

**DIOCESE OF DES MOINES**  
**Catholic Schools Policies/Regulations**

**AUXILIARY SERVICES**

**School Bus Driver and Vehicle Requirements**

It shall be the policy of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools Office, under the aegis of the Bishop, that schools owning and operating school buses meet the requirements of both the state and federal governments, maintain and make available to state and federal officials the necessary records.

This policy and its accompanying regulations must be shared with the school bus drivers.

Policy Adopted: November 16, 2009

Policy Reviewed: March 25, 2013  
July 30, 2021

**School Bus Driver and Vehicle Requirements Regulation  
Regulation 728.1**

Schools must comply with the following requirements:

- 1) **281-43.14(285) Driver age.** School bus drivers must be at least 18 years of age on or before August 1 preceding the opening of the school year for which a school bus driver authorization is required.
- 2) **281-43.15(285) Physical fitness.** Except for insulin-dependent diabetics, an applicant for a school bus driver's authorization must undergo a biennial physical examination by a licensed physician or surgeon, osteopathic physician or surgeon, osteopath, qualified doctor of chiropractic, licensed physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner. The applicant must submit to the applicant's employer the signed medical examiner's certificate (Pursuant to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations 49 CFR Sections 391.41 to 391.49), indicating among other requirements, sufficient physical capacity to operate the bus effectively to render assistance to the passengers in case of illness or injury, and freedom from any communicable disease. At the discretion of the chief administrator or designee of the employer or prospective employer, the chief administrator or designee shall evaluate the applicant's ability in operating a school bus, including all safety equipment, in providing assistance to passengers in evacuation of the school bus, and in performing other duties required of a school bus driver.
- 3) **281-43.17(285) Insulin-dependent diabetics.** A person who is an insulin-dependent diabetic may qualify to be a school bus driver if the person meets all qualifications of Iowa Code

subsection 321.375(3). Such driver is subject to an annual physical examination by a qualified medical examiner as listed in rule 281-43.15(285).

- 4) **281-43.21(285) Experience, traffic law knowledge and driving record.** No driver applicant shall be employed or allowed to transport students until the board determines that the applicant has an acceptable driving record, demonstrates the ability to safely operate the vehicle(s) representative of the vehicle(s) required to be operated during employment and is knowledgeable of traffic laws and regulations pertaining to the operation of a school bus. Each local district, or the district's contracted transportation service, must, at a minimum, check the driving record of each applicant or renewing driving on the Iowa Court information system available to the general public. The local district shall determine what an acceptable driving record is based on the district's review and must maintain records of the review of each driver. Nothing in this rule precludes the district from examining other records to determine with the driver has an acceptable driving record nor does it restrict the district to such examinations only at the time of hiring and renewal.
- 5) **281-43.23(285) Application form.** The school bus driver and the board of education/school board shall submit an application for the school bus driver's authorization annually, and upon a form prescribed by the Department of Education.
- 6) **281-43.30(285) Semiannual inspection.** To facilitate the semiannual inspection program, School officials shall send their buses to inspection centers as scheduled. A sufficient number of drivers or other school personnel shall be available at the inspection to operate the equipment for the inspectors. There is a fee for each vehicle inspected.
- 8) **281-43.31(285) Maintenance record.** School officials shall cause the chassis of all buses and allowable alternative vehicles, whether publicly or privately owned, to be inspected annually and all necessary repairs made before the Vehicle is put into service. The inspection and repairs shall be recorded on a form (TR-F-27A) prescribed by the Department of Education. The completed form (TR-F-27A) shall be signed by the mechanic and carried in the glove compartment of the bus.
- 9) **281-43.32(285) Drivers' Schools.** All school bus drivers shall attend classes or schools of instruction as approved by the Department of Education and provided for in Iowa Code subsection 321.376(2). The course of instruction for new drivers, to be successfully completed within the first six months of employment, shall also include the annual course of instruction for the school year in which the new driver is hired. All current school bus drivers shall attend the annual course of instruction, unless the current driver misses a year of instruction . Upon missing a year of instruction, a current driver shall successfully complete the course of instruction for new drivers prior to receiving an authorization. The employer of a school bus driver may impose additional training requirements for any new or current driver.
- 10) **281-43.33(285) Insurance.** The board of education shall carry insurance on all school-owned buses and see that insurance is carried by all contractors engaged in transporting pupils for the school in the coverage and limits as determined by the diocesan insurance company.
- 11) **281-43.36(285) Accident reports.** Rescinded on 10-2-2019
- 12) **281-43.37(285) Railroad crossings.** The driver of any school bus shall bring the bus to a complete stop within 50 feet, but not less than 15 feet from all railroad crossings, as required in Iowa Code section 321.343, regardless of whether or not there are any pupils in the bus, and regardless of whether or not there is an automatic signal at the crossing. After stopping, the driver shall open the entrance door, look and listen for approaching trains and shall not proceed to cross the tracks until it is safe to do so.
- 13) **281-43.38(285) Driver restrictions.**
  - 43.38(1)** The driver of a school bus shall not smoke in the vehicle or on any school property.
  - 43.38(2)** The driver shall not permit firearms or other weapons, nor ammunition, to be carried in the passenger compartment of any school vehicle transporting pupils.
  - 43.38(3)** The driver shall not fill the fuel tank while the motor is running or when there are

passengers in the vehicle

- 43.38(4)** The driver shall ensure that aisles and exits are not blocked.
- 14) School bus drivers must comply with drug and alcohol testing rules.
- 15) **281-43.40(285) Pupil instruction.** At least twice during each school year once in the fall and once in the spring, each pupil who is transported in a school vehicle shall be instructed in safe riding practices and participate in emergency evacuation drills. Documentation of these drills shall be maintained locally for five years and made available upon request.
- 16) **281-43.41(285) Trip inspections.** A pre-trip inspection of each school bus shall be performed and recorded prior to each trip. A written report shall be submitted promptly to the principal, transportation supervisor, school bus mechanic, or other person charged with the responsibility for the school transportation program, if any defects or deficiencies are discovered that may affect the safety of the vehicle's operation or result in its mechanical breakdown. A post-trip inspection of the interior of the school bus shall be performed after each trip.
- 17) **281-43.42(285) Loading and unloading areas.** Restricted loading and unloading areas shall be established for school buses at, or near schools.
- 18) **281.43.43(285) Communication equipment.** Each school bus shall have a two-way communications system or cellular telephone capable of emergency communication between the driver of the bus and the school's base of operations for school transportation.

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### **School Bus Driver and Vehicle Requirements Bus Driver Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulation Regulation 728.2**

Schools that own and operate school buses must have a designated company employee (DER) who serves as the key employee for the bus driver drug and alcohol program functions.

Schools may administer the Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol testing program in one of three ways:

- Administer the program internally
- Outsource some of the program functions to service agents
- Outsource all of the program functions to a vendor, called a "consortium" or a "third party administrator" and a DER on staff.

It is recommended that schools contract with an outside consortium/third-party administrator (C/TPA) as they must assure their clients that the services it provides comply with DOT regulations and that its service agents are qualified. A C/TPA will coordinate the required drug and alcohol testing services for the schools. These services include conducting initial urine collections for drug testing; designation of randomly selected bus drivers for testing; laboratory testing; alcohol testing; breath and alcohol technician (BAT), medical review officer (MRO) and/or substance abuse technician (SAP) if needed; and preparation of annual Management Information System (MIS) reports.

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