

Transportation Manual 2019-2020

SMITHVILLE I.S.D. VISION STATEMENT

Smithville I.S.D. serves the community by equipping students with the quality of education that prepares them to be successful in a changing society.

Dear Smithville ISD Transportation Team Member,

You, the Bus Driver, are the captain of your bus and are responsible for the safe transporting and delivery of your passengers, care of equipment, and good public relations for the school district.

Smithville I.S.D.'s children are the irreplaceable cargo you carry on your bus. Special qualifications of capability and good character are demanded of a school bus driver. You were carefully selected, trained, and successfully tested by the Texas Department of Public Safety. When you begin to travel the streets and highways you are met with a new vital responsibility, namely, public relations.

The letters SMITHVILLE I.S.D. are clearly visible on your bus from a long distance. The manner in which you operate your vehicle on the public streets has a great influence on other motorists' perception of the quality of our drivers, and the general operations of the school district.

For many people who do not have children in school, the bus driver and his passengers are the only representatives of the school system they meet. The way in which a driver conducts him or herself will cause the public to form opinions not only of the school bus transportation system, but of the district as a whole. A safe driving record and good public relations don't just happen – it has to be practiced. So, it is up to you, behind the wheel and in front of the public, to create and maintain an exemplary image of the bus driver and Smithville I.S.D. It requires a healthy body and steady nerves to remain calm and cool among noisy, restless children. Leave your personal problems at home. Do not let something that had an adverse effect on you at home or in route to work influence your attitude and treatment of students. A good attitude is essential. And a SMILE always helps.

During the school year, on school routes, special education trips, or field trips, the school bus driver comes in contact with a greater number of students and the public than any employee of the school system. After the child leaves his or her home, you are the first adult he or she sees. Your appearance, your dress, your words, your actions and your demeanor have a great impact on students and consequently, by your good example, you can contribute to both their social and academic education. When driving extra-curricular trips, our department is judged by other school districts and the courtesy of the driver often influences the behavior of the students and their performance in the extra-curricular activity.

Thousands of motorists, passengers and pedestrians believe that the well-trained school bus driver is one of the most competent drivers on the road!

This procedures manual is to give general guidance and a summary of the information, rules, regulations, policy, and laws you are required to know in carrying out the duties of a driver or monitor in the S.I.S.D. Transportation Department. You should also refer to the Employee Handbook and S.I.S.D. policy for rules and guidelines. Most of the sources for the policy and laws are listed at the end of this manual.

The first 90 calendar days of employment is considered an evaluation period. During this time, you will have the opportunity to determine if you enjoy what you are doing, where you are working and for whom you are working. Smithville I.S.D. will also have an opportunity to evaluate your work. Assuming that both parties are satisfied, a long and mutually rewarding relationship will begin to develop.

The success of any organization depends on the cooperation, coordination and teamwork of its employees. The unexpected absence or tardiness of one person can delay and interfere with transportation of our school children. We can do our best only when everyone is on the job at their assigned buses at the proper time. If, for any reason, you are unable to report to work as scheduled, you are required to contact the **Director of Transportation** as soon as possible prior to your ordinary route departure time so that arrangements can be made to cover your route.

Route Procedures

Consistent pickup/drop off times are to be maintained, but during fog, ice, snow and/or heavy rain, it is better to be late than to be involved in an accident.

Bus Safety:

Your safety belt will be used correctly at all times while the bus is in motion. This is not only school policy, but it is a state law.

Check and be sure that you know the location of all your safety equipment and how to use it. This includes flares, fire extinguishers, fuses, tool box, and first aid kit. If you find that any of these items are missing, or that the seal is broken on the fire extinguisher, please notify the Director of Transportation in writing immediately.

Bus Stops:

Every effort will be made to establish bus stops in the safest available locations. All stops should be made a safe distance from any obstructions that could interfere with safe loading/unloading procedures. Be especially alert for trees or poles close to curbs and guide wires bracing power poles. Any condition creating an unsafe situation should be reported to the Smithville I.S.D. Director of Transportation immediately. Please call the S.I.S.D. Administrative Offices at 512-237-2487.

