

# Charter Bus Intrastate and Interstate Local School System Requirements (December 2012)

While each school system strives to provide your school buses and drivers for athletic, band and field trips, there may be times when this is not possible and either your transportation department or a school looks to use a charter bus company. An October 2009 accident of a charter bus carrying college students just south of Atlanta reminded us that it is essential that school systems know that the company they are contracting with for charter bus transportation is properly licensed, has proper insurance, is reputable and meets all requirements when it comes to the safe transportation of students. Additionally, you should be cautious that you may contract with a reputable company and they may then sub-contract with another less reputable company to do the work. You can prevent this by proper wording in the contract agreement

**Georgia Code § 20-1-10** – No educational institution receiving state funds shall enter into an agreement with a motor carrier or contract carrier for the purpose of transporting students without first verifying that such carrier is certified by the PSC (Ga. Dept. of Public Safety as of July 1, 2012)...the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, or any similarly required certifying agency.

**NOTE – The previous PSC link for checking Intrastate licensed motor carriers in Georgia no longer works. See below for the new DPS site and instructions.**

## In State Transportation

**§ 40-1-100** exempts motor carriers and motor contract carriers "engaged solely in transporting school children and teachers to and from public schools and private schools" from Georgia Department of Public Safety regulation (there is no license required if this is their sole function). For all other carriers the link below is a minimum starting point for checking the credentials of an **Intrastate** charter bus company (licensed to transport passengers **IN STATE ONLY**). You should be aware that the list contains carriers that run shuttle type buses as well as school buses and full sized motor coach (Trailways/Greyhound) type charter buses. You will want to look for a carrier who uses school buses that meet Georgia specifications or the larger motor coach type buses. Even though a company is on the list and they run Georgia spec school buses or the full sized motor coaches, there will still be some companies who you will not want to use. You are looking for companies with a "Satisfactory Record". Your school system may also want to further evaluate a company beyond just using this link. If the company is also an Interstate carrier, then more in-depth information can be found (see below). NOTE - Just because a company is a licensed Interstate (out of state) carrier, that does not mean they are a licensed Intrastate (in state) carrier.

**UNLESS EXEMPTED BY 40-1-100 THEY MUST BE ON THE INTRASTATE LIST  
ACCESSED BY THE LINK BELOW.**

<http://www.gamccd.net/LPCBusCarriers.aspx>

**DIRECTIONS** – 1.) Click on the link and you will go to a list of “Bus Companies License Licensed in Georgia”; 2.) Click on the carrier to determine their rating; 3.) Note that you can sort by city to find carriers near you. Look to see if the charter company is on this list, and if they provide Georgia spec school buses/full sized motor coach buses and if they have a "Satisfactory Record".

### **Out of State Transportation**

The link below is a minimum starting point for checking the credentials of an **Interstate** charter bus company (licensed to transport passengers **OUT OF STATE**). You should be aware that the link contains carriers that run shuttle type buses as well as school buses and full sized motor coach (Trailways/Greyhound) type charter buses. You will want to identify a carrier who uses school buses that meet Georgia specifications or the larger motor coach type buses and check them out on this link (**this link does not provide a list, so you must either know the exact name of the carrier or the USDOT Number of the carrier to check their credentials**). Even though a company runs Georgia spec school buses or the full sized motor coaches and they are licensed, there may still be some companies who you will not want to use. You are looking for companies licensed for Interstate passenger transportation with a "Satisfactory" carrier safety rating. Additionally, this link contains extensive information to include vehicle inspection compliance, driver compliance and accident history. Your school system may also want to further evaluate a company beyond just using this link. **NOTE – THE § 41-1-100 EXEMPTION DOES NOT APPLY TO INTERSTATE CARRIERS.**

**DIRECTIONS** – 1.) Identify a carrier you want to evaluate by their USDOT Number or exact name; 2.) Click on the link; 3.) Click on either "USDOT Number" or "Name", & enter the carrier information & click "Search"; 4.) Click on the carrier name to view their information. Look to see if a charter company is contained in this link, and they are registered for Interstate passenger operation, and they provide Georgia spec school buses/full sized motor coach buses and they have a "Satisfactory" carrier safety rating (scroll all the way to the bottom). You may also want to evaluate other information provided.

