



# **OTTAWA CARLETON HEADSTART ASSOCIATION FOR PRESCHOOLS**

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## **TRANSPORTATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: Best Practice Guidelines for Headstart**

Prepared for  
Ottawa Carleton Headstart Association for Preschools

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### I. Executive Summary

The Ottawa-Carleton Headstart Association for Preschools (OCHAP) is an organization representing children, staff, parents and Board members of Headstart Preschools. It is committed to education, coordination, networking, and advocacy. The membership is driven by a core group of eleven Headstart programs, which have a vested interest in preschool children from economically and socially disadvantaged environments and their families. As a concrete expression of its mission, OCHAP undertook a review of the transportation services which are offered to families through the various Headstart programs. The review was part of an overall effort to examine and establish standards of quality care to meet the needs of young children and families in the City of Ottawa.

This document outlines “Best Practices” for transporting children to and from Headstart preschools. It is based on gathered transportation safety information, as well as the practical knowledge of Headstart directors. Best practices have been recommended around:

- ▣ Recommended Job Description for Drivers for Headstart Programs
- ▣ Recommended Staff Orientation to Headstart Vehicle
- ▣ Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian of a Child in a Headstart Program
- ▣ Responsibilities of a Child in a Headstart Program
- ▣ Recommendations for Route Planning
- ▣ Recommended Procedures for Loading and Unloading of Children
- ▣ Recommended Vehicle Evacuation Procedures
- ▣ Recommended Policies in Event of Illness
- ▣ Recommended Use of Headstart Vehicle During Field Trips
- ▣ Recommended Use of Child Safety Restraint Systems
- ▣ Recommended Optional Features for Headstart Vehicles

### II. Background Information

#### A. Headstart and Ottawa Carleton Headstart Association for Preschools

Incorporated in November 1990, the Ottawa-Carleton Headstart Association for Preschools (OCHAP) is an organization representing children, staff, parents and Board members of Headstart Preschools. Headstart programs in Ottawa are licensed under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, through the Day Nurseries Act of Ontario. OCHAP was established in response to the urgent need for advocacy and networking among Headstart programs dealing with issues of poverty, family stress, public housing, multiculturalism and other factors affecting child development.

On behalf of children and families, OCHAP provides a structure and forum for the development and delivery of high quality comprehensive early intervention services for preschool children in Ottawa. In carrying out its mandate, OCHAP acts as a collective voice to promote collaboration and provide advice to funding bodies and service planning.

OCHAP's stated goals are:

1. To inform the community about Headstart programs and other early enrichment programs for young children;
2. To provide a central body to support and coordinate services among Headstart Preschool programs and community agencies;
3. To support parent education programs;
4. To offer opportunities to educate and upgrade skills of staff;
5. To advocate on behalf of families participating in member schools; and
6. To advocate on behalf of member schools.

Agencies benefit from participating as members in OCHAP through the:

- < Development and support of citywide early enrichment and intervention services and strategies, such as OCHAP's Speech and Language Program, Book Bag (early literacy effort), and Right Start (a numeracy initiative).
- < Monthly meetings which promote education, service coordination, professional associations, effective partnerships, networking opportunities and advocacy among agencies working with families dealing with issues of poverty, family stress, public housing, multi-culturalism, and other factors affecting child development.
- < Annual in-service training workshops for professional staff development.
- < Periodic newsletters, forums and focus groups for the benefit of member schools and parents.

