

## **A Travel Training Protocol** **(What to Do Before, During, and After Travel Training)**

### **Before the training:**

1. Determine who initiated the request for travel training for a specific student and confirm that this is consistent with the regulations and policies of your school or school district. The travel training plan must be consistent with these regulations and policies to ensure the student's safety and well-being throughout the training.
2. Obtain parent/guardian permission before training begins (Appendix A). Make sure that the Emergency Contact Form (Appendix B) and the Family Plan—Unexpected Travel Events Form (Appendix C) are in place.
3. Establish goals for the training in consultation with the parent/guardian, the student (as appropriate) and the designated school personnel. What does the student need to know to travel independently and safely from one point to another? Appendix D describes what is typically covered during travel training. However, the training must be suited to respond to the individual needs of each student.
4. Check the student's file. Pay particular attention to the psychological evaluation reports, medical reports, memo on restrictions, etc. These documents may contain information that will impact the student's safety during the training or his/her ability to retain information during the training process. Note these concerns in the travel training plan and make provisions on how to address them.
5. Consult with the student's teachers and relevant staff members if they have other information that may impact travel training.
6. If the student needs reduced fare cards for the bus, subway, or train, start the application process before any training transpires. Consult the local transportation authority regarding the availability of half-fare or discounts for persons with disabilities and the requirements for application. In most cases, a government-issued identification, a copy of birth certificate or social security card is acceptable forms of identification. An applicant may be required to show a recent audiogram as well.
7. Map out the best route to and from the travel destinations. The local transportation authority website is a good reference. Consulting with parents/guardians can help the

trainer determine the quickest and safest route, and possibly one most familiar with the student. Confirm the final route with the parents/guardians as written on the Parent/Guardian Permission Form (see Appendix A). Encourage the parents/guardians to review the route at home with their children.

8. When the route is finalized, coordinate with the student's family, teachers, and designated school personnel to schedule the travel training dates. Travel training is never completed in one day. Ample time must be allocated to assess what the student already knows and evaluate what he/she is learning. Typically travel training happens over three-four days. Days vary depending on schedules and the student's ability to process information.
9. Prior to the training, conduct a pre-assessment of the student's commuting experience and knowledge (see Appendix E). In this meeting explain the goals and objectives of travel training and what he/she will learn during the training days.
10. Assign the student to check the weather report for each day of training so that he/she can plan to wear weather-appropriate clothing.

### **During the Training:**

Travel training occurs in a span of three to four days. On the first day of training, the student will experience the steps involved in traveling independently and safely as instructed by the trainer. On the second and succeeding days, the student will follow the steps from the previous day, with the trainer providing immediate feedback. As a final activity on the road, the student will travel independently and safely, with the trainer observing unobtrusively from a distance.

1. Explain bus and/or train schedules and pick-up points. If you use a school or a shuttle bus to bring you to a main terminal, explain its schedules and pick-up points as well. Provide the student with a copy of these schedules if they are available.
2. During the training, safety must be emphasized. Include safety precautions the student needs to internalize when going through bus terminals, train stations, and airports. Because many people use these stations/airports to commute, to shop, and to socialize, they can be overwhelming for someone who is learning to travel independently and safely. Teach the student where and how to access help in these places if there is a need.
3. At this point, assess the student's ability to communicate with non-signing individuals. The ability to communicate with people who do not use sign language is an important aspect of traveling independently and safely. If you sense that the student does not have the skills to communicate with non-signing individuals, engage him/her in role play to demonstrate different communication strategies. Examples of

communication strategies commonly used by deaf or hard of hearing people include, but are not limited to vocalizing, writing (with a pen and pad), pointing and gesturing, using a computer screen and keyboard, or pagers.

4. If the student's travel training includes using a subway system, help the student locate the station manager's booth before using the system. If the student's travel training includes the use of the airport or bus terminal, help him/her locate the traveler's information booth before checking in or riding the bus. Knowing where the station manager's booth and information desk are located is important so the student remembers where to go for help along the way. Remind the student to employ the different strategies in communicating with the station manager, security, police, or the information desk clerk. In a metro bus, the driver acts as the point person who can assist the student.
5. Demonstrate where and how the student can purchase reduced fare cards/tokens at subway or train stations. Each transit system has similar fare card/ticket pass machines in their respective stations and designated stops. Some transit systems allow reduced fare card holders to add money to their fare cards using regular machines. If this is so, let the student demonstrate how to add more money to a fare card using the regular machines at the station. Other transit systems require that reduced fare card holders buy them at specific stations or from authorized vendors only. If the station has an authorized vendor, have the student experience buying a reduced fare card while in training.
6. Teach the student how to check/read the transit system maps. Let the student practice reading the map to locate the station stop, fare amount, total travel time, and his/her final destination on the desired line. When training involves airport travel, teach the student how to read the arrivals/departures notice boards to confirm his/her flight status and gate information.
7. Unless the student starts where the route begins, he/she must know the direction of the bus, subway or train to his/her the destination. Using the transit map (available in print or posted in stations), teach the student how to determine which direction of the bus or train to board to his/her final destination. Some cities have electronic message boards that announce the arrival of trains and important commuter information (i.e., bus or train delays, station closures, elevator repairs, etc).
8. Point out the safety features within the platform or waiting area before leaving the station. Help the student locate the emergency telephones and exits.
9. Inside the train, orient the student to the different parts of the coach: doorways, station maps, seats for individuals with disabilities and the elderly, emergency exits, etc. Teach the student how to identify station stops from inside the train by looking at transit maps or the list of station stops posted.

