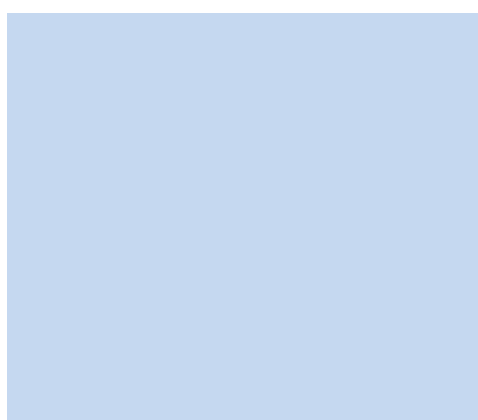
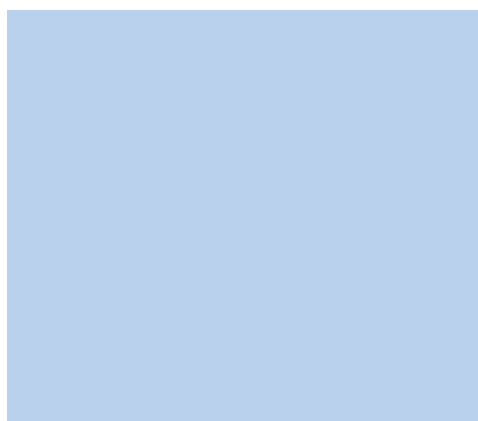
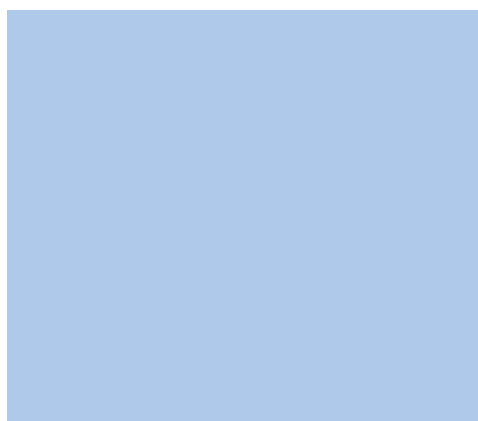


Assisted School Travel Program Guidelines



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1. Context

- 1.1 Under the Education Act 1990 parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure that their children receive an education. The New South Wales Government is committed to providing support for students enrolled in government and registered non-government schools to access education through the provision of transport assistance via services operated by the Department of Education and Communities in addition to those provided by Transport for NSW.
- 1.2 Under Transport for NSW's School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS), all school students, including those with disability who satisfy the eligibility criteria set down for that Scheme are entitled to access transport services free of charge to travel to and from school. Many students with disability who are capable of independent travel access these services daily.
- 1.3 The Department of Education and Communities' key focus is delivering educational services to school-aged students. The Department's Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP) provides assistance for eligible students with disability (as detailed in section 3 of these Guidelines) who are not able to travel to school independently (or their travel support needs cannot be met through access to the SSTS) and most importantly, who may not otherwise be able to access education without the provision of transport assistance.
- 1.4 Services under the ASTP vary considerably to those provided by Transport for NSW as this program provides a door-to-door service designed to support the individual travel needs of students with disability. This support is also provided at no cost to families, and accordingly, eligibility criteria are in place to determine whether or not a student requires access to this specialised service in order to access education. Not all students with disability require transport assistance, therefore not all students with disability will be eligible for assistance under this program. The program's resources are targeted towards supporting those eligible students who need transport assistance in order to attend school.
- 1.5 The ASTP seeks to assist parents, rather than remove their individual responsibility for school transport arrangements.
- 1.6 Please note that references in this document to "parent/s" or "parents and carers" include a guardian or other person having the parental responsibility or care of a student.
- 1.7 These Guidelines contain information and details regarding the eligibility criteria for access to assistance under the program and the processes by which applications will be assessed. These Guidelines aim to provide clear advice to parents, students, schools, and departmental officers in respect of the responsibilities of all parties associated with the assessment of student travel support needs and the application and approval process for assistance under this program.

2. Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP) Parameters

- 2.1 The ASTP provides travel support services primarily from a student's permanent place of residence to school and return. The level of support provided is tailored to meet the assessed individual travel support needs of students and may include full or part time transport assistance, additional supervision, support and assistance in meeting health care or behavioural needs whilst travelling, or assistance for students to develop skills leading towards independent travel.
- 2.2 For the purposes of accessing services under the ASTP, applicants must meet the definition of a "student" and meet all other eligibility criteria. A "student" is defined as an individual who is enrolled in a government or registered non-government school in New South Wales at school entry level or equivalent (Kindergarten) as a minimum. Children accessing special education early intervention programs specifically tailored to prepare students with disability for entry into formal education may also be considered eligible one year before formal school entry into a government or registered non-government school in New South Wales.
- 2.3 In New South Wales children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year, or if they enrol in a special school (a School for Specific Purposes), they may enrol at a younger age at Kindergarten equivalent level. The term "school" does not include pre-schools, long day care centres or pre-primary classes in or attached to schools. Therefore children accessing such services, whether operated privately or by the Department of Education and Communities, do not meet the definition of school "students" for the purposes of eligibility for access to travel support services under the ASTP.
- 2.4 Students may be eligible to access travel support up to the end of the year in which the student turns 18 years of age. In circumstances where persons of 18 years and over seek to enrol or continue their enrolment in order to complete their secondary education, their enrolment is to be supported by the need to continue and complete their Stage 6 schooling, and/or intend to achieve certification outcomes.
- 2.5 Subsidised travel under the ASTP is only available when it is undertaken during standard school days and hours as per the Department's school calendar. Students can travel one forward and one return trip each school day as a maximum.
- 2.6 Travel assistance is provided for eligible students to the closest appropriate Government or Non-Government school to their place of residence. Travel will aim to be by the shortest and most economical route between the student's home and school within the normal range of school commencement and finishing times. Services cannot be designed or altered to accommodate the individual work times or other commitments of parents and carers.
- 2.7 Students who meet the general disability criteria and who are not attending school on a full time basis may be eligible to access travel support services outside the normal range of school commencement and finishing times on the condition that the requirements as outlined in the Guidelines for Exemption from School are met.
- 2.8 Access to assisted school travel to support students who meet the general disability criteria and who are transitioning to and/or from a supported educational setting may be eligible to access travel support services during this transition period and support will be considered for a maximum of two school terms.
- 2.9 For a student to be eligible to access assisted school travel, parents and carers are required to clearly demonstrate that they are unable to provide or arrange transport for the student either fully