Through efforts of grassroots organizations, the initial Headstart programs were developed more than thirty years ago; the YM-YWCA Headstart Nursery School, Children's Aid Society Headstart Nursery School and Queensway Preschool being among the first. The last preschool, designated as a Headstart program by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, was Nanny Goat Hill Nursery School in 1990. While each school is unique and responds to the specific needs of its respective communities, all of the member agencies strive toward an ideal Headstart program. At present, there are eleven Headstart programs in the City of Ottawa, in the following four electoral districts:

**Ottawa Centre:**

- < Nanny Goat Hill Nursery School, under the auspices of Somerset West Community Health Centre
- < The National Capital YMCA-YWCA Headstart Nursery School
- < Queensway Preschools, under the auspices of the Queensway Social Action Group

### **Ottawa-West Nepean:**

- < Pinecrest-Queensway Nursery School, under the auspices of Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Service
- < Foster Farm, under the auspices of the Child Care Division, City of Ottawa
- < Esther By Child Care Centre, under the auspices of the Child Care Division, City of Ottawa
- < West End Nursery School

### **Ottawa-South:**

- < Cornerstone Children's Centre
- < Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School
- < Heatherington Nursery School

### **Ottawa-Vanier:**

- < Children's Aid Society Headstart Nursery School/Pré-Maternelle Bon-Départ [Note: This voluntary Headstart program is located in Gloucester, but serves at-risk children and families throughout Ottawa.]

## **B. Transportation Review**

In Spring 2002, the City of Ottawa through the Child Care Services Branch, People Services encouraged the Headstart preschools to undertake a review of its transportation system. This task was assigned to the Community Developer for OCHAP. In June 2002, a comprehensive report was issued entitled, "Transportation of Preschool Children: Review of Current Systems and Recommendations for Headstart Programs in Ottawa." (NOTE: The report is accessible through OCHAP's website: [www.ochap.ca](http://www.ochap.ca) -- under Available Publications.)

The report identified the complex set of issues facing Headstart programs related to transportation of preschool children. A literature review was conducted, which pinpointed concerns related to transportation safety – e.g. the incidence of accidents, importance of qualified drivers, the use or non-use of safety harnesses, the construction of vehicles, policies related to loading and unloading of children, planning of school bus routes, etc.

In addition, an analysis was conducted on the transportation component offered by the various Headstart programs in Ottawa. Seven of the eleven Headstart programs offer transportation services to families. The report included a critique of the types of vehicles; leasing or contract arrangements; driver qualifications, training and responsibilities; safety issues; costs; policies and procedures; geographical boundaries; the relative importance of transportation to Headstart parents and families.

An outcome of the report was the recommendation that OCHAP members should set minimum standards and optional practices for the transportation of Headstart preschool children. After which, all Headstart programs would work towards implementing these "ideal" guidelines, hopefully endorsed by and with financial support from the City of Ottawa. This document is the end result of a series of discussion with Headstart Directors, who worked on establishing these "Best Practice Guidelines."

### C. Acknowledgments

The Best Practice Guidelines were reviewed and updated by the following OCHAP members:

- June Adamson, Director, West End Nursery School
- Bev Bakka, Community Developer, OCHAP
- Milena Bubroy, Acting Director, Cornerstone Children's Centre and Heatherington Nursery School
- Michele Hynes, Director, Pinecrest Queensway Nursery School
- Janie O'Leary, Director, Children's Aid Society Headstart Nursery School
- Kirsten Partanen, Director, Queensway Preschool
- Mona Rowland, Director, The National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA Headstart Nursery School
- Nancy Rowley, Director, Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School

The guidelines would not have been developed without support from:

- Jane Joy, Manager, Child Care Services Branch, and
- Janet Chadwick, Project Policy Officer, Program Development, Community Services, People Services Department

The following source documents were used as a blueprint for these best practice guidelines:

