as high or higher than for bussing K-12 students. But what standards are we talking about: What makes a vehicle safe? When is loading or unloading safe? What other salient concerns?
2. **Is yours a "best" practice, or just so-so?** The best practices in head start transportation today, where are they, why are they "best", and can you replicate them? Among the topics: How can children's bus rides become a learning experience; when is it time to get rid of that "old" bus?
3. **Big and little ideas that work.** Swifter diffusion of innovations through the Head Start world! Among the topics: the bus driver's necessities kit -- what he or she really needs within reach if a child has a medical problem; the most effective interactive communication systems for buses and bus drivers.
4. **Doing what everybody else does -- when national uniformity makes practical sense.** Elements of Head Start transportation systems that ought to be the same and be treated the same in every state! Among the examples: certification standards for drivers; the elements of a basic driver training program; the minimum emergency equipment to be stored on a bus; and bus stop and start signaling rules.
5. **Adaptable models for busy people.** Program directors and transportation coordinators, busy with day to day problems, may find adaptable models of standards and practices handy in coping with small but important transportation components. Among the possibilities: training drivers on defensive driving techniques, or on proper pre-trip bus inspections, or on assuring comfortable transportation for children with physical disabilities.
6. **Does anybody have the answer to your question?** Providing a reliable connection between project directors with difficult questions and resource people with sophisticated answers: how might it be done? Among the questions that might be fielded: how to achieve a cost-effective contract with a private bus company; practical ways of operating buses in high-density urban neighborhoods, or in short-term migrant programs, or in a sparsely settled rural area.
7. **Information you may like to study if only you have time to find and organize it.** In the Head Start universe there are certain issues that call for comprehensive factual treatment before decisions are made about them. Among those issues: compensation packages for drivers and monitors; all-perils insurance portfolios; using transportation expenses as a local match.
8. **Easy on, easy off, and perfectly secure passengers: designing buses for tiny tots.** A proposal for intimate cooperation between Head Start professionals, pediatricians, state and national transportation specialists, and school bus manufacturers to design and market a cost-effective vehicle that will assure safe transportation for infants and toddlers.

This publication highlights study findings and other facts, figures and trends in Head Start Transportation Programs.

Study Highlights (Facts, Figures and Findings) In October 1997 M. H. West & Co., Inc. initiated work on a national study of Head Start transportation systems. Heading the extensive study which by design will culminate with the development and operation of a [National Transportation Center for School Children](#) is Marilyn H. West, Owner and President of M. H. West & Co., Inc. Working with her on this three-phased project was John R. Rothermel, D. Ed. Both Mrs. West and Dr. Rothermel have strong research skills and extensive experience working with health and human service organizations in program evaluation, planning and implementation. They along with other members of the project team generated significant data and information about Head Start transportation programs. This information is providing the foundation and underlying principles for the guidance and technical assistance that is available currently on a limited basis to Head Start programs and will be available on a large scale in the fall of 1999.

[Preschool Children Transportation Programs](#), Selected "Best Practices" Preschool transportation agencies must consider factors such as passenger comfort, high performance and safety in the operation of their transportation systems. Safety is paramount. This publication highlights guidelines for Head Start Programs to follow to achieve "Best Practices" in their transportation programs. The foundation of these guidelines is the 1998 national study completed by M. H. West & Co., Inc. Support for this initiative has been a two-year SBIR Grant funded through the Head Start Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families.

Guidelines for "Best Practices" in Transportation Programs include the following areas:
transportation agency vehicles
drivers
monitors
teachers
parents