Routine Daily Practices:

All buses are to be warmed up prior to leaving on a run. Warm-up time is governed by the outside temperature. It is advisable to warm-up your bus for five (5) minutes in warm weather and ten (10) minutes in cold weather.

All lights will be used in prescribed manner when picking up or discharging students on a public thoroughfare. This does not mean in front of the school or in the parking lot. Always use headlights and clearance lights. Never use parking lights only if the bus is in motion.

Whenever a driver leaves the bus he/she is to:

1. Remove the key from the ignition and place it in the LOCK BOX inside the shack after each use.
2. Make certain that the brakes are set, and the transmission is in neutral.
3. If parked next to a curb, curb the wheels whenever possible.

All windows are to be closed at the end of the day. You may leave the windows open during the day in the heat unless there is the possibility of rain.

The bus must be checked for sleeping or hiding students after the completion of every trip!!

Never leave your bus unattended when there are students present unless another adult – teacher, parent, or sponsor – is on the bus!

As a representative of Smithville I.S.D., all drivers are expected to use language befitting professional drivers. Conduct all conversation with students, employees, bus operations officials, parents, and school officials in a professional manner.

Bus Breakdowns:

In the event of a breakdown, call the office or the transportation director's cell phone at once. Never let anyone work on or jump-start your bus except authorized service personnel from the school district unless express permission has been given by the Director of Transportation.

Do NOT use your bus to push another bus. Bus maintenance personnel will handle any problems that arise with mechanical deficiencies.

Unauthorized Riders:

NO ONE is allowed to ride the bus except authorized students, staff and drivers. If a student wishes to ride home with a friend and this student is not a regular rider of the route, he/she must have a note from the school office; a note from the parent is not acceptable unless it is initialed by a member of the Smithville I.S.D. administrative staff. If an emergency occurs, call the Director of Transportation for specific instructions. DO NOT pick up an individual on the road unless it is one of your regular bus riders at a designated bus stop.

Fueling:

Drivers are responsible for fueling their own bus. All drivers will be issued a Fuel man credit card and will be responsible for fueling the bus assigned to them. It is advisable that buses

should be refueled when the tank gauge shows half-empty. Do not ever let a diesel bus run out of fuel. Never fuel a school vehicle with students aboard.

Bus Yard/Lot

You will be given specific instructions for parking your bus, i.e. location, angle, distance between buses, etc. Never start your parking procedure until the bus ahead of you has completed parking and the driver has signaled that he/she is finished. If it is necessary for you to sit in line and wait your turn to park, please do so.

Bus Care and Maintenance:

You will be assigned a specific bus. You are responsible for the care and operation of the bus. This includes the cleanliness of the bus. All buses are to be swept on a regular basis; trash can/box emptied and not allowed to accumulate. The dashboard and interior of the bus is to be cleaned regularly and seats checked after every run for tears, graffiti, etc. Report any damage to the director immediately. Do not accumulate items around the A/C intake cabin filter.

NO bus is to leave the lot with the back windows, windshield or mirrors dirty or missing. The necessary supplies for cleaning your bus will be available in the drivers' building.

A clean bus is a source of pride to the driver and the students. If you have a clean bus when you start your run, it is much easier to maintain it. The riders will cooperate if you show them that you care.

As stated before, the bus is to be checked for damage after every trip. This is to include broken or cracked, torn or defaced seats or walls. Any damage to the inside of the bus is to be specifically listed and diagrammed on the bus damage report.

You are responsible for your bus on any site other than the bus yard.

