

**HEAD START 45 CFR PART 1303.70(c)
TRANSPORTATION WAIVER REQUEST**

Grant Number: 05CH5005-000

Legal Name of Grantee: Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District

Name, Title and Signature
of Authorized Official
Requesting Waiver: Casey P. McCormick, Director

Phone Number: (906) 779-2695

FAX Number: (906) 779-9577

E-mail Address: cmccormick@diisd.org

1. Number of Children Served:
Head Start: 195
Early Head Start 50

2. Number of Children Provided Transportation Services:
Head Start 190
Early Head Start 0
 - a. Using Grantee Owned or Leased Vehicles 0
 - b. Through Grantee Contracted Transportation Services 190
 - c. Through Arrangement at No Cost to Grantee 0

3. Proposed Number of Children Who Will Be Covered by Waiver
Head Start 190
Early Head Start 0

4. Requesting Waiver of : Bus monitor requirement (45 CFR 1303.70(c))

5. Waiver Request Applies to the Following: Grantee

6. Grantee's Justification for Requesting a Waiver

We would like to note that the Transportation Standards for the State of Michigan are the most stringent in the nation in consideration of insuring the safe transportation of children. Licensing Rules for Childcare Centers address the mandate for restraints on buses weighing less than 10,000 pounds AND mandate that, in addition to the bus driver, a staff or volunteer be present on the bus after receiving the tenth child. We have not only complied but have embraced these rules and regulations. With this stated, we will proceed with our justification for an extension.

Program Year 2003-2004 was the first year that the Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District- Head Start program entered into a contractual agreement for transportation services. Prior to this change to contracted transportation services, our Grantee Board had conducted a comprehensive transportation study to determine the best fiscal course for the delivery of transportation services. The services were historically provided within the auspices of the Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District. All transporters were employees with full health and retirement benefits and were part of a unionized bargaining group. While we might have been able to confine the yearly increase in salary within a one to three percent increase, we projected the retirement rate to increase by at least four percent. The cost for healthcare benefits was projected to increase by fifteen to seventeen percent for each of the next subsequent years. As a result of this analysis, the Board decided to enter into a contractual agreement for transportation services at a cost savings to the program. Given the fact that contracted transportation services have been more cost effective than operating the service internally, the cost for contracting transportation has risen each year since 2003-2004.

In Program Year 2006-2007 the Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District-Head Start Program was required to reduce our funded enrollment from 246 to 195 children. With this reduction in enrollment, we also experienced an 11% reduction in our grant allocation. In addition, we experienced a -1% Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). These budget reductions caused a significant restructuring of our program, including the reduction of classroom staff and a reduction in support services staff time. Flat funding has put additional pressure on our budget and caused staff reductions.

Based on our estimations, the cost to fully implement the standards for bus monitors at this time would be cost prohibitive for our program and could jeopardize the quality of service provided to families and children. While we were able to secure funds for the child restraint systems and are currently using the restraint system in all buses, the cost of training and contracting for monitors would be anticipated to exceed \$100,000 for a full year. The Board felt strongly that the monitors, to meet the standards, would need to be adequately trained and supervised and believed that a volunteer bus aide contingency would provide adequate supervision of children being transported.

It is the belief of the Grantee Board that the granting of a waiver for bus monitor requirement (45 CFR 1303.70(c)) is in the best interest of the children served. The Grantee Board feels the use of volunteer bus aides along with well trained drivers and the use of a five point harness restraint system ensures the safety of the children being transported. In addition, the granting of a waiver will allow this grantee to maintain a budget that will ensure quality services to families and children which will meet all Head Start Performance Standards.