

Equal Access: Safe Transportation for Children and Youth Who Use Wheelchairs



Why This Matters

Children and youth with physical disabilities require special accommodations when accessing transportation from the moment they start riding in vehicles. In order to develop emotional, physical, and mental well-being, children with physical disabilities need access to transportation, so they can participate in educational activities, entertainment, and physical activities with as few barriers as possible. To achieve this, safety is crucial.



Children and youth with mobility issues deserve equal access to safe transportation.

What the Research Says

- ❖ Even though many parents and caregivers use the appropriate safety seat, most safety seats are misused in at least one way.
- ❖ Improperly secured seats can mean that children's backs and necks are unsupported which risks serious injury.
- ❖ Wheelchairs should be purchased transport ready, which includes special features that allow for easy attachment to clips on the bus or specially adjusted vehicles.
- ❖ The most potentially harmful situation on the road is not a crash, but sudden stops and turns that might provoke additional injury, especially to the neck and head.
- ❖ Lack of appropriate training for children and youth on safe use of their wheelchairs and on how to access public transport limits safe transportation.

Barriers to Safe Transport

- ❖ Most children and youth who use wheelchairs highly depend on family or caregivers for safe transport.
- ❖ Close to 40% of parents with disabled children report that they are unable to take their child to activities because of the transportation issue.
- ❖ Parents report that school bus transportation often does not have a proper tie down system to secure their child safely in their mobility device.
- ❖ Lack of knowledge and proper training create barriers to access when a child using a wheelchair needs to commute to an activity, school, or a medical appointment.
- ❖ Research shows that many individuals working with children and youth who use wheelchairs are not aware of necessary transport safety measures to assure children's safety.

What You Need To Know

- ❖ Training and information is key for children who use wheelchairs and the adults who help them in their daily activities, especially teachers, school staff, and drivers of buses and vehicles that transport children and youth with physical disabilities.
- ❖ Providing special training to caregivers and children on how to comfortably and to safely use the child's main mode of transportation might reduce anxiety and fear, as well as preventing possible injury, especially when using the bus.
- ❖ Studies show that proper training can eliminate the experience of physical discomfort during transportation.

Providing training to children, parents, and transportation staff would ensure that safe transportation needs are met and will ultimately enable children and youth to participate in activities. Additional resources would help build and support independence in children and youth who use wheelchairs.

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This research was supported by the Roy Watson Traffic Safety Fund and the UVic Centre for Youth & Society.