or in part. Each application is assessed using a consistent set of eligibility criteria to ensure equity of access. The assessments are based on the needs of the student and the circumstances surrounding the ability of the parents/carers to provide or arrange transport to get their child to and from school. Should the needs of the student or the family circumstances change over time, applications for access to transport assistance can be re-assessed in accordance with eligibility criteria.

- 2.10 Students who access assisted school travel services include (but are not limited to) those with mild, moderate or severe intellectual and physical disabilities, hearing or vision impairments, mental health disorders and Autism, with many of these students diagnosed with multiple disabilities.
- 2.11 Transport arrangements for students with disability to participate in activities that take place at venues other than the school do not fall within the scope of services provided under this Program.
- 2.12 The scope of the program does not allow transport services to be created for the sole purpose of transporting students to and/or from respite care services, work placements, VET Programs or other similar activities.
- 2.13 For students approved to access ASTP transport services temporary variations may be provided where such arrangements can be accommodated within existing transport services and with minimal impact on distances travelled and the amount of time students spend in transit.

3. Student Eligibility

3.1 General Criteria

3.1.1 To be eligible to apply for access to the ASTP, a student must:

- a) be a permanent resident of New South Wales; and
- b) be assessed as having identified disability according to the Department's established [Disability Criteria \(May 2003\)](#); and
- c) be enrolled in a government or registered non-government school in New South Wales at school entry level (Kindergarten or equivalent) as a minimum, **or** be accessing a special education early intervention program specifically tailored to prepare students with disability for entry into formal education one year before formal school entry into a government or registered non-government school in New South Wales; and
- d) be enrolled in a special school or support class specifically for students with disability; **or** require high level assistance for mobility purposes (for example, use of a wheelchair or other form of mobility aid) if enrolled in a mainstream class; and
- e) have parents and/or carers who have demonstrated their inability to provide or arrange travel for the student to and from school either fully or in part; and
- f) be assessed as being unable to travel independently; and
- g) be enrolled in the closest appropriate government or registered non-government school to their home, following consideration of:
 - the impact of travelling distance and time on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes;
 - the impact of travelling distance/time on the student's health, wellbeing and safety;

- the availability and location of special education services that meet the student's specific educational needs; and
- whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that could be made at a school nearer to the student's home that would be less disruptive and no less beneficial for the student as an alternative to travel assistance.

3.1.2 Parents/carers who choose to access a service for the student which is not the nearest appropriate to their place of residence will not be eligible for access to assistance under the ASTP and will have the responsibility of providing or arranging transport for the student to travel to and from school.

3.2 Distance Criteria

3.2.1 The distance between the student's home and his or her school will be taken into account in the assessment of each student's individual travel support needs with consideration given to whether there is any other reasonable adjustment at an alternative location closer to the student's home that would be less disruptive and no less beneficial for the student.

3.2.2 Generally 40 kilometres from the student's place of residence to the school would be considered a maximum distance. For applications where the distance to be travelled is more than 40 kilometres, consideration of the impact of the distance travelled on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes and their general health, wellbeing and safety will be required. This will assist in determining the most appropriate form of assistance.

3.2.3 The minimum distance criteria that applies to eligibility for subsidised travel under Transport for NSW's SSTS will be used in the assessment of the individual student's ability (with or without assistance) to negotiate the travelling route with reasonable safety to and or from school. These distances will be used as a guide only, and will be considered in light of the nature of the student's disability and other identified travel support needs.

3.3 Time Criteria

3.3.1 The time that each student spends travelling to and/or from school will be taken into account in the assessment of their individual travel support needs with consideration given to whether there is any other reasonable adjustment at an alternative location closer to the student's home that would be less disruptive and no less beneficial for the student.

3.3.2 Generally, a travel time of up to 60 minutes would be ideal, with a maximum of 90 minutes on each one way trip. For applications where the estimated travel time is more than 90 minutes, consideration of the impact of the time travelled on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes and their general health, wellbeing and safety will be required. This will assist in determining the most appropriate form of assistance.

3.4 Students from Overseas

3.4.1 Overseas students living in New South Wales who are eligible for a free government education are also able to access assisted school travel if they meet the ASTP eligibility requirements. Those students who are not eligible for a free government education are not eligible to access assisted school travel.

