

School District Student Transportation

Update to 2008 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Few Requirements for Drivers of “Type III” Vehicles.** Unlike school bus drivers, drivers of type III vehicles (cars, station wagons, and vans) were not required to pass written, driving, or physical exams; submit to controlled substance testing; or undergo annual training or evaluation.
- **Varied School District Transportation Management Practices.** School districts’ contracting and oversight practices ranged from excellent to poor. Many school districts were uncertain about their student transportation responsibilities.
- **Insufficient Oversight of the State’s School Bus Safety Program.** The Department of Public Safety (DPS) did not provide sufficient oversight of school bus drivers. Also, DPS did not maintain adequate data on its annual school bus inspections.

Changes Implemented

- **Requirements for Type III Drivers Strengthened.** The 2008 Legislature amended *Minnesota Statutes* 171.02 and strengthened the requirements for drivers of type III vehicles. Most type III drivers are now subject to a background check, physical exams, and annual license verification.
- **Model Contract and Best Practices Developed.** The Minnesota Department of Education developed two documents: (1) a best practices handbook for student transportation, which provides an outline of oversight issues school districts should consider while administering their student transportation programs; and (2) a model contract for school districts to use when entering into a student transportation contract.
- **Improved Management of School Bus Safety Oversight.** The 2008 Legislature amended *Minnesota Statutes* 169.435 and created the Office of Pupil Transportation Safety within DPS. This office is responsible for overseeing all department activities related to school bus safety, including maintaining a consistent record-keeping system to document school bus inspections and conducting periodic audits of school districts to determine compliance with federal and state requirements.

Action Needed

- **Ensure Implementation of Student Transportation Best Practices.** The departments of Education and Public Safety should continue to ensure that school districts and other carriers comply with driver requirements and follow best practices. The Department of Public Safety should continue to improve its school bus inspection data.