Runge Independent School District Bus Rider Transportation Handbook



Transportation Department

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..... Contact Information

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Dear Parents / Guardians and Bus Riders:

Runge ISD Transportation Department is providing this School Bus Rider's Safety Handbook so all concerned will be familiar with our expectations and transportation procedures. Transportation services should enhance the learning experience of each student rider. Every effort will be made to provide safe, comfortable, and pleasant transportation service while maintaining appropriate efficiency.

Runge ISD offers the privilege of bus transportation for eligible student riders. Eligibility is generally determined by distance from the home campus (more than 2 miles) and by application of Board policy. It is important to note that using district transportation services is a privilege, not a right. Transportation privileges can be suspended or revoked.

We ask that you read and discuss the contents of this handbook with your student rider to promote a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations. Effective transportation service requires appropriate actions by bus drivers and staff, school administrators, students, and parents/guardians. We will not allow anyone to interfere with or stop the district from providing our students with a safe, efficient, and comfortable riding experience.

Please complete the bus rider's contract on the last page of this handbook and return it to the campus office. Students will not be permitted to ride the school bus until this form has been signed and received by the Transportation Department. If you have any questions, please get in touch with the campus office or the transportation department at the numbers in this handbook.

Thank you for your cooperation and support regarding the care and safety of all our children.

Educationally Yours,

Hector O. Dominguez, Jr. Superintendent

General Information.....

Runge ISD School Bus Drivers

School bus drivers are selected, hired, and trained following specific selection criteria and a thorough criminal history background check. All Runge ISD bus drivers complete the Texas Department of Public Safety School Bus Driver Certification Course. Each driver has also earned a Class B Commercial Driver License. Bus drivers are required to pass a pre-employment drug test along with an annual physical and are subject to random drug and alcohol testing.

Every driver has completed the required school bus and periodic safety training course. Runge ISD school bus drivers are professionals and are expected to conduct themselves as such at all times. They work hard to earn the trust and respect of parents/guardians and students. As a result of their dedication and professionalism, they will expect courtesy, proper respect, and consideration from all students and adults.

Eligible Riders

Generally, students who reside more than 2 miles from their school (as measured along public roadways) are eligible for state-funded bus transportation. Additionally, selected neighborhoods less than the 2-mile funding limit have been designated for bus service due to a hazardous walk route to the campus. Students within these areas will also be provided with bus service.

New Riders

New bus riders must read and sign the district's School Bus Rider's Safety Handbook and Bus Rider's Contract. Once a bus request is completed and received by the transportation department, all new riders will be provided bus transportation on the second day - "afternoon drop off route." (For example, a transportation request received on Monday morning will allow the student to ride the bus on Tuesday afternoon.) The transportation department will notify the parents/guardians of all new riders of the bus route/bus color, bus stop, and the approximate pickup and drop-off times within 24 hours of receiving the bus request.

Restricted Areas

Runge ISD buses will not enter dead-end streets, personal property, or gated communities except when approved by the Director of Transportation. Using private property or gated communities requires prior concurrence from the property owner(s) or the Home Owners Association.

School buses are designed with many specific features for the safety of students. A major design factor is the compartment formed by each seat, which protects the students sitting on that bench seat. For this compartmentalization to work correctly, proper seating is required. As students enter the bus, they should carry their backpacks or wear them to the front to ensure adequate seating. While seated, each student should face forward; the student's torso should be facing forward at all times; the student's back should be flat against the back of the seat, and the student's bottom should be flat on the seat. The student should be **sitting straight back and upright against the seat.** Both feet and legs should be kept in front of their body. **See the diagrams below.**

Video Cameras

Video cameras (with or without audio) may be utilized on Runge ISD school buses. Federal (FERPA) regulations designate these video recordings as part of the student's education record and, therefore, prohibit viewing these videotapes by the general public. School or law enforcement personnel may use this information as safety training material and evidence of bus safety rule violations.



Extracurricular Trips

All bus safety rules apply to bus riding to and from school-sponsored events. The bus driver has overall responsibility for the bus and the safety of all passengers; however, the sponsor will be expected to address student behavior issues and the cleanliness of the bus.

Weather Conditions

School buses operate on any day that school is being held. Currently, four options exist on bad weather days.