Bus Video Equipment/Cameras

Video cameras are for the documentation of events that happen every day that you may or may not know has occurred. When the need to inform you of an occurrence on your bus we will allow the bus driver to view the film or inform you of the issue. The videos are very helpful in clearing up matters of questionable nature. The bus driver's eyes are focused on the road and the dangers that are present in driving responsibility. Cooperation in making your bus available for video change is required. For those bus drivers that take your bus home, you will be required to provide for video changes. This may require your bus to stay in the lot. The video cameras provide valuable information for the safety of children and the bus driver and assists in the good order and discipline of students being transported. Do not touch or alter camera equipment. Please report any and all malfunctions to the Director of Transportation.

Dress Code

Drivers must present a **neat, clean, well-kept** appearance. Good judgment and good taste is the rule with respect to hair length, mustaches and beards. Proper attire is required. This includes clothing that is clean and does not present a safety hazard. There are certain items that are NOT

acceptable: tattoos must be hidden, no flip-flop shoes, cutoffs, miniskirts, tank tops, halters, lack of undergarments or shirts that are unbuttoned down all the way in the front. The Director of Transportation will be the final judgment regarding dress code and personal appearance.

Student Confidential Information

Drivers will not discuss personal or private matters concerning students with anyone other than building principals or the Director of Transportation. Student confidentiality must be maintained and is mandatory.

Personal Cell Phone Usage

It is against state law and district policy to use a cell phone while operating a public school bus. It is also a violation of state law to be operating a motor vehicle (any motor vehicle) on school property and using a cell phone. The Smithville I.S.D. policy and Texas Department of Transportation law regarding the usage of cell phones prohibits the use of the cell phone while DRIVING a school bus. Policy allows for the driver to pull off the road to a safe zone, placing the bus in “park”, to use the cell phone. This policy is for sending and receiving emergency calls. Cell phones have been involved in many accidents and will soon be the leading cause of accidents on highways according to the National Safety Council. The cell phone is a great assistance for the emergency action and the need for the phone is evident, but the distraction of using the phone while driving increases your chance to have an accident. It is our responsibility to assure the public that we are doing our best to keep children safe, prevent accidents, and not give support to public opinion that bus drivers are not concerned about the safety of students. DO NOT use the cell phone while driving an S.I.S.D. bus, van or truck.

School vehicles should be driven at a safe, prudent speed considering road conditions, weather and traffic, regardless of the posted speed limit for that road. The law provides a maximum speed limit of 60 on designated interstate and toll roads. The speed limit in loading and parking zones is 5 miles per hour.

Citations:

Any driver who receives a traffic citation in any Smithville I.S.D. vehicle under his/her control will be held responsible for said citation unless the citation is a direct result of Smithville I.S.D.’s responsibility for equipment. Please report immediately to the Director of Transportation any traffic stop by law enforcement.

Tobacco Use:

Smoking and/or use of tobacco in any form on school grounds or in a school vehicle is prohibited.

Alcohol and Drug Use:

A driver shall not drive or be in active control of any Smithville I.S.D. vehicle, report for duty or remain on duty when under the influence of any alcoholic beverage and/or drugs, nor shall these substances be transported in a school vehicle at any time. An employee found guilty of any of these actions will be subject to suspension and possible termination.

Personal Use of Bus:

No driver is allowed to use a bus for personal transportation. The driver is to use the bus for the transportation of authorized students to and from school and on authorized field trips. The driver shall use the most direct route from the parking area to the pickup point and from the drop off point back to the parking area. No side trips and/or stops for refreshments are permitted. Unauthorized use of your bus will be followed by disciplinary action and possible termination.

Personal Vehicles

Park your **personal vehicle** at your own risk. Smithville I.S.D. will not be responsible for any damage to your vehicle while it is on school property unless the damage is caused by a district owned vehicle. Avoid parking on private property and/or blocking driveways. Your car can and will be towed at your expense. In addition, Smithville I.S.D. is not be responsible for any **personal articles** lost or misplaced by the driver. Any personal article left in a building on school property is done so at your own risk. Do not transport students in your personal vehicle.

Theft of, damage or sabotage to any Smithville I.S.D. property shall be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Personal Information Changes

Any change in your address or telephone number must be reported to the district payroll office and the Director of Transportation at once.

