



Education
Public Schools



ASSISTED SCHOOL TRAVEL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

TEXT REVISION 2020

CONTENTS

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 1 | Context | 1 |
| 2 | Assisted School Travel Program | 2 |
| 3 | Student eligibility | 3 |
| 4 | Assessment and application process | 5 |
| 5 | Roles and responsibilities | 6 |
| 6 | Appeals process | 6 |
| 7 | Variation to approved transport arrangements | 7 |
| 8 | Review of student travel support needs/eligibility | 8 |
| 9 | Travel training program | 9 |
| 10 | Assisted Travel Support Officers | 9 |
| 11 | Work Health and Safety | 10 |
| 12 | Child protection | 11 |
| 13 | Monitoring | 11 |
| 14 | Transport for NSW | 11 |

Appendix – Roles and responsibilities

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Department of Education's Assisted School Travel Program | 13 |
| 2 | Parents | 14 |
| 3 | Students | 15 |
| 4 | Government and non-government school principals | 15 |
| 5 | Department of Education School Services teams | 16 |
| 6 | Manager, Disability Support – Catholic Schools NSW and Division Head, Student Services – Association of Independent Schools of NSW | 17 |
| 7 | Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel | 17 |
| 8 | Contracted Eligible Service Providers and drivers | 17 |
| 9 | Assisted Travel Support Officers | 18 |

1 CONTEXT

- 1.1 Under the [Education Act 1990](#) parents* and carers have a responsibility to ensure that their child receives an education. The New South Wales (NSW) 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 (the department) in addition to those provided by Transport for NSW (TfNSW).
- 1.2 Under the TfNSW [School Student Transport Scheme](#) (SSTS), all school students, including those with disability who satisfy the eligibility criteria set down for the SSTS 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.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOOL TRAVEL PASS?

Students from Kindergarten–Year 2 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- Aged 4 years 6 months, or older.

No minimum walking distance criteria applies to these students.

Primary school students from Years 3–6 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW, or an overseas student eligible for free government education.
- The straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 1.6 km.
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.3 km or further.

Primary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a [School Term Bus Pass](#) which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

Secondary school students from Years 7–12 are eligible if:

- They are a resident of NSW or an overseas student who is eligible for free government education,
- The straight line distance from their home address to school is more than 2 km, or
- The walking distance from home to school is 2.9 km or further.

Secondary school students who live too close to the school to be eligible for free travel may qualify for a [School Term Bus Pass](#) which provides bus travel at a discounted price for the whole school term.

Source: <https://apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/#/>

- 1.3 The department's key focus is delivering educational services to school-aged students. The department's Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP) seeks to assist parents, rather than remove their individual responsibility for school transport arrangements. ASTP provides assistance for eligible students with disability (refer to [student eligibility](#)) 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.

* Please note that all references to 'parent(s)' include a carer, guardian or other person having the parental responsibility or care of a student.

- 1.4 Services under the ASTP vary considerably to those provided by TfNSW. ASTP provides a door-to-door service designed to support the individual travel needs of eligible students with disability. This support is also provided at no cost to families. 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 the program. ASTP resources are targeted towards supporting those eligible students who need transport assistance in order to attend school.
- 1.5 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

- 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 while 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 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 NSW, all children must be in compulsory schooling by their 6th birthday. Children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year. The department provides a range of enrolment and support options for children with disability or special learning needs. These include additional support for children in their local school as well as specialist support classes located in some regular schools and in schools for specific purposes (SSPs or special schools). Parents should discuss additional support in their child's local school as well as support class and SSP placement with the principal of their local school. For more information, visit [primary school enrolment](#).

- 2.3 The term 'school' does not include preschools, 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, 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 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 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 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 the 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 impairments.
- 2.11 The ASTP does not allow transport services to be created for the sole purpose of transporting students to and/or from activities other than to the student's home e.g. work placements, Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs or other similar activities.
- 2.12 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:
- be a permanent resident of NSW, **AND**
 - be assessed as having identified disability according to the department's established [Disability Criteria \(May 2003\)](#), **AND**
be enrolled in a government or registered non-government school 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, **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 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:
 - o the impact of travelling distance and time on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes
 - o the impact of travelling distance and time on the student's health, wellbeing and safety
 - o the availability and location of special education services that meet the student's specific educational needs
 - o 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 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 a student's home and 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 km from the student's place of residence to the school is considered maximum distance. For applications where the distance to be travelled is more than 40 km, consideration of the impact of the distance travelled on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes and their general health, wellbeing and safety is 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 TfNSW'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 NSW 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 [DE International](#).