3.4.2 For more information on student visa classifications and eligibility for free government education contact the Temporary Visa Holders Unit:
Telephone 1300 300 229
Fax: (02) 4224 9074
Website: www.internationalschool.edu.au

4. Assessment and Application Process

- 4.1 All government and registered non-government schools are responsible for ensuring that the travel support needs of students are assessed before an application for assisted school travel is forwarded to the Assisted School Travel Unit (ASTU) for assessment.
- 4.2 Each new application will include the Application for Assisted School Travel, parts A and B. Part A is to be completed by the parent/carer and part B is to be completed by the school enrolling the student.
- 4.3 The school Principal and/or the learning support team coordinator are required to collaboratively complete the new application with due regard given to the applicability of the ASTP eligibility criteria. The school Principal is best placed to manage parent and carer expectations before an application is completed by providing advice in respect to whether the student meets the eligibility criteria for access to the program.
- 4.4 An accurate assessment of each student's travel support needs in accordance with the Assessment of Travel Support Needs – Guide for Schools is required to be undertaken and recorded in part B of the application. The completed application along with either a Student Behaviour Support Plan and/or an Individual Health Care Plan (if applicable) relevant to supporting the student while travelling is to be signed by the Principal and forwarded to the ASTU.
- 4.5 When applications are received, they are assessed by the ASTU assessment team. In order to establish whether the student meets the eligibility criteria for access to the ASTP, the assessment team may consult with regional student services officers, senior officers from the Association of Independent Schools of NSW or the Catholic Education Commission NSW, the school Principal, other Government agencies, parents and carers and their medical practitioner, employer or education facility or other persons as required. The ASTU assessment team is made up of senior officers from within the ASTU.
- 4.6 Where possible, the ASTU will process applications within 7 working days of receipt of completed application documentation.
- 4.7 The parents/carers and the student's school will be advised in writing of the result of the assessment process. If the application is not approved, the parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school in the first instance to discuss the ASTP eligibility criteria and the reasons for non-approval. The school or the parents and carers may then contact ASTU to discuss the application and if applicable provide additional information to support the student's application for assisted school travel. The parents/carers can also seek advice on the process to lodge an appeal should the application remain not approved.
- 4.8 An Application for Assisted School Travel must be completed and forwarded with all the required supporting documentation to the ASTU when a student:
- 4.8.1 enrolls in kindergarten; or
 - 4.8.2 progresses from Year 6 to Year 7(or age equivalent); or
 - 4.8.3 changes schools; or
 - 4.8.4 at any other time:
 - when a student is seeking access to assisted school travel for the first time; or
 - following a break in service provision (other than a temporary withdrawal of services).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Department of Education and Communities is responsible for managing all aspects of the ASTP in accordance with approved Policy and Guidelines to meet the needs of eligible school students with disability who require assistance to travel to and/or from school.
- 5.2 The program is a complex organisational exercise and to operate successfully, requires the active cooperation of all parties concerned to fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities.
- 5.3 The program requires all parties to work in partnership to ensure that the travel support needs of students can be appropriately assessed in accordance with the program's eligibility criteria and to ensure services provided under this program meet those needs.
- 5.4 There is a shared responsibility for all parties to communicate details of incidents which need to be considered by any other party (regardless of where any such incident has occurred).
- 5.5 The roles and responsibilities of the Department's ASTU as well as those of parents and carers, students, Government and Non-Government school Principals, Regional Student Services Teams, Non-Government school organisations, the Assisted School Travel Appeals Panel and contracted service providers are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 5.6 The ASTU may seek additional information from relevant parties in order to ascertain or review eligibility for access to services under the ASTP.

6. Appeal Process

- 6.1 In cases where an application has not been approved, an appeals process has been established in order to provide an independent assessment of the original application and any additional supporting information.
- 6.2 Parents and carers can appeal the Department's decision to not approve an application for access to assisted school travel or a variation to existing transport arrangements by completing the [ASTP Independent Appeals Panel Request form](#) and forwarding the form along with any supporting documentation to the ASTU. A copy of the ASTP Independent Appeals Panel Request form can be obtained from the Department's internet site, from the school Principal or the ASTU. Forms should be forwarded to the ASTU within 30 days of the date of the letter advising of the outcome of the application assessment process.
- 6.3 When the appeal documents are received, the ASTU assessment team initially reassesses the application for assisted school travel to determine if any new information has been provided to support the student's eligibility for access to travel assistance. If not, the appeal and application documents will be referred to the independent Assisted School Travel Appeals Panel for their consideration and recommendation to the Department.
- 6.4 The Appeals Panel meets on a monthly basis and comprises senior personnel from the Department's Administrative Services and Disability Programs Directorates, the Catholic Education Commission NSW, the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, a Principal of a special school and a parent of a student with a disability.

- 6.5 Parents/carers will be notified of the decision of the Appeals Panel in writing where possible within five working days from the date of the Appeals Panel meeting.
- 6.6 In cases where applications remain not approved following consideration by the Appeals Panel, further assessment or consideration of any subsequent appeal will only be considered where such a request contains information not previously considered by the Appeals Panel.
- 6.7 The role of the Appeals Panel is detailed in section 7 of Appendix 1.

7. Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements

- 7.1 All requests for variation or cancellation of approved transport arrangements must be submitted by schools to the ASTU for assessment on the Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements form. The form showing the outcome of this assessment will be returned to the school after the request is processed.
- 7.2 These variations may be of a permanent or temporary nature and should ideally be submitted to the ASTU for processing with at least 7 working days notice prior to the required commencement date. The ASTU will process requests for variation within 7 working days (where possible).

7.3 Permanent Variations

- 7.3.1 For students who are changing residential address on a permanent basis or seeking to access transport services in addition to that already approved, Part A of the *Application for Assisted School Travel* must be completed by the student's parents or carers and forwarded with the variation form to the ASTU for processing.
- 7.3.2 It may also be necessary for the ASTU to seek confirmation from the appropriate officer within the Department, Association of Independent Schools of NSW or the Catholic Education Commission NSW, that the student is still attending the nearest appropriate school to the new residential address. If the student is not attending the nearest appropriate school the parents or carers will have the responsibility of providing or arranging transport for the student to travel to and from school.

7.4 Temporary Variations

- 7.4.1 Requests for variations to approved travel arrangements will only be supported where the variation can be incorporated into an existing transport service with minimal impact on distance travelled and time spent in transit.

7.5 Respite care

- 7.5.1 Requests for temporary variations for students to travel to NSW Department of Family and Community Services - Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) Centre-Based Respite Services will be sent directly from ADHC to ASTU and will be processed in accordance with agreed operational communication procedures. The ASTU will advise the Respite Client Liaison Officers (RCLOs) the outcome of these requests. Schools will also be advised of approved ADHC respite requests.
- 7.5.2 Applications for variation to transport services for any respite arrangements other than ADHC Centre-Based Respite Services are to be processed through the school by submitting a *Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements* form. If there is any doubt as to the nature of the variation request schools should call the ASTU on 1300 338 278 to ensure that any ADHC Centre-Based Respite Services variations received by the school have been received

by ASTU directly. The ASTU will advise schools of the outcome of requests for temporary variations to travel services.

7.6 Stoppages or Temporary Variations to School Start/ Finish Times

- 7.6.1 Assisted school travel services may accommodate students from more than one school to maximise the efficiency of the service. In the best interests of all parties concerned it is not possible for the ASTU to allocate additional services to meet temporary or one-off variations to start/finish times of schools. Accordingly, assisted school travel services will operate at regular times to align with standard school start and finish times and will not be varied to accommodate changes for these purposes.

7.7 Work Placements and Vocational Education Training Programs

- 7.7.1 For students approved to access ASTP transport services who are involved in work placements and Vocational Education Training programs that are being provided at a location other than the student's school, (e.g: TAFE, community access) a variation to transport services may be provided when:

- transport can be incorporated into a current school transport run without increasing travel time or impacting on arrival and departure times for other students accessing the same transport service; and
- school personnel provide or arrange suitable supervision of students at that location.

- 7.7.2 Additional services will not be scheduled for these purposes outside of regular approved travel times or days, or for students not already accessing ASTP services.

8. Review of student travel support needs/eligibility

- 8.1 School personnel in partnership with parents/carers have a responsibility to monitor the progress of students who have additional support needs. A formal review for each student receiving additional support must be conducted by the schools at least once a year.
- 8.2 At each student's annual review, the effectiveness of current access provisions (including Assisted School Travel) is to be addressed. This includes further assessment of each student's travel support needs and the continued eligibility of each student to access travel support services under this program.
- 8.3 In circumstances where the review co-ordinator determines that the needs of the student have increased or decreased and this change requires alterations to existing travel support services the ASTU is to be notified as soon as possible using the [Student Travel Support Needs - Change Request form](#).
- 8.4 Where the family circumstances have changed, impacting on the parent's or carer's ability or inability to provide or arrange transport for the student, the ASTU is to be notified as soon as possible using the [Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements](#).
- 8.5 ASTU staff may also seek a review of the travel support needs of a student by a school or region in circumstances where temporary approvals have been granted or where information is received regarding changes in student needs or family circumstances.

- 8.6 A review of student travel support needs/eligibility would also need to take place following any incident which has the potential to impact on the health, wellbeing and safety of any individual on the transport run. This may require a review of the student's behaviour management plan or health care plan as appropriate.

9. Travel Training Program

- 9.1 As part of the ASTP, the process for assessing the travel support needs of eligible students will provide valuable information that can be used to identify those students who are able to acquire the skills necessary to travel independently to and from school.
- 9.2 A priority of the ASTP is to identify eligible students who are currently accessing assisted school travel services and who have sufficient aptitude, knowledge, motivation, mobility and skills to respond to a travel training program.
- 9.3 These are students assessed using the [Assessment of Travel Support Needs- Guide for Schools](#) at Level 1 (Capable of Independent Travel) and the travel training program aims to assist with the transition from a supported travel environment to one of independence.
- 9.4 For further information please contact the State Consultant Assisted School Travel, Assisted School Travel Unit on 1300 338 278.

10. Travel Support Officers

- 10.1 While the majority of students accessing support under the ASTP travel successfully on transport without additional adult supervision, for students with complex behaviour support needs and/or high level health care needs, the provision of a Travel Support Officer to travel with the student may be considered as part of the school's assessment of the student's travel support needs.
- 10.2 Travel Support Officers may also be engaged to assist eligible students to travel to and/or from school on walking routes or other forms of transport, such as public transport or school bus services as an alternative to tailored door to door transport services. Support of this nature may also be a pre-cursor to a travel training program for students assessed as capable of acquiring skills to travel independently.
- 10.3 For new students seeking access to assisted school travel who are assessed as needing the additional support of a Travel Support Officer, the school principal is to complete the applicable section in the Application for Assisted School Travel. Transport assistance for these students cannot commence until a Travel Support Officer is assigned to travel with the student.
- 10.4 For students currently accessing travel assistance and who are subsequently assessed as needing the support of a Travel Support Officer, the school principal is to apply by completing the Student Travel Support Needs - Change Request form. In these circumstances travel assistance may be temporarily withdrawn pending the assignment of a Travel Support Officer.