- < *Head Start Transportation Legislation, Regulations and Policies*, The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 26, 2002. [Http://www2.acf.chhs.gov/programs/hsb/regs/regs/1310.htm](http://www2.acf.chhs.gov/programs/hsb/regs/regs/1310.htm)
- < *Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Transportation Policies and Regulations*. [\[http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/busing\]](http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/busing)
- < *Taking the School Bus: How to prepare your child for the school bus*. Canada Safety Council [\[http://www.safety-council.org/info/child/schlbus.html\]](http://www.safety-council.org/info/child/schlbus.html)
- < *Guideline for the Safe Transportation of Pre-school Age Children in School Buses*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, February 1999.
- < Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School, Inc. -- Bus Driver Job Description, Introducing Field Trips in September, Staff Orientation of the Bus, Bus Evacuation Procedures, Pickup of Children and Unauthorized Pick Up Procedure
- < Heatherington Nursery School -- Bus Circle Check, Field Trip Protocol, Staff Orientation of the Bus, Bus Evacuation Procedures
- < Queensway Preschool, Job Description for Driver/Teachers Aid
- < The National Capital YMCA/YWCA Headstart Nursery School – Loading and Unloading of Children

# Recommended Job Description for Driver for a Headstart Program

The driver plays a critical role in the safe transportation of preschool children to and from home and school. Thus, a written job description with a clear list of expectations should be reviewed with the driver periodically. Below is a comprehensive checklist of possible requirements for Headstart preschool drivers upon which to base a job description.

<b>Driving and Maintenance Skills Checklist</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must hold a valid driver's license with appropriate Class designation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must have a valid first aid certificate with CPR.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must have full motor capabilities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must demonstrate knowledge of Transportation Act and be able to meet the specifications of this Act and any other regulations that apply to this work.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to work in conditions involving exposure to chemical substances contained in cleaning and maintenance supplies, exposure to bodily fluids, infectious diseases, frequent high noise levels and inclement weather.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must have basic knowledge of mechanical workings of the vehicle, e.g. checking fan belts, oil levels, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to work with chemical substances contained in cleaning and maintenance supplies.
<b>Reasoning, Interpersonal and Communication Skills Requirements</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to interpret and follow written and oral instructions and to write.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to work in and judge potential hostile situations.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to operate a cellular phone or CB radio.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to perform basic arithmetic.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to maintain cooperative and effective working relationship with supervisor, children and parents.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Must be able to work in tight schedules while adapting to daily minor changes of schedules.

<b>Duties and Responsibilities</b>	
	<b>Regular Maintenance of Vehicle</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Conduct daily check on vehicle, e.g. open hood and check hoses, battery, radiator, etc.; start engine; check gas levels; check and adjust mirrors, lights, tires, doors, seats, wipers, bus body, exhaust, horn, brakes, undercarriage, gas caps, stop arm, etc.; check for presence of fire extinguisher, emergency axe, flares, first aid kit, registration and insurance papers, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Perform systematic preventive maintenance on vehicle, e.g. ensure vehicle has adequate gas, anti-freeze, oil, windshield fluid, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Monitor and arrange for vehicle safety inspections, as required. Take vehicle in for regular maintenance to ensure it will pass safety inspections.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Ensure CMV certificate is maintained on vehicle, as well as all legal documents.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Clean vehicle periodically.
	<b>Pick-Ups and Drop-Offs</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Plan appropriate and safe routes, and make plans for alternate routes, if needed.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Perform daily pick-up and drop-off runs according to the school's policies
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Check to ensure the person picking up child is authorized and confirm by checking personal identification (e.g. driver's license)
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If person is not listed as an authorized pick up person, call the parent with de-facto custody. If parent/guardian is not available, contact the emergency persons listed. If unable to contact parent/guardian or emergency contact, explain to individual attempting to pick up the child that you have no authorization to release the child and have to return the child to the school until authorization can be confirmed. (You may suggest to the individual that they accompany or meet you at the school.) If after one hour, you are unable to contact the parent/guard/emergency contact person, you may call the police.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Be responsible for ensuring no children are left on the vehicle.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Maintain daily log and inform Director of any occurrences which require action.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Maintain mileage records re: field trips, regular route, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Drive vehicle for field trips, as required.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Ensure loaner vehicle is obtained, as needed.