10. If commuting involves the use of transfer tickets (bus-to-bus, subway-to-bus, bus-to-subway), the student needs to know where to get and how to use them. This will help the student minimize the cost of commuting. Inside a bus, transfer tickets are given by the driver as the passenger boards. Inside subway stations, transfer tickets are available from dispensing machines.
11. When using the bus or train, the student needs to know:
  - a) Bus/Train stop locations
  - b) Bus/Train number/s
  - c) Fare information (Exact change required? Tokens?)
  - d) The direction of the bus/train he/she should take
  - e) How to alert the bus driver/train conductor that he/she needs to get off
  - f) Street crossing procedures
  - g) Travel safety tips and procedures (See Appendix F).
12. If travel training includes air travel, the student needs to know the following:
  - a) Arrival at the airport (at least two hours before the scheduled departure).
  - b) Check in procedures (on-line vs. in-person; curbside vs. automated).
  - c) Security-screening procedures (what goes through the x-ray machines; risks related to cochlear implants or shunts in the student's person; what to do when flagged for thorough search, etc).
  - d) Inform the airline grounds crew he/she is deaf and needs to be approached when boarding starts or when changes in the schedule occur.
  - e) What to do in cases of emergency at the airport, en route to, or at the destination.
  - f) Multiple layovers, including gate and airplane changes (boarding passes, gate information, schedule changes/updates).
  - g) Baggage claim and carry-on luggage.
  - h) Meeting family/friends upon arrival.
  - i) Travel safety tips and procedures (See Appendix F).
13. While en route to the destination, let the student observe the behavior of his/her fellow commuters. Encourage questions from him/her. Engage him/her in conversation about traveling independently and safely.
14. When the trainer and student arrive at the destination (i.e., home), make sure that the trainer speaks with the parent or guardian to provide a summary of what transpired during the travel training. Share successes and concerns or ask questions. Let parents and guardians ask questions or share their concerns. Encourage them to sit with their child and let him/her explained what happened. This approach will help the student retain as much information as possible. At the same time, it will provide parents and guardians with feedback that they can share with the trainer.

15. Document each day of the training, especially what needs to be reviewed or emphasized during the succeeding days or after the training is completed. If there are concerns or issues that come up or are raised by the parents and guardians, include these in the documentation as well. (See Appendix G.)
16. Using the travel training checklist (Appendix H), review what the student has learned from the training—start this on the second and succeeding days of training. Encourage the student to assess his/her progress as well.
17. Travel training is completed when the student has aptly demonstrated his/her ability to travel independently and safely.

### **After the Training:**

1. For objectivity, arrange for another staff member to meet with the student to conduct post-assessment (see Appendix I) and an evaluation (see Appendix J) of the travel training. If the student is able to fill out the two forms, let him/her do so; the staff member will facilitate and be available for questions. Otherwise, the staff member will record student responses on the form. Student feedback is essential in helping the trainer plan the succeeding training days.
2. Document student learning and progress after each day of training (see Appendix G). This will help other staff, teachers, and parents/guardians to know what the student has learned and what needs to be reinforced even after the training is completed.
3. Provide feedback to parents/guardians and teachers about the student's strengths and weaknesses while traveling. Parents/guardians can use this feedback to help their child practice and apply what they have learned when they travel together. Teachers can use this feedback to provide reinforcements to the student inside the classroom.
4. A certificate of completion may be given to the student at the conclusion of the training to recognize his/her accomplishment and to serve as a reminder that he/she can travel independently and safely.

### **Parent/Guardian Involvement and Measure of Success:**

The goal of travel training is to teach the student to travel independently and safely. Among other factors, the involvement of parents/guardians is important to ensure that the student practices and applies what he/she has learned after the training is completed. Therefore, a measure of a successful training is a student who practices and applies the skills.

Throughout the travel training process, parents/guardians:

1. Must be included in designing and approving the travel route on which the training will be based.
2. Must have a copy of the travel training plans and receive constant updates or immediate feedback on their child's progress during the training.
3. Must have direct access to the designated school personnel if they have questions or concerns about their child's well-being.
4. Must be supported when they establish curfews and rules for their child to follow in emergency situations.
5. Must be encouraged to provide opportunities for their child to practice and apply the skills he/she learned in the training.