Lack of transportation is no excuse for absence or tardiness. It is your responsibility to maintain your private vehicle so that you have dependable transportation. You are responsible for obtaining transportation to work.

Requests for time off must be submitted in writing to the **Director of Transportation** at least **forty-eight (48)** hours in advance of absence. Availability of substitute drivers affects approval/denial of requests for time off. Repeated incidents of time off for personal reasons will be considered excessive absenteeism.

This department is aware that we do not always know ahead of time when certain emergency situations will arise. In case of death, severe sickness or accidents you will be given time off as needed.

If you are forced to be absent from work, notify the office as soon as possible. In case of an absence of more than 3 days due to illness or surgery, a doctor's release must be provided before you will be allowed to return to work. An absence of over 3 days which was not pre-approved by the Director of Transportation may result in your route being given to a standby driver and you will be placed on standby status.

Refusal to obey a direct verbal or written order from a supervisor may be cause for disciplinary action or dismissal.

In order to maintain schedules and keep reports accurately, you, as a professional driver, must have a reliable method of keeping time. An inaccurate timepiece will not be accepted as an excuse for missed schedules or errors on reports.

Any accident on the lot must be reported immediately. Use the forms on the bus provided by our insurance carrier for this purpose. If you have an accident on your route, contact the **Director of Transportation** at once for specific instructions.

It is your responsibility as a school bus driver to maintain and have in your possession when operating a bus:

1. State of Texas Class B Commercial Driver's License with all endorsements.
2. Bus Driver Certification Card
3. Medical Examiners Certification Card
4. CPR Card

If any of these licenses are allowed to expire, you will be suspended from duty until proof of renewal is presented.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

Smithville I.S.D. recognizes that certain situations may arise which compel an employee to be absent for a considerable period of time. If you find it necessary to be absent for more than 3 days, you may be given a **leave of absence** without pay under the following circumstances:

1. **Death in the family** – leave not to exceed 2 weeks. SISD policy allows 2 day bereavement leave if the death is an immediate family member.
2. **Pregnancy** – all female drivers must notify the Director of Transportation when their pregnancy has been verified by a doctor. Thereafter, a written report must be obtained from a doctor certifying that it is not injurious to health to continue as a school bus driver. If no such report is supplied, she must terminate her run immediately. In no event will a pregnant driver be permitted to work after the end of the eighth month of pregnancy or if the seat restraint (belt) cannot be properly fastened. Leave of absence shall be granted not to exceed two months.
3. **A leave of absence must be requested in writing.** During a leave of absence you will be carried on the payroll without pay. Upon your return, you will have the option of returning to your former run or being placed on standby status, whichever is the most practical for the employee and the school district.

TERMINATIONS:

Voluntary – termination initiated by the employee. You are requested to give the Director of Transportation a minimum of two weeks notice before ending employment with the district.

Medical – termination initiated by the employee or Smithville I.S.D. when it is determined that the employee cannot continue to work due to medical reasons.

Discharge – termination initiated by the district. An employee may be discharged for misconduct or violation of district policies and rules.

Violation of Smithville I.S.D. policy, infraction of bus operation rules, posted, written or given orally by a person of authority in the Transportation Department will constitute reason for **disciplinary action**. Disciplinary action is defined as a verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension, or a combination thereof, or discharge. Such action, when taken by a person of authority in the Department of Transportation, shall be administered as judicially and promptly as circumstance will allow. Before the disciplinary action is administered, the employee shall be given the opportunity to present his/her side of the situation. The school administration shall give the disposition of the situation promptly.

When a driver is involved in a preventable accident or disciplinary problem that is severe enough to warrant investigation, he/she may be placed on **suspension without pay** until the investigation has been completed. Upon completion and review, the Director of Transportation will advise the driver of the results of the investigation and any resulting action.

The Transportation Department is represented by the Director of Transportation and the Transportation Supervisor. These two individuals will work directly with all school personnel regarding discipline, bus assignment, schedules, safety drills and any other matters related to transportation.