- 1. School starts on time & ends on time.
- 2. Early dismissal: On days of early dismissal due to weather conditions, schools must determine whether a child has appropriate supervision at home. If the campus puts a student onto the bus, that student will be delivered to their neighborhood bus stop/drop-off point.
- 3. Delayed start: If school is delayed due to weather, the buses will run two hours later than usual.
- 4. Cancel school: A decision to cancel classes for the day will be made by 6:30 a.m.

Early dismissal, delayed start, or school cancellations will be notified via radio stations, School Messenger, School Way, and the district website. If you have not done so, please sign up for School Messenger and/or School Way to receive a phone call, text, or push notification.

Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, the Runge ISD Administration will notify the Transportation Department and the school district. As circumstances dictate, buses may be detained at a campus or diverted to a safer location. Delivery of students will continue as appropriate.

Students should follow the driver's instructions and remain calm and quiet. During these events, students are encouraged to telephone parents/guardians to inform them that they are safe and that the bus is being delayed.

Parents are encouraged to meet the bus at their student's designated bus stop to allow for orderly delivery of all students. Meeting the bus at other locations is disruptive and inappropriate.

Parent's Responsibility

1. Read and discuss with your student(s) the contents of this bus rider's handbook; if you have any unanswered questions or concerns, contact the campus principal or Transportation Director for assistance.

2. Please inform your student(s) of their bus stop's designated route's color, time, and location. This information is available at the Runge ISD website or by contacting the Transportation Department.

3. Please have your student(s) at the bus stop at least five minutes before loading. If the bus is 20 minutes late, please have your students return home and contact the campus office.

4. Please discuss what a privilege it is to ride the school bus and how it may help your family. Student attire and behavior on the school bus are the same as in the classroom—students who do not comply can and will be suspended from bus riding.

5. Remind your student to tell you, a teacher, a principal, or the bus driver if they are concerned about a situation on the bus.

6. Report severe issues on or at the bus stop to the Transportation Director or contact your campus Principal.

7. Once you have covered the safety information with your child, complete, sign, and return the bus rider's contract (found on the last page) to the bus driver.

8. You are responsible for transporting your student(s) to and from school during suspension from the bus. Absence is unexcused if a student does not attend school during this time.

Transportation's Responsibility

1. Maintain current bus schedules and rider information for all buses for the district.

2. Meet with the drivers at the beginning of each school year and, as needed, to discuss loading procedures, safety concerns, driving techniques, and student management.

3. Investigate all complaints and safety concerns.

4. Confer with students, parents, school administrators, and bus drivers when appropriate.

5. Campus administrators and/or the Transportation Director can contact parents when inappropriate behavior is reported.

6. Campus administrators and/or the Transportation Director can assign consequences for unsafe behavior on the school bus.

7. Forward all Code of Conduct violations to the appropriate campus.

Campus Administrator's Responsibility

1. Process and assign consequences for all Code of Conduct violations.

2. Process and assign consequences or a Behavior Intervention Plan for all Special Needs concerns.

3. Contact parents and enforce consequences when appropriate.

4. Facilitate conferences between bus drivers, parents, and transportation when needed.

Expectations of All Student Riders

1. All Student Riders are expected to follow the guidelines of their Campus Student Code of Conduct, the procedures contained in this handbook, and the instructions provided by the School Bus Driver.

2. All Student Riders are expected to board and exit the bus at their designated pick-up or delivery point closest to the student's home. Any changes to this must be approved in writing by the student's parent or guardian before the student can exit at another bus stop. All changes must be handled through the campus office at least 24 hours before the pickup or delivery charge.

3. All students are expected to be on their side of the street at the designated bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pickup time. The school bus will approach the designated pick-up point and utilize the amber warning light signals (AWLS), which alert other drivers. When the Red Lights are activated, the student should wait for visual confirmation from the driver to cross the roadway. The bus will make a complete stop within the regularly scheduled time; the driver will proceed to the next pick-up point if no students are visibly present at the stop.

4. All Student Riders are expected to wait quietly at their designated pick-up point until the school bus arrives. Designated pick-up points may be moved farther away from the student's home if students fail to respect their neighbor's property and vandalism is reported.

5. All Student Riders are expected to return home and contact their parent/guardian only if the school bus is over 20 minutes late. We try to be on time, but unfortunately, some delays occur. If you experience a repeated delay, please contact the Transportation Director for assistance.