- 10.5 All applications for Travel Support Officers are to be forwarded to the ASTU and must be supported (as applicable) by a Student Behaviour Support Plan and/or Individual Health Care Plan which details strategies to support the student while travelling. The individual health care plan must include an emergency response plan where the student is diagnosed at risk of an emergency.
- 10.6 Schools have a responsibility to communicate the management strategies identified through the processes of risk assessment and health care planning, to both drivers and Travel Support Officers in order to ensure the continued health, wellbeing and safety of the student and others travelling with the student.
- 10.7 Travel Support Officers and/or drivers must not administer medication or health care procedures to students, unless in emergency situations where appropriate training has been arranged and the school principal provides written confirmation that the Travel Support Officer has the necessary skills to administer medication and/or health care procedures and/or manage the student's health care needs during travel. In such cases, documented procedures are to be included in the student's health care/emergency response plan.
- 10.8 The ongoing need for a Travel Support Officer to travel with a student is reviewed on an ongoing and annual basis to meet the changing needs and circumstances of the student.

11. Work Health and Safety

- 11.1 The Department is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy working and learning environment for staff, students, contractors and visitors to schools, colleges and other workplaces across the organisation.
- 11.2 Consultation in the planning and decision making for the safe travel of students with disability is the responsibility of parents/carers, schools, regions and the ASTU. It is therefore important that relevant information pertaining to the support that students require while travelling is communicated to assisted school travel drivers and Travel Support Officers.
- 11.3 Assisted School Travel contractors have the legal liability under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 in respect of all aspects of the services provided, including obligations to their drivers. There may be circumstances where a student's behaviour is assessed as posing a potential risk. In these circumstances it may be necessary to temporarily withdraw the student from the ASTP. A resumption of transport will be dependent on the outcome and recommendations arising from the risk assessment process.
- 11.4 Consideration will be given to the potential impact of the time and distance to be travelled on the student's health, safety, wellbeing and ability to learn and whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that could be made at a school nearer to the student's home that would be less disruptive and no less beneficial for the student as an alternative to extended travel.
- 11.5 A Student Behaviour Support Plan and/or Individual Health Care Plan (suitable for travel) must be considered for each student and submitted with all assisted school travel requests where:
- 11.5.1 student behaviour has resulted in a temporary withdrawal of access to transport services; and/or
 - 11.5.2 the distance between home and the educational setting exceeds 40 km; and/or

- 11.5.3 the journey between home and the educational setting has an expected travel time of 90 minutes or more; and/or
- 11.5.4 a student's history or circumstances (including health conditions) might pose a risk of any type to themselves or any other person; and/or
- 11.5.5 a student requires a specialised seating or restraint system for postural or behaviour management purposes.

12. Child Protection

- 12.1 The Department has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and young people. All parties involved in the Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP) need to exercise the highest levels of responsibility in protecting children and young people from harm. All parties need to:
- be aware of their obligations towards children and young people related to the specific role they have in the ASTP; and
 - report concerns about suspected risk of harm to children and young people to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline and inform the Principal of the child or young person's school. Any other concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person should be communicated to the school Principal or the teacher on duty. Any concerns related to the alleged conduct of contractors, drivers or Travel Support Officers must also be notified to the Department of Education and Communities' Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate. The contact number for the Directorate is 9266 8070.
- 12.2 All contractors, drivers and Travel Support Officers who provide services under the ASTP are identified as requiring employment screening checks that must be undertaken before they can commence work. In accordance with the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, this involves a Working With Children Background Check, i.e. relevant criminal records (serious sexual offences and listed offences where the victims are children), apprehended violence orders taken out to protect children and employment proceedings taken by previous employers which affect the person's suitability for working with children. A Public Sector Suitability Assessment is also undertaken to review general criminal history information for offences that are not child related and is an additional check the Department conducts to review offences that are not relevant to the Working With Children Background Check.

13. Monitoring

- 13.1 The ASTU will undertake regular monitoring of individual assisted school travel services and contractor performance.
- 13.2 Services are regularly reviewed to ensure operational efficiency and that the changing needs and circumstances of students with disability are met. This process may result in changes to transport arrangements at any time throughout the year.

14. Transport for NSW

14.1 School students who are not eligible for access to the ASTP may be eligible for access to the subsidised School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) where students are capable of independent travel, a Private Vehicle Conveyance (PVC) subsidy or assistance under the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme. These Schemes are administered by Transport for NSW.

14.2 Students with Disability

14.2.1 Students with disability, who are able to use public transport and meet the standard SSTS eligibility criteria, can be transported under the SSTS.

14.3 Applications on Health Grounds

14.3.1 Students who do not meet the standard SSTS eligibility criteria may be deemed eligible for subsidised transport if they are unable to walk to school due to a health condition. The subsidy may be in the form of a temporary travel pass or payments under the Private Vehicle Conveyance (PVC) subsidy, if the student's condition prevents them from travelling by bus, train or ferry, etc.