		<b>Interpersonal Relationship</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Maintain positive attitude regarding parents and children.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Drivers must not engage in any verbal or physical conflict with staff, parents and/or children.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Ensure presence of an adult monitor on vehicle, if required.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Assist adult monitor, if needed.
		<b>Other Responsibilities</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Administer basic first aid in case of injury, handle emergency situation, including evacuation procedures, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Read and be regularly aware of school's policies and procedures re: child boarding and exiting procedures, use of child restraint systems, any required paperwork, responses to emergencies, emergency evacuation procedures, child pick up and release procedures, and pre- and post field trip vehicle check.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Driver should have a combination of classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel instruction to enable them to operate the vehicle in a safe and efficient manner, and to safely plan and run a fixed route, including loading and unloading children, stopping at railroad crossings and driving manoeuvres.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Attend appropriate staff meetings and training sessions.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Practice emergency evacuations, periodically
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Obtain and submit all receipts related to the vehicle to appropriate persons.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Be responsible for informing Director as far in advance as possible of any requests for time off work to ensure that alternate arrangements can be made for driving the bus.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Participate in an annual evaluation to include on-board observation and road performance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Perform additional duties as assigned.

# Recommended Staff Orientation to Headstart Vehicle

Upon employment, Headstart staff should participate in an “Vehicle Orientation” with the regular driver. The driver will review policies and procedures that are completed daily, as well as how the vehicle operates.

1. Staff will be shown where the emergency exits are and how they operate, as well as how to operate the doors, emergency flashers, stop arm, etc.
2. Staff will be required to review the Emergency Evacuation procedures for the vehicle and participate in regular practice drills.
3. Staff will be shown the features of and learn how to operate the cell phone or CB radio.
4. Staff will update their skills when features or equipment is added or changed.

# Responsibilities of the Parent or Guardian of a Child in a Headstart Program

Headstart programs should orient parents to its transportation system, and provide “safety education” training. The training should include a discussion on appropriate behaviours for children while on school vehicles, as well as in pedestrian safety (e.g. the need for an adult to accompany a preschool child while crossing the street, waiting for the green light and appropriate crossing signal, etc.) Headstart programs must ensure that parents understand the importance of the following behaviours and reinforce such behaviours with their child:

1. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the safety, escort and supervision of their children prior to pick-up and immediately after leaving the vehicle on their return trip home. Parents must make sure the children wait well away from the roadway, and stay well back until the bus has come to a full stop and the door opens.
2. If it is dark on the way to or from the bus, parents/guardians should make sure their children are visible. Parents could use retro-reflective tape on their clothing and avoid dark colours for clothing.
3. Parents/Guardians must ensure the children are at the proper pick-up location at least five minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time.
4. Parents are required to notify school when an alternate person is picking up their child from the program. At registration, a list of alternates is completed and noted on Child Release Form. Should no authorized individual be at the designated bus stop, the child will be returned to school and the parents/guardians must then make alternate arrangements to have the child picked up.
5. Parents/Guardians must impress upon their children the need for safe and appropriate behaviour while boarding, riding and leaving the bus. Parents should explain to the child the reasons why they should walk at least three metres (10 feet) away when crossing in front of the bus so that the driver can see them. Parents should forbid children from running, pushing and horseplay near, around or on the vehicle. Parents/Guardians should ensure that their children have their belongings placed securely in their backpack.
6. At no time will a driver take instructions from parents/guardians if they are contrary to those issued by the school administrator.
7. Parents should attend educational sessions or workshops on transportation safety, e.g. use of seatbelts, appropriate behaviour, etc.

Transportation to a Headstart program should be viewed as a privilege, not a right. Parents must understand that improper conduct may result in the withdrawal of this privilege. Reinstatement will be at the discretion of the school after consultation with the child and his/her parent or guardians.