6. All Student Riders must turn in the Rider's Contract Form at the back of this handbook before assignment to a bus route. Failure to complete or return this form may result in denial of riding privileges. Please contact Transportation if any of the information provided needs to be updated.

7. Bus drivers have the authority to assign seats as needed. All Student Riders are expected to sit in the designated seat and hold all carry-on items in their lap. Depending on the situation, we may require students to sit up to three seats. All Runge ISD Regular School Buses can safely transport up to three students per seat.

8. Student Riders are expected to go directly to their seat and prepare for the ride. Students should always sit in their back pockets and face the front. Sitting sideways, extending legs out in the center aisle, sitting on backpacks or band instruments, or facing backward creates a hazardous situation.

9. All Student Riders must follow safety procedures while riding on any Runge ISD School Bus. We require that students not eat or drink while on the school bus (choking hazard). Any open, non-sealable container (food, candy, or drink) will be thrown in the trash when the bus is boarded AM or PM, with no exceptions. All candy, gum, food, pens, pencils, and any pointed object should be left in the backpack at all times, or it will be taken from the student.

Riding Procedures for All Student Riders

Designated Bus Stops

1. Eligible Riders are expected to board or exit the bus at the designated stop closest to their home. Using other bus stops may result in the loss of riding privileges.

2. Students should practice good citizenship while waiting for their bus to arrive and respect their neighbors' property. Students should arrive at their stop at least five minutes before the bus arrival time. If crossing the street is necessary, wait until the bus arrives and control the traffic flow with Red Lights. Students should make eye contact with the driver and wait for the signal to cross.

3. The behavior expected in school should be displayed at all designated stops. Be a good neighbor.

4. The bus drivers are not permitted to add or move stops. Please get in touch with the Transportation Director for assistance if you need to discuss your bus stop location.

5. Substitute Drivers are used to drive your school bus route when the regular driver is out or on a field trip. They will use the approved route description to drive the route. If the route or times differ from your regular driver, please get in touch with the Transportation Director for assistance; however, please understand that some delays may occur.

Boarding at a Bus stop

1. As the school bus approaches, students should form a single line and be ready to board the bus. Stand on the sidewalk or 10 feet from the roadway while waiting for the bus.

2. No student should ever approach the bus until the bus has completely stopped and the driver has set the air brake. The air brake system will make a loud air noise when the bus is secured.

3. The driver will open the door and motion for the students to load. Once on the bus, go directly to your seat. Pushing and shoving are dangerous and may result in injury or loss of riding privileges.

4. Any area within 10' of a school bus is considered **"The Danger Zone."** Students within this area are in a place where they may not be seen. Students should not move within 10 'of the bus unless boarding or exiting.

5. Bus drivers allow a specific amount of time to load the bus at school or during designated bus stop pick-ups. Once the driver has shut the door and the air brake is released, students are not to chase after the bus or run along the side of the bus. They are to return to their home and have their parents take them to school.

Exiting at the Campus

1. As the school bus approaches the campus unloading zone, all students should remain seated until the bus has completely stopped and secured. Each campus has specific times to unload students. Students should follow the driver's directions.

2. When the driver signals to unload, students should begin forming a single line and proceed to the front of the bus. Pushing and shoving may result in injury or loss of riding privileges.

3. Any articles found on the bus by the driver will be retained for the student until the afternoon run. The item can be collected at the Transportation Department if not claimed that afternoon. Items will be held for 24 hours and then disposed of.

4. Students should never use the emergency exits unless directed by the driver. Emergency doors, windows, and roof hatches are available only during evacuation procedures.

Boarding at a Campus

1. When the students are released from school, they are expected to go directly to their bus. Students waiting for their bus to arrive from another campus should form a line along the sidewalk area of the campus loading zone. School personnel are outside to assist if needed.

2. Students moving in or around the buses while parked are in the **"Danger Zone"** of the bus, so extra caution must be exercised. This is an unsafe procedure, so it should be avoided.

3. Once students board the bus, they are expected to stay on it and remain seated.

4. Bus drivers allow a specific amount of time to load the bus at school or during designated bus stop pick-ups. Once the driver has shut the door and the air brake is released, students are not to chase after the bus or run along the side of the bus. They must return to the campus and make other arrangements with their administrator.