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 ASTP 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 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 expectations before an application is completed by providing advice in respect to whether the student meets the eligibility criteria for access to the ASTP.
- 4.4 An accurate assessment of each student's travel support needs in accordance with the [Assessment of travel support needs](#) 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 ASTP.
- 4.5 When applications are received, they are assessed by the ASTP to establish whether the student meets the eligibility criteria for access to the ASTP. The ASTP may consult with School Services teams, senior officers from the Association of Independent Schools of NSW or Catholic Schools NSW, the school principal, other government agencies, parents and their medical practitioner, employer or education institution, or other persons as required.
- 4.6 Where possible, the ASTP will process applications within 7–10 working days of receipt of completed application documentation. ASTP experiences peak periods during the school year, which may impact on processing times.
- 4.7 Parents and the student's school will be advised in writing (usually by email) of the result of the assessment process. If the application is not approved, parents are encouraged to contact the school in the first instance to discuss the ASTP eligibility criteria and the reasons for decline. The school or parents may then contact ASTP to discuss the application and, if applicable, provide additional information to support the student's application for assisted school travel. The parents 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 ASTP when a student:
- 4.8.1 enrolls in Kindergarten, **OR**
 - 4.8.2 progresses from Year 6 to Year 7 (or equivalent age), **OR**
 - 4.8.3 changes schools, **OR**
 - 4.8.4 changes school sections (when there is a different address and/or different start/finish times), **OR**
 - 4.8.5 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, **OR**
 - after a temporary withdrawal of services over 6 months within a school year.

5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Department of Education 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 ASTP 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 ASTP 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 ASTP as well as those of parents, students, government and non-government school principals, School Services teams, non-government school organisations, the Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel and contracted service providers outlined in the [Appendix](#).
- 5.6 The ASTP may seek additional information from relevant parties in order to ascertain or review eligibility for access to services under the ASTP.

6 APPEALS 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 can appeal the ASTP's decision to not approve an application for access to assisted school travel or a variation to existing transport arrangements by completing the [Appeals Panel Request form](#) and forwarding the form along with any supporting documentation to appeals.astp@det.nsw.edu.au. Forms should be forwarded to the ASTP 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 ASTP initially re-assesses the application for assisted school travel to include the new information provided to support the student's eligibility for access to travel assistance. At this point any application may be approved and transport provided. If not, the appeal and application documents will be referred to the Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel (panel) for their consideration and recommendation to the ASTP.
- 6.4 The panel meets on a monthly basis (refer to the [key dates](#)) and comprises senior personnel from the Department of Education's Disability, Learning and Support Directorate, Catholic Schools NSW, Association of Independent Schools of NSW, a NSW public school principal and a parent of a student with a disability.
- 6.5 Parents will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 7–10 working days (where possible) from the date of the panel meeting.
- 6.6 In cases where applications remain not approved following consideration by the panel, further assessment or consideration of any subsequent appeal will only be considered where such a request contains information not previously considered.
- 6.7 The role of the panel is detailed in section 7 of the [Appendix](#).

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 ASTP 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 ASTP for processing with **at least 7–10 working days' notice prior** to the required commencement date. The ASTP will process requests for variation within 7–10 working days. ASTP experiences peak periods during the school year, which may impact on processing times.
- 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 and forwarded with the form to the ASTP for processing.
- 7.3.2 It may also be necessary for the ASTP to seek confirmation from the appropriate officer within the Department of Education, Association of Independent Schools of NSW or Catholic Schools 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 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 Transport to locations other than home

- 7.5.1 Prior to 2018, the ASTP had an arrangement with the NSW Department of Family and Community Services – Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to transport to ADHC Centre-Based Respite Services. From 1 July 2018, ADHC and ADHC-funded service providers transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The previous arrangement between ADHC and ASTP has finished.
- 7.5.2 Transport requests for NDIS-funded services before or after school – such as respite, after-school programs, therapy or community access – should be discussed first with the student's Local Area Coordinator, Support Coordinator or the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Refer to s12 of the [NDIS Operational Guidelines](#).

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 ASTP 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 the 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, 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 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 coordinator determines that the needs of the student have increased or decreased and this change requires alterations to existing travel support services, the ASTP 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 ASTP is to be notified as soon as possible using the [Variation to Approved Transport Arrangements form](#).

- 8.5 ASTP 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](#) 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 Education Services, Assisted School Travel Program, on 1300 338 278 or email schools.astp@det.nsw.edu.au.

10 ASSISTED 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 an Assisted Travel Support Officer (ATSO) to travel with the student may be considered as part of the school's assessment of the student's travel support needs.
- 10.2 ATSOs 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 precursor 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 an ATSO, the school principal is to complete the applicable section in the [Application for Assisted School Travel](#). Transport assistance for these students cannot commence until an ATSO 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 an ATSO, 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 an ATSO.
- 10.5 All applications for ATSOs are to be forwarded to the ASTP 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 ATSOs in order to ensure the continued health, wellbeing and safety of the student and others travelling with the student.
- 10.7 ATSOs 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 ATSO 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 an ATSO 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, schools, regions and the ASTP. It is therefore important that relevant information pertaining to the support that students require while travelling is communicated to assisted school travel drivers and ATSOs.
- 11.3 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 time and distance 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, **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 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 department's [Child Wellbeing Unit](#) 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 ATSOs must also be notified to the Department of Education's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate (EPAC). The contact number for the EPAC is 02 9266 8070.

12.2 All contractors, drivers and ATSOs 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 [Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014](#), this involves a [Working With Children 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 (Part 3, rule 18 of the [Government Sector Employment \(General\) Rules 2014](#) 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 Check.