# Responsibilities of a Child in a Headstart Program

Headstart program should provide “safety education” training to children, as well as parents. The training should be developmentally appropriate and integrated into the child’s experiences. Children should be taught appropriate behaviours on vehicles, but also in pedestrian safety (e.g. the need for an adult to accompany a preschool child while crossing the street, waiting for the green light and appropriate crossing signal, etc.) Headstart programs must ensure that children are taught and understand the importance of the following behaviours:

1. Headstart children should be at the properly dressed at the bus stop, and be on time and wait in a safe place.
2. Headstart children must stand well away from the street until the vehicle is stopped.
3. Headstart children are to follow the loading and unloading procedures, as designated by the school.
4. Headstart children must not abuse, damage or throw litter or items on the vehicle.
5. Headstart children must place personal items and backpacks on their lap or under their seat – not in the aisle where they may cause someone to trip.
6. Headstart children must tell the driver, if they drop something under or near the bus.
7. Headstart children must remain seated at all times to and from school. Standing while the vehicle is in motion should not be permitted.
8. Headstart children must refrain from poking head, arms, feet, etc. out the window.
9. Headstart children must not open or close windows, unless authorized by the driver and/or monitor.
10. Headstart children must refrain from tampering with the emergency door, windows or other equipment on the bus.
11. Headstart children should not eat or drink while on the vehicle.
12. Headstart children must not take any dangerous or annoying objects and/or animals or pets on the vehicle.
13. Headstart children must follow all rules of safety that apply at school while riding on the vehicle.
14. Headstart children must not distract the driver’s attention by creating a disturbance or by interfering with other children. Headstart children must use their quiet voices while on the vehicle
15. They must make sure to use the handrail when getting on or off the vehicle. Headstart children must not push or shove other children when disembarking. Headstart children should walk straight onto the sidewalk, and away from and never on to the street.
16. Headstart children should learn emergency evacuation procedures, and participate in drills with the vehicle they will be riding.
17. Headstart children are to show courtesy, respect and obedience to the driver, and must follow the driver’s instructions at all times.

# Recommendations for Route Planning

Each Headstart program providing transportation service must ensure that in planning fixed routes, the safety of the children being transported is the primary consideration.

1. The time a child is transported to and from the program should not exceed one hour, unless there is no shorter route available or any alternative shorter route is either unsafe or impractical. Parents and caregivers should be consulted, if possible.
2. Vehicles must not be loaded beyond the maximum passenger capacity at any time.
3. Vehicles must not be required to back up or make “U” turns, except when necessary for reasons of safety or because of physical barriers. If present, a bus monitor should help and ensure a safe backup.
4. Stops must be located to minimize traffic disruptions and to afford the driver a good field of view in front of and behind the vehicle.
5. When possible, stops must be located to eliminate the need for children to cross the street or highway to board or leave the vehicle.
6. If children must cross the street before boarding or after leaving the vehicle, because curbside drop off or pick up is impossible, they must be escorted across the street by the bus monitor or another adult.
7. Specific procedures must be established for use of alternate routes in case of hazardous conditions, that could affect the safety of the children who are being transported, such as ice or water build up, natural gas line breaks, or emergency road closing. Transportation providers must choose routes that comply as much as possible with the requirements outlined above.

# Recommended Procedures for Loading and Unloading of Children

1. Children do not get on or off the vehicle, nor remove themselves from their seats until the vehicle comes to a complete stop.
2. If loading or unloading a group of children, the driver is to put pylons out at the front and rear of the vehicle, and remove them before leaving.
3. Loading and unloading needs to be done away from the street side of the vehicle.
4. A minimum of two staff must be present at all times during the loading and unloading of the children.
5. Children should not be grouped at the entrance of the vehicle door. Staff should be available to receive the children a safe distance from the vehicle.
6. Driver is responsible for supervision of loading and unloading of the children.
7. Driver or staff is to assist children in removing or locking child safety restraint systems to ensure they are properly secured.
8. Driver is to inform staff of the number of children arriving at the centre before unloading, and staff is to inform the driver of the number of children going home.
9. An audible head count and visual role call is to be completed by the staff before the bus departs. The driver then doe a head count and confirms numbers with staff.