Exiting at a Bus Stop

1. As the school bus approaches a designated stop, students should pay attention and be ready to exit once the bus is stopped and secured.

2. No student should ever walk down the center aisle of the bus while the bus is moving.

3. Students are expected to exit at their designated bus stop only. Students wishing to use a different bus stop must have a signed note from their parent/guardian received at the campus at least 24 hours before the change.

4. The driver will open the door once the bus has been secured. The amber warning light signals (AWLS) will be activated before the bus stops. Once the bus is stopped and the door is opened, the red warning light signals (RWLS) will be activated, signaling for all traffic to stop. The driver will allow adequate time for each student to unload. All students crossing in front of the bus should watch the driver for assistance.

5. Any area within 10' of the School Bus is considered "**The Danger Zone**." Students should immediately walk away from the school bus as they unload. No one should ever stand, walk, or cross the street directly behind a school bus (blind spot).

6. Be alert for vehicles that do not stop when the bus is loading or unloading students. Each day, drivers carelessly run through the red lights flashing on school buses that are stopped for children. Please instruct your student to look before stepping off of the bus and while crossing roadways.

7. Students should never touch the school bus while walking away. Students should never retrieve any item that may end up under the school bus.

8. Students should cross all streets at the intersections while walking to or from the bus stop and obey all traffic signals and signs along the way.

Students Riding Home or to School With a Friend

1. All students who need to ride home or to school with a friend are required to have the following:

- \checkmark A permission note is signed by the parent/guardian.
- \checkmark A campus administrator or front office personnel must also sign the note to ride home.

2. Students who do not have a permission note (approved by the principal) will not be permitted to ride the bus home with their friends.

3. The student who requested his or her friend ride home may be permitted to stay at the campus with their friend if the Campus Administrator permits them to stay. The campus will contact their parents to pick them up.

Emergency Evacuation

1. Stay calm and quiet; be ready to listen to instructions from the driver. Excessive noise will make it difficult for everyone to hear.

2. Follow the driver's instructions. He or she is in charge of the bus and has been trained to take action to protect all the students.

3. All students must remain on the bus. Students cannot leave the area, even with parents, until released by the Police or Fire Department. Parents are expected to cooperate and not force themselves onto the school bus. Police and paramedics each have essential actions to complete to ensure that each student rider is safe and accounted for properly.

4. The following procedures will be used for evacuation in an emergency under the direction of the driver:

- The rider nearest the door will open the emergency door, exit, and then hold the door open.
- The second rider nearest the door will exit and assist the first rider in helping other students exit the bus.
- Evacuation will start with the seat closest to the door.
- The third rider to exit will act as the guide and lead the other students to a safe place. Usually, 50 giant steps away from the bus.
- Once outside the bus, follow the guide, stay together, and follow the driver's instructions as safely, quickly, and thoroughly as possible.
- Buses with side doors will follow the same process, starting from whichever side (back or front) is closest to the danger.
- The driver is usually the last person off the school bus.

The driver has been trained to evacuate the bus if an emergency occurs. The driver will assess the situation and decide to evacuate or keep the students on the bus. The safest place is where we want the students to be.

Expected Conduct on All School Buses

Assigned Seating

1. The bus driver has the authority to assign seating as needed. Whether assigned to a seat or not, each rider will be responsible for his or her space.

2. Students should report any existing vandalism or damage immediately to the bus driver. The person determined responsible will be required to pay repair costs. The administration will notify parents/guardians of this situation. Student riding privileges may be suspended until payment is received.

2. If assigned, students should always sit in their assigned seats, especially when a substitute driver is on the bus. Drivers may safely assign up to three students per bench seat.

4. Consumption of food or drink on the bus is not permitted. Any open, non-sealable container (food, candy, or drink) will be thrown in the trash when the bus is boarded AM or PM, with no exceptions.

5. All candy, gum, food, pens, pencils, and any pointed object should be left in the backpack at all times, or it will be taken from the student.

Cell Phones

1. Students are encouraged to contact their parent/guardian when the bus has been delayed (after 10-15 minutes), and they get home late. We strive to keep our buses on schedule; however, some delays are beyond our control. When doing so, do not allow the phone use to distract the driver.

