# School Bus Driver Safety – Driver Conduct Meeting Kit

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

As a school bus driver, your conduct is super important because it directly impacts the safety and wellbeing of the students. It's not just about driving safely, but also about creating a positive and respectful environment on the bus. Your behaviour sets the tone for the students, influences their trust in you and the school, and ultimately reflects on the entire school transportation system. Unprofessional or unsafe conduct can have serious consequences, affecting not only the students but also your job and the reputation of the school district.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

When we talk about the potential dangers related to how a school bus driver conducts themselves, here are some important things to keep in mind.

**Distracted Driving:** You know how difficult it is when you're trying to do a bunch of things at once? Well, when you're driving a school bus, your main focus really needs to be on the road. Anything that pulls your attention away, even for a second – like checking your phone, grabbing a bite to eat, or getting into a really involved chat – can be a big deal. With a bus full of kids, those quick distractions can have serious consequences.

**Driving Under the Influence and Aggressive Driving:** It's pretty obvious that getting behind the wheel when you haven't been thinking clearly – whether it's from alcohol or anything else that impairs your judgment – is just asking for trouble. Your reactions are slower, and your decision-making isn't sharp. And then there's driving aggressively – speeding, tailgating, making risky moves. That not only scares the students but also makes an accident much

more likely.

**Ignoring Rules and Acting Unprofessionally:** Those traffic laws and school policies? They're there to keep everyone safe. When a driver decides to ignore them, like blowing through a stop sign or speeding, they're putting everyone on the bus at risk. Plus, the way a driver behaves towards the students matters. Being unprofessional or crossing boundaries can make kids feel unsafe and uncomfortable, and it can lead to some serious trouble down the line.

**Poor Communication and Driving Tired:** Keeping the lines of communication open is important. If a driver isn't clear with the students about what they need to do, or if they don't report a safety issue when they see it, things can escalate. And let's talk about being tired – driving when you're worn out is a lot like driving when you're not thinking straight. Your reaction time slows down, and you're just not as alert. When you're responsible for a bus full of kids, that's a risk you can't take.

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

When it comes to keeping yourself safe as a school bus driver, a lot of it boils down to making good choices every time you're behind the wheel. First and foremost, it's about really focusing on the driving itself.

**Prioritize Focused Driving**

The most crucial way to protect yourself and the students is to remain fully focused on the task of driving. This means actively avoiding any distractions while the bus is in motion. Put your phone away, refrain from eating or drinking, and manage conversations so they don't divert your attention from the road. Your primary responsibility is the safe operation of the vehicle.

**Adhere to All Laws and Policies**

Strictly following all traffic laws, school district policies, and transportation regulations is non-negotiable. This includes

obeying speed limits, traffic signals, and designated routes. Familiarize yourself thoroughly with these rules and regulations and consistently abide by them. This not only ensures safety but also protects you from potential legal issues and disciplinary actions.

**Maintain Professional Boundaries**

Establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries with students is essential. Your interactions should always be appropriate, respectful, and focused on your role as a driver ensuring their safe transport. Avoid any personal relationships or communications that could be misconstrued or create uncomfortable situations. Adhering to these boundaries protects both you and the students.

**Practice Effective Communication**

Communicate clearly and respectfully with students, school staff, and parents. Provide necessary instructions to students in a calm and understandable manner. Promptly report any safety concerns, incidents, or issues to the appropriate school personnel or transportation authorities. Clear and professional communication can prevent misunderstandings and ensure that safety concerns are addressed effectively.

**Manage Fatigue and Stress:**

Ensure you are well-rested before your shifts and take necessary breaks to avoid fatigue. Driving while tired impairs your judgment and reaction time. If you are experiencing significant stress that could affect your ability to drive safely, communicate this to your supervisor and seek appropriate support. Taking care of your physical and mental well-being is crucial for safe driving and protecting yourself from potential errors.

**Document and Report:**

Accurately document any incidents, safety concerns, or behavioral issues according to school district policy. Timely and thorough reporting ensures that necessary actions can be taken and provides

a record of events. This can be important for your protection in case of any allegations or investigations.

## FINAL WORD

Being a safe school bus driver is all about staying focused, following the rules, treating everyone professionally, and taking care of yourself. Those simple things go a long way in keeping you and the kids safe on every trip.