School bus Driver Safety – Students with Disabilities Stats and facts

FACTS

- **Specialized Training Needs:** Drivers often lack training on handling disabilities (e.g., autism, mobility impairments), leading to challenges in managing behaviours or operating equipment like wheelchair lifts, increasing stress and distraction risks.
- **Behavioural Challenges:** Students with behavioural or emotional disabilities may exhibit disruptive actions (e.g., yelling, aggression), diverting driver attention and compromising road safety.
- **Equipment Operation Risks:** Improper use of accessibility equipment (e.g., wheelchair securements, lifts) due to inadequate training can cause injuries to students or drivers and delay safe transport.
- **Physical and Mental Strain:** Assisting students with mobility devices or managing prolonged behavioural incidents can cause physical injuries (e.g., back strains) or mental fatigue, impacting driver safety.
- **Inadequate Support**: Lack of bus aides or monitors for students with complex needs places extra responsibility on drivers, increasing workload and potential for errors or distractions.
- **Emergency Preparedness Gaps:** Drivers may be unprepared for medical emergencies (e.g., seizures) or evacuations involving students with disabilities, risking delayed or unsafe responses.

STATS

- A 2021 Statistics Canada survey indicated that 22% of school bus drivers reported workplace stress due to managing students with special needs, often linked to lack of specialized training.
- A 2022 Public School WORKS report noted that 45% of school districts with dedicated training on students with disabilities saw a 25% reduction in driver-related safety incidents.
- WorkSafeBC reported in 2022 that 12% of school bus driver injuries in British Columbia involved physical strains from assisting students with mobility devices, preventable with proper equipment training.
- A 2023 Journal of School Safety study stated that 30% of bus driver distractions were linked to managing students with behavioural disabilities, increasing near-miss crash risks.
- The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) noted in 2023 that buses with aides for students with disabilities reduced driver stress complaints by up to 20%.
- A 2024 NJ Common Ground report found that 50% of drivers transporting students with IEPs lacked access to student information cards, hindering safe interaction and emergency response.