2. Parents / Guardians are asked not to request to speak to the driver on the student's cell phone. The parents should contact the Transportation Department and arrange for the driver to contact them after their route.

3. Students who allow their cell phones to become a distraction or disruption on the school bus will be asked to put the phone away. Failure to do so may result in the cell phone being confiscated. Parents must then pick up the cell phone at the campus office. Students may be fined \$15 for the return of the phone. Parents may call the campus office to make arrangements for pickup.

Electronic Devices

1. The use of any electronic device is a privilege. Students may lose this privilege if they fail to follow safety instructions from the driver.

2. All electronic devices must have headphones or be placed on mute. External noise from any device is not allowed on the school bus. Keep the device at an acceptable volume level. If the driver requests the device to be turned down, please follow the directive. Students must be able to hear instructions from the driver at all times.

3. Bus drivers are not responsible for lost or stolen items used or left on the bus.

4. Students who allow their MP3 players, iPods, etc., to become a distraction or disruption on the school bus will be asked to put the item away. Failure to do so may result in the item being confiscated. Parents will then be required to pick up the item at the campus office during regular hours of operation. Parents may call the campus office to make arrangements for pickup.

Carry-on Items

1. All carry-on items must be kept in the student's lap while riding (for example, backpacks, purses, duffel travel bags, etc.)

2. All students who carry an instrument will be assigned a seat toward the front of the bus or have a space designated to store their instrument. This will prevent the student from carrying the instrument over the heads of other riders.

3. Students who bring vast and heavy band instruments on the bus may be challenged to board and exit the bus safely. Special arrangements may need to be made by the parent with the school if the instrument cannot be transported safely on the bus.

4. All sports equipment, including basketballs, footballs, soccer balls, skateboards, etc., must always be in a bag. Students may be denied transportation if the equipment is not contained. If items are removed from the bag, they may be confiscated and turned over to an administrator or the transportation department. Parents may call the Transportation Department to make arrangements for pickup.

Excessive Noise

1. All students are expected to go directly to their seats and prepare for the ride home or school.

2. Screaming or yelling, talking very loudly, singing, dancing on the bus, or creating a disruptive situation of any type will not be tolerated.

3. The use of band instruments or noise-making devices is not permitted on the bus at any time.

4. All students should talk only to their seatmates or the person beside them. All conversations should be kept as quiet as possible.

5. Students must comply with the bus driver's request to "quiet down." If non-compliant, a student may be referred for disciplinary consequences, including suspension of bus riding privileges.

Emergency Equipment

1. School buses are equipped with standard emergency equipment such as a fire extinguisher, reflective triangles, a Blood-borne pathogen spill kit, and a minor first aid kit. Your driver has been trained to use each piece of equipment properly.

2. Emergency windows, doors, and roof hatches are equipped to make a buzzing sound to alert the driver if students lift one of these handles. Students who sit by these windows or doors are not permitted to lift the red handles or open these exits at any time unless the driver is evacuating the bus or the students are being trained on emergency evacuation.

3. Students who tamper with these exits may lose their riding privileges. The driver will ask the students to correct the situation. If the student fails to follow the directive, the student will receive a warning from the driver, and Transportation will contact the parent/guardian. Continued refusal to comply may result in suspension of riding privileges.

Disruption of Transportation

1. Anyone who disrupts transportation services may lose their riding privileges. This includes disruptions created by riders as well as parents of riders. Questions or concerns may be communicated with the Transportation Director or your child's campus principal.

2. Students are expected to follow safety procedures while busing to or from school. Each student is expected to follow the RUNGE ISD Code of Conduct while riding. If it is not allowed inside the classroom, it is not on the bus.

3. Drivers are not required to break up fights on the school bus physically. However, the drivers will verbally instruct the students to stop and instruct those not fighting to keep out of harm's way. The driver will notify the transportation director upon return to the school. Disciplinary consequences will apply, including suspension of bus riding privileges.

4. A student threatened by physical aggression or harassment should immediately notify their Parent/Guardian, Bus Driver, Teacher, or Campus Administrator.

5. School bus drivers may take the bus to a safe location to speak with students about behavior and bus safety procedures.

Items Prohibited on School Buses for Safety Reasons

A student who brings any dangerous items, including those specified below, onto the bus may lose their riding privileges immediately, even while an investigation is pending or coordinating for campus consequences.