# Recommended Vehicle Evacuation Procedures

Drivers and monitors must be familiar and should practice vehicle evacuation procedures – in cases of a vehicle breakdown, stall or accident. If possible, children should also practice these procedures, and learn the importance of appropriate behaviour under these trying situations.

## **In the Event of a Vehicle Breakdown or Stall:**

1. Bring vehicle to a full stop as far off the roadway as possible. The passengers may remain on the vehicle if stopped in a safe location, and if it is safe to do so.
2. Driver should remain with the vehicle, and use cell phone or radio to contact someone for assistance (e.g. contract or lease provider, 911 or Headstart Director).
3. Flares, lamps, lanterns or portable reflectors must be set out at a distance of approximately 100 feet in advance and rear of the vehicle.
4. If the situation warrants, assist children off the vehicle through the emergency door when necessary, and direct children to safe area away from road.
5. Collect and record information in log book and files, when necessary.
6. Keep children calm and seated in their seats until driver investigates.
7. Unlock and open emergency door, if available, when necessary and when it is safe to do so, in an orderly and calm manner. Help children to exit through the emergency door only when the driver or other adult is there to assist you.
8. Assist the driver in keeping the children in a safe area.
9. Seek aid when necessary.

## **In the Event of a Collision** (in addition to above)

1. Stop immediately and investigate.
2. Turn off ignition and check for fire.
3. Call 911 or Police if there has been any personal injury or property damage.
4. Check on safety of passengers.
5. Administer first aid if necessary.
6. Assist children in getting off vehicle in calm and orderly manner.
7. Do not leave site until all children are found, and departure is authorized by police or Director.

# Recommended Policies In Event of Illness

Drivers may encounter situations in which a child becomes ill or queasy while on the vehicle – or the driver him- or herself may experience an unexpected illness. Headstart programs must establish a clear strategy on how to handle such situations.

## ***In Event of Illness of Child***

1. When safe, pull over to a safe location.
2. Turn off bus. If no monitor is present, driver must remove keys from ignition.
3. Tend to ill child. If monitor is present on the bus, the monitor is to tend to child. Driver remains in seat, can and should distract other children.
4. Assess severity of illness, and decide whether to return child to Centre or home.
5. Contact Headstart program and inform Director of decision and/or action.

## ***In Event of Illness of Driver***

1. When safe, pull over to a safe location.
2. Assess severity of illness, and decide whether to return to Centre. If driver feels it is unsafe to continue driving, monitor should occupy children while arrangements are made to transport those children already on bus to Centre. If no monitor is present, the driver is to call the Headstart Director and let her know it is unsafe to continue.
3. Contact Director of lease/contractor.
4. Arrange for an alternative driver, if needed.



# Recommended Use of Headstart Vehicle During Field Trips

Programs should have a separate policy and procedure around preparing children and staff for field trip. The following statements are policies and procedures involving the use of a Headstart vehicle for field trips

1. Standard loading and unloading procedures should be followed at all times, including field trips.
2. Driver is responsible for supervision of loading and unloading of children.
3. When all the children are on the motor vehicle/bus and before the motor vehicle/bus is put in motion:
  - ▣ Driver completes a full circle check on the exterior of the vehicle.
  - ▣ Staff will complete an audible head count and perform a visual role call, physically identifying each specific child and “checking off” their name on the group list. (The staff will not conduct the head count by simply counting the number of children present.)
  - ▣ All staff confirm the number of children present on the “check off” list.
  - ▣ All staff ensure the children are seated properly (sitting on their bottoms, facing forwards), and if applicable, ensure children are properly secured in their child safety restraint systems as per the child safety restraint system recommendations of the Transportation Safety Board.
  - ▣ Staff will then give the driver permission to depart.
4. No child is permitted to join the field trip while the children are in transit.
5. Staff/volunteers should position themselves to maximize supervision of the children while on the vehicle/bus, or as space permits doing frequent visual checks.
6. Staff are responsible for any and all behavioural concerns that may arise as per program policies.
7. Driver is not to be included in the ratios.
8. When unloading children, extra adults are to depart the bus/vehicle before the children in order to assist in the supervision of the children as they get off the bus and wait for the others.
9. Last staff on the vehicle is responsible for checking the seats of the vehicle, and checking under the seats for children and forgotten items.