14.3.2 In order to apply for subsidised travel for health reasons, the parents/guardians must obtain a prescribed medical certificate form from Transport NSW or the transport contractor concerned. Additional information about the School Student Transport Scheme is available from the Transport for NSW offices at:

- ✓ Parramatta: Telephone: (02) 9891 8900 or Toll free: 1800 227 774
- ✓ Newcastle: Telephone: (02) 4929 7006 or Toll free: 1800 049 983
- ✓ Wollongong: Telephone: (02) 4224 3333 or Toll free: 1800 049 961
- ✓ Website: www.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts

14.4 Private Vehicle Conveyance Subsidy (PVC)

14.4.1 In areas where there is no public transport available for all or part of a student's journey between home and school, a subsidy may be paid towards the cost of providing transport by private motor vehicle. "Part of a journey" is defined as a distance of more than 1.6 kms to the transport pick up point or school. Schools are responsible for informing parents of the availability of the PVC subsidy.

14.5 Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme

14.5.1 Individuals who are unable to use public transport because of a qualifying severe and permanent disability may be eligible for subsidised taxi travel. For further information relating to the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme, contact Transport for NSW by:

- ✓ telephone (toll free) - 1800 623 724 or
- ✓ facsimile - (02) 8836 3122.

15. Suggestions and Complaints

- 15.1 The ASTU welcomes feedback on all aspects of the program. To provide feedback please contact the ASTU on 1300 338 278 or complete an [ASTU Suggestion/Complaint Form](#).

16. Further Information

- 16.1 Further information on the Assisted School Travel Program is available from the Assisted School Travel Unit on telephone number **1300 338 278**.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Roles and Responsibilities applicable to:

1. Assisted School Travel Unit
2. Parents and Carers
3. Students
4. Government and Non-Government School Principals
5. Regional Student Services Teams
6. State Coordinator, Special Learning Needs – Catholic Education Commission NSW and Director, Professional Services – Association of Independent Schools NSW
7. Assisted School Travel Program Independent Appeals Panel
8. Contracted Eligible Service Providers and Drivers
9. Travel Support Officers

Appendix 2 Assisted School Travel forms

Appendix 3 Other forms

Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

1. The DEC Assisted School Travel Unit

- 1.1. managing all aspects of the Department of Education and Communities' Assisted School Travel Program in accordance with approved Policy and Guidelines to meet the needs of eligible school students with disability who require assistance to travel to and/or from school;
- 1.2. liaising with relevant Department of Education and Communities and non-government school personnel as required to determine student eligibility to access assistance under the ASTP;
- 1.3. assessing applications for assisted school travel and requests to vary existing transport arrangements in accordance with the guidelines and eligibility criteria for assisted school travel, including seeking additional information as necessary from relevant parties to ascertain or review eligibility for access to services under the ASTP and advise parents/carers and schools as to the outcome of the assessment process;
- 1.4. using best endeavours to facilitate the timely allocation of students to transport services that meet the needs of students with disability while maintaining operational efficiency (where possible, the ASTU will process applications within 7 working days of receipt of completed application documentation);
- 1.5. processing *Working with Children Checks* for all Travel Support Officers and drivers who are required to submit the relevant screening forms and receive approval from the ASTU prior to commencing work. (All forms (*Prohibited Declaration, Consent to Employment Screening, Declaration for Criminal Records Check*), including identification must be forwarded to the ASTU to facilitate employment screening prior to engagement);
- 1.6. liaising with school and regional personnel to ensure transport services continue to meet the changing travel support needs of students with disability;
- 1.7. working in partnership with parents/carers, school and regional personnel to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and/or from school with safety, and to support students who have been identified as having the potential to develop the skills necessary to travel independently to and/or from school with safety;
- 1.8. engaging Eligible Service Providers to provide transport services in accordance with approved procedures to ensure transparency in the allocation process and that probity requirements are adhered to;
- 1.9. conducting a rolling program of contract compliance reviews to ensure that operators are complying with their contractual obligations to provide the best possible transport service for students with disability;
- 1.10. referring concerns about the safety or condition of transport vehicles used to provide transport services to the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to request an inspection. (Where any defects are found the RTA undertakes action against the operator to ensure vehicles meet safety standards);
- 1.11. implementing and monitoring the processes and procedures negotiated as part of the Protocol between the Department of Family and Community Services – Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) and the Department of Education and Communities in respect to requests for variations to approved transport arrangements for students accessing respite care offered through ADHC operated Centre Based Respite Services;

- 1.12. processing contractors' and Travel Support Officers' payment claims in a timely manner with accuracy;
- 1.13. managing the annual rollover of student applications from one school year to the next to ensure that suitable transport services are in place for the commencement of each school year;
- 1.14. appointing an Executive Officer to the Assisted School Travel Appeals Panel.