13 MONITORING

13.1 The ASTP 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 [School Drive Subsidy](#) or assistance under the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme. These schemes are administered by Transport for NSW (TfNSW).

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 for SSTS 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 School Drive 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 TfNSW or the transport contractor concerned.

14.4 School Drive Subsidy

- 14.4.1 The [School Drive Subsidy \(SDS\)](#) is available to NSW residents in areas where there is no public transport, to drive an eligible student all or part of the way to school. The subsidy is only intended to partly offset the cost of using a private vehicle to drive the eligible student and is not intended to cover all costs. TfNSW administers the SDS scheme. The subsidy is for driving school students to school or to the nearest transport pick up point, by car, motorcycle or boat.

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. Find out more about the [Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme](#).

APPENDIX – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONS ASSISTED SCHOOL TRAVEL PROGRAM

- 1.1 managing all aspects of the Department of Education's Assisted School Travel Program (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
- 1.2 liaising with relevant Department of Education 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 and schools as to the outcome of the assessment process
- 1.4 facilitating the timely allocation of students to transport services that meet the needs of students with disability while maintaining operational efficiency. The ASTP will process applications within 7–10 working days of receipt of a fully completed application with all supporting documentation. ASTP experiences peak periods during the school year, which may impact on processing times.
- 1.5 processing [Working with Children Checks](#) for all ATSOs and drivers who are required to submit the relevant screening forms and receive approval from the ASTP prior to commencing work. All forms ([Declaration for child-related work: Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check](#), [Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check: application and informed consent form](#)), including identification must be forwarded to the ASTP 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, 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 Maritime Services (RMS) to request an inspection. (Where any defects are found the RMS undertakes action against the operator to ensure vehicles meet safety standards)
- 1.11 processing contractors and ATSO payment claims in a timely manner with accuracy
- 1.12 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
- 1.13 appointing an Executive Officer to the Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel.

2 PARENTS

Under the [Education Act 1990](#), all parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring their children attend school. For students supported by the ASTP, parents 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 ASTP to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and 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 ATSOs 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 (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 and 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 ASTP as well as the contractor is to be advised)
- 2.10 advising the principal, the ASTP contractor and/or the ATSO 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 ASTP and the Department of Education 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 ASTP 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 ATSO
- 2.14 immediately advising the ASTP and reporting concerns related to the conduct of contractors, drivers or ATSOs. The contact number for the ASTP is 1300 338 278.

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 other interested parties related to the ASTP Guidelines and eligibility criteria for access to services under the ASTP
- 4.2 assessing parents' capacity to provide or arrange transport for students by reviewing the information provided by parents 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](#) and completing **Part B** of the Application for Assisted School Travel (for new applications) and forwarding all relevant documents to the ASTP for assessment where possible with 7 working days' notice prior to the required commencement date
- 4.4 monitoring and reporting all WHS 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 ASTP 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 ASTP
- 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 ASTP. (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 WHS risk to themselves or others in an ASTP vehicle for the return journey)
- 4.7 promptly notifying ASTP 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 ATSOs 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 driver and ATSO 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, the ASTP 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 from school safely
- 4.15 working in partnership with parents, regional personnel (for government schools) and the ASTP to identify alternative options to assist students to travel to and/or from school safely
- 4.16 notifying ASTP 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](#) and advising the ASTP 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 TfNSW, specifically the [SSTS](#) (for students capable of independent travel) and the [SDS](#)
- 4.19 checking the identity of any unfamiliar driver or ATSO.

5 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SCHOOL 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 are fully informed of eligibility criteria for accessing support services as part of the ASTP
- 5.2 confirming on request by ASTP that supporting documentation accompanying a new application accurately describes the student's travel support needs in accordance with the [Assessment of travel support needs](#)
- 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, schools and the ASTP 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, schools and the ASTP 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 MANAGER, DISABILITY SUPPORT – CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NSW AND DIVISION HEAD, STUDENT 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
- 6.3 nominating an appropriate representative on the Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel.

7 ASSISTED SCHOOL TRAVEL INDEPENDENT APPEALS PANEL

- 7.1 The Assisted School Travel Independent Appeals Panel (the panel) is responsible for providing an independent review of the ASTP determinations on eligibility, when parents appeal against the 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
 - 7.2.2 consider all relevant documentation related to the appeal with specific attention given to the application process and the applicability of the ASTP Guidelines in accordance with the eligibility criteria
 - 7.2.3 conduct further enquiries when necessary. These may include communication with parents, school personnel, departmental staff, Association of Independent Schools of NSW, Catholic Schools NSW, employer, health professionals, TAFE/university, TfNSW, RMS, other government and non-government agencies or local transport providers
 - 7.2.4 make recommendations to the Director, ASTP that are consistent with the eligibility criteria as detailed in these 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

- 8.4 ensuring that students are not left unattended at any time.

9 ASSISTED TRAVEL SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 9.1 providing constant supervision and support for students identified as having additional requirements while accessing assisted school travel services
- 9.2 attending to students' health care or behavioural support needs in accordance with individual health care plans or behaviour management plans
- 9.3 actively intervening where necessary to prevent students from endangering or harming themselves or others during transit.