**Transportation by Car:** Transportation may be taken by car, if necessary, only if age and weight appropriate child restraints are used and properly installed. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure compliance with this paragraph.

# Recommended Use of Child Safety Restraint Systems

Should the City of Ottawa, OCHAP and the individual Headstart programs impose a mandatory use of Child Safety Restraint Systems, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Personnel responsible for securing CSRSs onto school bus seats and children into CSRSs should be properly trained and all personnel involved should be provided up-to-date information and training.
2. School-bus seats designed for CSRSs are to be located starting at the front of the vehicle to provide drivers with quick access to and a clear view of the CSRS occupants. CSRSs should not be placed in school bus seats adjacent to emergency exits.
3. If other students share seats with the CSRSs, the CSRSs should be placed in window seating position.
4. When ordering new buses, the maximum spacing specified (within 24 inches from the seating reference point) is recommended for seats designated for CSRSs to provide adequate space, and the combined width of the CSRS and/or other passengers on a single seat should not exceed the width of the seat.
5. When retrofitting school buses, proper instructions to install a CSRS should be followed.
6. When transported in school buses, preschool age children should be supervised according to their developmental and functioning level.
7. Specified procedures should be established for loading and unloading children in CSRSs. Procedures should be established for the periodic maintenance, cleaning and inspection for damage of CSRSs. Procedures should train personnel involved in direct service delivery of infants, toddlers and preschool children on the physical day-to-day handling of these young children.
8. When procedures are established, it should be noted that some children in CSRSs may have special needs, including medical fragility that must be address on a child-by-child basis.
9. Written plans on evacuating preschool age children and other passengers in CSRSs in the event of an emergency should be established. The plan should be provided to the drivers, monitors and emergency response personnel. Evacuation drills should be practised on a scheduled basis – by personnel and children, themselves
10. All school buses carrying children in CSRSs should carry safety belt cutters that are accessible only to the driver and any monitors.
11. Schools should establish a policy on whether they or the child’s guardian must supply a CSRS to be used on a school bus.

# Recommended Optional Features for Headstart Vehicles

Headstart programs in Ottawa must comply with federal, provincial and city legislation, regulations and policies. Vehicles must adhere to correct specifications. In addition, the following optional features for Headstart vehicles – whether a school bus or passenger van -- should be considered:

<b>Features</b>	<b>Presently Available</b>	<b>Presently Not Available</b>	<b>Desired</b>
Sensor beepers when too close to object.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reverse beepers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency exits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mirrors which eliminate blind spots: - on the front - on the rear - on sides of vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Signage</b>	<b>Presently Available</b>	<b>Presently Not Available</b>	<b>Desired</b>
Notice indicating “Caution: Children on Board”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headstart name and contact information on side, back and front of vehicle (or on window if allowable and if sides can not accomodate information).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent’s name on a list – kept in vehicle with emergency contact information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signs indicating location of emergency equipment, e .g. fire extinguisher, first aid kit, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Presently Available</b>	<b>Presently Not Available</b>	<b>Desired</b>
Communication system, e.g. cellular phone, CB radio in vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency roadside kit with flares, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire extinguishers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency activity kit if bus is broken – to occupy children while bus is in roadside repair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rubberized seats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Restraint Systems – geared to appropriate height and weight of child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Auxiliary Seating, such as temporary or folding jump seats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>