The drivers have very little or no contact with the teaching and administrative staff. However, in the event that you do, please remember that you and your actions are representative of the Transportation Department. Be courteous at all times and do not make any changes regarding transportation policies without the expressed permission and knowledge of the Director of Transportation.

Our students are the public we serve daily and we strive not to argue with them. Should a situation arise when students and/or parents have a difference of opinion with our rules and policies, explain courteously that you must follow instructions and schedules and any changes must be made by the Transportation Department. Give them the office phone number, 512-237-2487, and name of the Director of Transportation. Be pleasant and professional in your conversation.

Students are NOT to be let off the bus once they board it, whether at the pickup point or at school. No excuse is accepted. If a parent comes to the bus, be certain it is the parent/guardian and only then may a student be allowed to leave the bus. Many times students will ask to be let off the bus because their friends are in a car following the bus, they see their parent's car at a store, they have forgotten books, they need to go the restroom, etc. The list is endless. The answer is and **MUST** be NO.

In the event of a breakdown, notify the Director of Transportation at once and you will be advised on the procedure you must follow.

When you have a disciplinary problem, your only option in controlling the students is the use of **DISCIPLINARY FORMS**. Never slap a student or manhandle a student by pushing or shoving them into a seat. Do not argue with students. This is in violation of school policy and will be grounds for dismissal.

Grievances

If you, as a driver, have a **grievance** against the district, department or another driver, do not discuss it with the other employees. Take it directly to your Director of Transportation. If the grievance cannot be settled informally the employee will follow the district policy outlined in FNG (Local).

Time Clock Procedures

You must punch your time card in the morning and afternoon. No one can punch your time card for you. Anyone caught punching someone else's time card will be dismissed, as well as the person whose card is being punched.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRANSPORTATION MONITOR GUIDE

Goal: Assure the safety of each student while in transport and provide stability and order in supporting the driver in seat assignment, age separation, noise control, and application of school bus rules.

Buses requiring a bus monitor have had a history of documented student discipline and behavior problems that require immediate behavior control. Normal attempts of control have had little or no success in maintaining a safe environment for the students. The following list is a recommended format to gain control of the behavioral problems associated with this bus.

1. Work with the bus driver to maintain good order, discipline and a safe environment on the bus.
2. Enforce the rule of assigned seats.
3. No one is to be out of seat while bus is moving.
4. Please use your classroom voice.
5. Follow all general school bus rules posted in front of bus.
6. Students violating any rule will be given a discipline referral.
7. Monitors are allowed to move freely on the bus for consultations.
8. Verbal reports on student behavior and recommendations to the Director of Transportation will help in resolving future problems.

Sources:

S.I.S.D. Employee Handbook
S.I.S.D. Policy
Texas Department of Transportation

Website references:

www.smithvilleisd.org
www.smithvilleisd.org
www.txdot.gov

Employee Transportation Manual Receipt

Name _____

Campus/Department _____

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Smithville ISD Employee Transportation Manual. I agree to read the manual and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

Employees have the option of receiving the manual in electronic format or hard copy. Hard copies will be printed and sent to you if you indicate that choice. Electronic copies may be obtained on the district website at www.smithvilleisd.org.

Please indicate your choice by checking the appropriate box below:

- I choose to receive the employee transportation manual in electronic format and accept responsibility for accessing it according to the instructions provided.

- I choose to receive a hard copy of the employee transportation manual.

The information in this manual is subject to change. I understand that changes in district policies may supersede, modify, or render obsolete the information summarized in this manual. As the district provides updated policy information, I accept responsibility for reading and abiding by the changes.

I understand that no modifications to contractual relationships or alterations of at-will employment relationships are intended by this manual.

I understand that I have an obligation to inform my supervisor or department head of any changes in personal information such as phone number, address, etc. I also accept responsibility for contacting my director or the superintendent if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

Signature

Date

Please sign and date this receipt and forward it to your director as applicable to you and your assignment.