

# RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

## ***Field Trip Tips: Leadership and Planning***

*Some of the most memorable school experiences don't always happen at school. A well planned field trip can add more than just a change of venue, it can also change the way students learn, but there are additional risks to be considered with venturing off campus. Travel, off-site supervision and unexpected hazards are some of the challenges school staff face while on a field trip. Implementing a procedure and establishing clear leadership roles during the trip could help improve field trip safety.*

### ***Planning***

Designate a trip leader as the individual responsible for content and logistics before, during and after the trip. Set adequate approval timelines well in advance for pre-trip correspondence and class activities. Create a trip ticket or fact sheet that documents administrative approval and identifies the destination, trip objectives, schedule, mode of transportation and other logistical information. Make sure that the travel times and the sequence of events are reasonable. To build anticipation and excitement, you can review the following as part of your lesson plan:

- advance research,
- specific questions to be resolved,
- anticipated weather,
- appropriate attire,
- lunch plans, etc. and
- activity teasers.

A field trip to a new destination may require a pre-trip visit to check the site, review the plan with the host venue staff and address needs such as:

- Will the parking lot accommodate bus loading and unloading?
- Is the facility ADA accessible?
- Are there adequate restrooms and drinking water?

Current knowledge of the site and clear communication with the host could help reduce the chance of scheduling problems and possibly identify hazards such as construction projects or other changes to the facility.

### ***Transportation***

Student safety is crucial. As transportation arrangements are made, consider the first choice to be a school bus with a professional driver and the last choice to be parent volunteers. If parent volunteer drivers are used, establish procedures to pre-qualify an approved driver list. Confirm and address the following issues:

- Proper licensing.
- Proof of insurance.
- Recent driving history report (MVR) showing a good driving record.
- Vehicle capacity with seatbelts for every passenger.
- Protect confidential and personal information acquired in this process.

*This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Public Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing risk exposure to the public, personnel and property. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your GPP Risk Control Representative. [www.glatfelterpublicpractice.com](http://www.glatfelterpublicpractice.com)*

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- Provide clear instructions, supervisor responsibilities and a list of students assigned to each driver.
- Emphasize loading and unloading safety practices that are specific to the destination.

For more details refer to the Risk Communiqué entitled "Transportation of Students in Private Automobiles."

## **Permission Slips**

In order for students to participate in the field trip, have parents or guardians give written consent. Use standardized permission slips that have been approved by legal counsel. Leave the original signed forms at the school and send copies along with the field trip leader. Along with their permission, gather emergency contact information and note any special accommodations needed or severe medical conditions. It may be helpful to request authorization to provide first aid or procure necessary emergency medical treatment.

## **Supervision**

Plan for an adequate ratio of adults to students. The number will vary depending on the age of the student, the activity and location. For example, if the activity is escorting a high school class from the bus stop to a theater seat and back again, you may need less help than elementary students visiting a large museum. Obtain background checks for volunteers in accordance with the school district policy. Assign specific students to staff and volunteers and use the buddy system where appropriate. It is important that the trip leader maintains responsibility of the participant list and that student are accounted for on each group movement.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

Prepare for the unexpected with an emergency plan that includes procedures for off-campus incidents. Provide an emergency contact communication checklist to trip leaders and volunteers. The permission slips can help maintain accurate guardian phone numbers. Discuss provisions for transporting students if needed as a result of behavior problems or illness.

Field trips bring academic rewards and unique risks. Good leadership and systematic trip planning can help you safely extend the boundaries of the school out into your community so that students have a safe and fun learning experience on each field trip you endeavor.

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