2. Parents and Carers

Under the *Education Act 1990*, all parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring their children attend school. For students supported by the ASTP, parents/carers are responsible for:

- 2.1. providing accurate and up to date information regarding their inability to provide or arrange travel support for the student to get to and from school through the completion of Part A of the Application for Assisted School Travel and providing additional information as required;
- 2.2. working in partnership with the Department to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and/or from school, and to notify the school Principal of any change in circumstances likely to affect the student's entitlement to or ongoing need for transport assistance;
- 2.3. providing all additional equipment as required by law and to support the safe travel of the student, including but not limited to car seats, booster seats, harnesses, and wheelchairs where appropriate;
- 2.4. providing advice, support and guidance to drivers and Travel Support Officers in relation to the specific seating, safety and health care needs of the student (This includes supporting alternative means of travel to and from school if behaviour, health or safety needs indicate that it is unsafe for the student to travel in an ASTP vehicle);
- 2.5. ensuring that a nominated responsible adult is present at agreed arrival/departure times (A 15 minute period either side of agreed arrival/departure time must be anticipated. In order to ensure that all students spend no more time in transit than is necessary, drivers are only able to wait a maximum of three minutes, morning and afternoon);
- 2.6. escorting the student to/from the vehicle (including students in wheelchairs) and assisting with the transfer of the student into and out of the vehicle, ensuring all seatbelts and other restraints are correctly fitted;
- 2.7. checking that wheelchairs are properly secured within the vehicle (a minimum four anchorage points are required), ensuring that wheelchair brakes are on and ensuring that the wheelchair restraint system includes a seatbelt which is secured directly to the vehicle or to parts which are themselves secured to the vehicle (this is separate from any postural restraint attached to the wheelchair);
- 2.8. informing the school Principal immediately of any change in address or personal details or circumstances including a change to the person nominated to be present at the agreed morning pick-up time and afternoon set-down time;
- 2.9. informing the contractor at the earliest opportunity if the student will not be travelling due to short-term illness or other reasons (if the student will be absent for an extended period of time the ASTU as well as the contractor is to be advised);

- 2.10. advising the Principal, the Assisted School Travel contractor and/or the Travel Support Officer of any issues, incidents or other matters which may affect the health, safety or wellbeing of the student or others during travel, including the conduct of other students towards their child;
- 2.11. working in partnership with the ASTU and the Department's school and regional personnel to support students who have been identified as having the potential to develop the skills necessary to travel independently to and/or from school with safety;
- 2.12. reimbursing drivers for any damage to their vehicle for which the student is responsible;
- 2.13. immediately advising the ASTU if there are any concerns regarding any aspect of the provision of transport services and in particular, about the roadworthiness of the transport vehicle or if they have any doubts about the identity of an unfamiliar driver or Travel Support Officer;
- 2.14. immediately advising the ASTU and reporting concerns related to the conduct of contractors, drivers or Travel Support Officers. The contact number for the ASTU is 1300 338 278 (1300 DET AST).

3. Students

- 3.1. All students are to behave in a manner that ensures both their comfort and safety and the comfort and safety of all persons travelling with the student with consideration being given to a student's age, individual needs, disability and developmental level.

4. Government and Non-Government School Principals

- 4.1. providing information to staff, parents and carers and other interested parties related to the ASTP Guidelines and eligibility criteria for access to services under the ASTP;
- 4.2. assessing parents' and carers' capacity to provide or arrange transport for students by reviewing the information provided by parents and carers in Part A of the Application for Assisted School Travel;
- 4.3. assessing the students' travel support needs by referring to the Assessment of Travel Support Needs – Guide for Schools and completing Part B of the Application for Assisted School Travel (for new applications) and forwarding all relevant documents to the ASTU for assessment where possible with 7 working days notice prior to the required commencement date;
- 4.4. monitoring and reporting all OH&S issues related to the safe travel of students including vehicle condition, safe seating, student health care needs and behaviour, seeking further support from the Department's regional personnel and ASTU (non government schools) where necessary;
- 4.5. ensuring that a risk assessment is undertaken for students with a history of behaviour concerns or health care needs and as required complete and forward a Student Behaviour Support Plan and/or Individual Health Care Plan to the ASTU;
- 4.6. temporarily withdrawing travel assistance from students who pose a risk of any type to themselves, other students or staff, or contractors and forwarding copies of incident reports to the ASTU. (This may include negotiating an alternate means of transport home from school for students whose behaviour/health care needs during the morning journey indicates that there may be an OH&S risk to themselves or others in an ASTP vehicle for the return journey);

- 4.7. promptly notifying ASTU should the outcome and recommendations of the risk assessment indicate that travel assistance should be resumed, modified or cancelled;
- 4.8. providing ongoing support, training and relevant information to drivers and Travel Support Officers for all students with *Student Behaviour Support Plans* and/or *Individual Health Care Plans* that include strategies appropriate for implementation during transit;
- 4.9. ensuring appropriate supervision arrangements are in place at school for students accessing the program at agreed arrival/departure times and arranging for staff to be available to assist with the transfer of students into and out of the vehicle, ensuring all seatbelts and other restraints are correctly fitted;
- 4.10. checking that wheelchairs are properly secured within the vehicle (a minimum four anchorage points are required);
- 4.11. ensuring that the wheelchair restraint system includes a seatbelt which is secured directly to the vehicle or to parts which are themselves secured to the vehicle (this is separate from any postural restraint attached to the wheelchair);
- 4.12. ensuring that wheelchair brakes are on;
- 4.13. certifying the accuracy of drivers' and Travel Support Officers' payment claims by checking the forms to ensure they detail the daily journeys travelled and the names of students who did not travel have been recorded appropriately;
- 4.14. working in partnership with parents or carers, the Assisted School Travel Unit and (for Government schools) regional personnel to support students who have been identified as having the potential to develop the skills necessary to travel independently to and/or from school safely;
- 4.15. working in partnership with parents or carers, regional personnel (for Government schools) and the ASTU to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and/or from school safely;
- 4.16. notifying ASTU of any change in student travel support needs or any change in the student's or family's circumstances which may impact on the nature of travel assistance required or the student's eligibility for continued access to assisted school travel services;
- 4.17. re-assessing at least annually (or more frequently, if required) the travel support needs of students who are currently accessing assisted school travel by referring to the Assessment of Travel Support Needs – Guide for Schools and advising the ASTU where student needs have changed by completing the Student Travel Support Needs – Change Request form;
- 4.18. informing parents of the availability of alternative forms of travel assistance through Transport for NSW, specifically the School Student Transport Scheme (for students capable of independent travel) and the Private Vehicle Conveyance subsidy; and
- 4.19. checking the identity of any unfamiliar driver or Travel Support Officer

