

Duluth Head Start Federal Grant FY 2023

Transportation Waiver

History: In 2017, Duluth Public Schools applied for and received Voluntary PreK (VPK) dollars from MN Dept of Education. This funding was designed to provide a preschool experience for 4-year olds at schools exhibiting a need. Transportation to and from school was a requirement. Since our district also serves 4-year olds from two additional funding streams, Head Start and School Readiness, it was agreed that transportation would be granted to all 4-year olds attending preschool, as long as the transportation aligns with the elementary school day. This has eliminated access barriers, which can be significant, particularly for Head Start families who must meet federal poverty guidelines to be eligible for the program. Offering transportation results in increased enrollment and improved attendance for students.

Head Start funding has federal guidelines for transporting children that require additional safety measures, such as child restraints and bus monitors (Performance Standards 1303.71(d) and 1303.72(a)(4)). We ask that these measures be waived, so that our children can ride the bus as VPK 4-year olds, and Kindergarten students can.

With children's safety of utmost concern, our Policy Council supports this plan contingent on the following:

Safety Guidelines for Preschool Children on School District Buses

- 1. This opportunity is only for children who have turned four by September 1.**
- 1. An adult must be present as the child is picked up and dropped off. If the adult is not a parent, it must be someone who the parent designates may take the child home from a bus stop.**
- 2. Children will wear safety vests to increase visibility as a preschool student*.**
- 3. Children will sit at the front of the bus, closest to the bus driver.**
- 4. Preschool children will participate in a bus safety presentation on the first day of school.**
- 5. Riding the bus is voluntary. If parents feel uncomfortable putting their child on a bus, they may still self-transport.**

6. Head Start students have to follow Covid-19 guidelines outlined by the Head Start Performance standards, which at this time, include masking*.

***indicates newly revised safety guidelines**

We ask that you waive the requirements for child restraints and bus monitors, so Head Start four -year- old children can continue to access the comprehensive services provided by Duluth Head Start. Enabling access to programs designed to enhance school readiness for children whose families are experiencing poverty, should continue to be a priority for Duluth Public Schools.

Respectfully Submitted by Sherry Williams, Head Start Director

By signing below, you are indicating support for this Transportation Waiver.

Jill Lofald, School Board Chairperson

Date

Felicia Fanaselle, Policy Council Chairperson

Date