Gun or Gun-like toy	Glass Containers	Animals
Knife (any size)	Water balloons	Insects / Fish
Brass Knuckles	Lighters	Paintballs
Laser Pointers	Firecracker (fireworks)	Alcohol
Stink Bombs	Rubber bands / clips	Aerosol sprays (any)
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Any other item that may be considered dangerous or put riders at risk of injury

Steps of Student Consequences For Rider Behavior

District transportation to and from school is a privilege, not a right. The severity of misconduct on the bus will determine the severity of the consequence. Serious behavior concerns such as bringing any of the above items onto the bus, fighting, verbal or physical aggression, profanity, bullying, blatant disrespect, or refusal to comply with the driver, etc., will immediately suspend bus riding privileges regardless of the number of offenses. According to the Student Code of Conduct, students may also be assigned additional disciplinary consequences, including detentions and/or ISS/DAEP placement.

Step 1:

<u>Bus Driver Intervention</u> - Each student will be allowed to correct or change his/her behavior through a verbal warning. The Driver may speak to the student's parent and/or campus administrator for assistance in correcting inappropriate behaviors.

Step 2:

<u>First Documented Bus Offense</u> – If the behavior is not corrected upon intervention or a pattern of misbehavior persists, a written bus referral from the driver will be given. The student will be suspended from bus riding privileges for **three** school days. The parent/guardian will be notified and responsible for transporting their student to and from school daily.

Step 3:

<u>The Second Documented Bus Offense</u> - A second written referral will be submitted if misbehavior continues. The student will be suspended from bus riding privileges for **ten** school days. The parent/guardian will be notified and responsible for transporting their student to and from school daily.

Step 4:

<u>Third Documented Bus Offense</u> – The student will be suspended from bus riding privileges for the **remainder** of the **semester**. The parent/guardian will be notified and responsible for transporting their student to and from school daily.

Step 5:

<u>Fourth Documented Bus Offense</u> – The student will be suspended from bus riding privileges for the **year**. The parent/guardian will be notified and responsible for transporting their student to and from school daily. (Note – bus offenses do not "start over" each semester but continue for the year.)

Vandalism or Damage to the Bus

Students should immediately report any vandalism or damage to the bus to the bus driver. The person determined responsible will be required to pay repair costs. Parents/guardians will be notified if this occurs. Students will be suspended from the bus until payment is received. Depending upon the severity of the situation or the number of prior offenses, the student may be suspended for a more extended period or the remainder of the year.

Special Needs Transportation

1. To qualify for special needs transportation, the campus ARD committee must determine whether special transportation is needed as a related service. The Transportation Department must complete the "Transportation Request Form" after the ARD meeting; this authorizes Special Needs Transportation services.

2. Regular Education students with temporary medical conditions or injuries may qualify for temporary Special Needs Transportation. Please check with Campus Administrators for more information.





Runge I.S.D. Transportation Bus Rider's Contract



Please complete it and return it to your child's school office. (One form is required per student rider.)

Student's na	ame (please print):	
Campus (cir	rcle one): Elementary Junior High	h High School Grade:
Bus Route/(Color:	Bus Stop #:
Home Addr	ess: Physical Address Only - House Nu	Jumber and Street Name (no Rural Route #s or PO Box #s)
Bus Rider's in the handb	Safety Handbook at <u>www.rungeisd.or</u> ook and will review and discuss its co	copy or to electronically access the Runge ISD School org. I agree to abide by the rules and procedures explained contents with my child. I also understand that the school a transportation at least 24 hours before the change occur
I have	 Received a paper copy of the E Accepted responsibility for acc District website at <u>www.runge</u> 	ccessing the Bus Rider's Safety Handbook on the
Parent/Gua	rdian's Name (please print):	
Parent/Gua	rdian's Signature:	Date Signed:
Email Conta	act:	
Home/Cell 1	Геlephone: ()	Work Number: ()
Emergency	Contacts:	
Name:	Telephon	one # () Cell #: ()
Name:	Telephon	one # () Cell #: ()
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Medical Inf	ormation:	
Medical Info		re particular action?YesNo

This contract must be completed and returned to the school office before your child will be permitted to ride the bus.