5. DEC Regional Student Services Teams

- 5.1. providing support to parents and schools in the assessment of students' travel needs as part of an application for access to assistance under the ASTP which may arise as a result of the Access Request assessment and student placement process. Ensure that parents/carers are fully informed of eligibility criteria for accessing support services as part of the ASTP;
- 5.2. confirming on request by ASTU that supporting documentation accompanying a new application accurately describes the student's travel support needs in accordance with the Assessment of Travel Support Needs – Guide for Schools;
- 5.3. consulting with relevant parties where any regional decision to place a student is likely to have significant time and or distance implications for the student and assessing the appropriateness of the request for assisted school travel in consideration of other support alternatives at a location nearer to the student's home;
- 5.4. documenting and maintaining records of any Regional decision with regard to students who require a risk assessment or support plan relevant to travel;
- 5.5. working in partnership with parents/carers, schools and the ASTU to support students who have been identified as having the potential to develop the skills necessary to travel independently to and/or from school with safety;
- 5.6. working in partnership with parents/carers, schools and the ASTU to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and/or from school with safety;
- 5.7. facilitating an accurate review of student's travel needs and parent capacity to provide or arrange travel as part of the Annual Student Review process (including an assessment as to the closest appropriate educational setting to support the student's needs);
- 5.8. supporting schools with planning for students who pose a risk of any type to themselves, other students, staff or contractors and have been temporarily suspended from the ASTP and where necessary, assist with the coordination of case conferences involving interagency personnel for these students.

6. State Coordinator, Special Learning Needs – Catholic Education Commission NSW and Director, Professional Services – Association of Independent Schools of NSW

- 6.1. providing high level educational support and advice with regard to all requests received from non government schools;
- 6.2. providing Disability Confirmation Sheets to schools for students seeking access to ASTP; and
- 6.3. nominating an appropriate representative on the Assisted School Travel Appeals Panel.

7. Assisted School Travel Program Independent Appeals Panel

- 7.1. The Appeals Panel is responsible for providing an independent review of the ASTU determinations on AST eligibility, when parents and carers appeal against the Department's decision to not approve applications for transport for students.
- 7.2. The Panel will:
 - 7.2.1. ensure that the original determination was made according to the eligibility criteria for access to AST;
 - 7.2.2. consider all relevant documentation related to the Appeal with specific attention given to the application process and the applicability of the AST Guidelines in accordance with the eligibility criteria for access to AST;
 - 7.2.3. conduct further enquiries when necessary. These may include communication with: parent/carer; school personnel; officers from DEC, Association of Independent Schools of NSW; Catholic Education Commission NSW; employer; health care professionals; TAFE/University; Transport for NSW, RTA, other government and non government agencies or local transport providers;
 - 7.2.4. make recommendations to the Manager, ASTU that are consistent with the eligibility criteria as detailed in the Assisted School Travel Program Guidelines.

8. Contracted Eligible Service Providers and Drivers

- 8.1. providing quality transport services for students with disability in accordance with the Department's contractual terms and conditions for assisted school travel;
- 8.2. providing vehicles suitable for the transportation of students with disability and ensuring that vehicles are fitted with appropriate restraints as required by law;
- 8.3. supporting the safety of students travelling in motor vehicles; and
- 8.4. ensuring that students are not left unattended at any time.

9. Travel Support Officers

- 9.1. Providing travel support services in accordance with the Department's contractual terms and conditions for assisted school travel;
- 9.2. providing constant supervision and support for students identified as having additional requirements while accessing assisted school travel services;
- 9.3. attending to students' health care or behavioural support needs in accordance with individual Health Care plans or Behaviour Management plans; and
- 9.4. actively intervening where necessary to prevent students from endangering or harming themselves or others during transit.

Appendix 2 – Assisted School Travel Forms

All forms are available to download from the Assisted School Travel website –

- ✓ [Application for Assisted School Travel](#) [PDF 1,533kb]
- ✓ [Medical Certificate to be provided by parents when due to their medical incapacity they are unable to provide or arrange transport for students](#) [PDF 883kb]
- ✓ [Assessment of Travel Support Needs – Guide for Schools](#) [PDF 209kb]
- ✓ [Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements](#) [PDF 477kb]
- ✓ [Student Travel Support Needs – Change Request](#) [PDF 905kb]
- ✓ [ASTU Suggestion and Complaint Form](#) [PDF 835kb]
- ✓ [ASTP Independent Appeals Panel Request](#) [PDF 994kb]

Appendix 3 – Other Forms

- ✓ [Student Behaviour Support Plan Proforma](#) (DEC Intranet only link)
- ✓ [Individual Health Care Plan](#)