### **Insurance Coverage Requirements -**

You should always obtain a certificate of insurance when contracting a trip with a charter bus company. You should also check with the insurance company to verify authenticity. Interstate minimum requirements are \$5,000,000 and Intrastate minimum requirements are \$100,000/\$500,000/\$50,000. If your school system has higher insurance limits on your school buses then you may wish to require higher limits on the charter company as well.

## **Local School System Evaluation**

As previously stated, a local school system may wish to evaluate carriers beyond just using the links provided above. As an example, you may do a more extensive on-site evaluation of local charter companies each year in establishing a list of companies that your schools may use (see GSBA *Charter Bus Guidelines* below).

## **Summary**

It is essential that either the local school system (LSS) Transportation Department or Loss Control Department identify and communicate the charter bus companies approved for their LSS use. If left up to individual schools, there is the likelihood that an undesired charter company will be unsafely transporting your students.

Utilize the above guidelines in the evaluation and selection of charter bus companies for both in state and out of state trips. Communicate approved carriers to your schools, clubs, athletics, band, chorus, PTA, vendors contracting class trips, etc. to ensure that any carrier transporting your LSS students is approved.

## **Georgia School Boards Association Charter Bus Guidelines**

There should be a pre-qualification process, dependent on local school district guidelines, where the district will approve on an as-needed basis or where the school district will develop an annual approved list to select from.

- On-line verification of safety rating (Georgia DPS and FMCSA) refer to above links
- Application process suggestions
  - Company information
    - Any other DBA or affiliate names
    - How long in business
    - US DOT ID number
    - Safety Compliance Officer
    - All locations where units are based
    - Request any information regarding any non-compliance communications from state or federal agencies within past 24 months
    - Has company filed bankruptcy during past five year?
    - Are buses inspected annually? If so, by whom?
    - Does company subcontract for equipment and drivers?
    - Company procedures for roadside emergencies and breakdowns
    - Member of what professional charter bus organizations?
    - How does company handle driver issues in which more than ten hours of driving is required?
    - Is bus/driver equipped with a wireless communication device?

- Will the driver provide a bus safety drill to prepare passengers for evacuation and other emergency procedures?
- Driver Qualifications
  - Do all drivers hold current CDL with a passenger endorsement?
  - Do all drivers hold a valid medical certificate?
  - Does your company have a driver drug/alcohol testing program that complies with DOT regulations?
  - Has your company or an affiliate ever been cited for noncompliance?. If so, attach explanation
- Rates
  - Basic Rate: Hourly      Daily Rate      Mileage Rate
  - Specify any charges above and beyond basic rate      Out of State Overnight
- Insurance
  - Proof of a minimum \$5 million liability per occurrence
- Equipment Standards
  - Number of buses available: School Buses      Luxury Coaches      Lift Buses      Limousines
  - Describe accommodations for the disabled
    - Lifts; seat belts; wheelchair lockdowns; will you transport oxygen or special apparatus?
  - List optional equipment on units (bathrooms, TV/VCR/DVD, Wi-Fi, etc.)
- Cancellation Policy
  - EXAMPLE: “Should a principal or the Superintendent of schools mandate that a trip be cancelled due to inclement weather or national emergency/crisis, or for any other cancellation by order of the Supt. Of Schools, the trip may be rescheduled, or a full refund will be made to the school, at the discretion of the principal or Supt. Of Schools. In the event of a reschedule, neither the school nor the school district will incur additional charges or fees. The school district will endeavor to notify the charter bus company of any trip cancellation at least eight hours prior to the scheduled departure date and time. It is understood by the school district that cancellation of a trip within the eight-hour window may incur those charges imposed for such things as dispatched buses, drivers, prepared meals, fuel, etc.
- Verification Statement

- Signed and notarized statement verifying all information provided is correct and true.
  - Tardiness and Additional Expenses
    - Should carrier arrive more than 1 hour behind schedule, all charges connected with alternate arrangements, will be the responsibility of carrier.
- Districts may also require employees to complete a Departure Checklist along with the driver(s):
  - Ensure that the bus company that arrives is the one that was contracted for the trip.
  - Make sure the proper number of buses and drivers are present as stipulated in contract.
  - VEHICLE WALKAROUND
    - Windows
    - Interior lights
    - Headlights
    - Tail lights/brake lights
    - Horn
    - Tires (NO slick tires)
    - Fire extinguisher(s) (Charged)
    - Copy of the annual safety inspection (sticker or paper)
  - DRIVER INFORMATION
    - Valid CDL with passenger endorsement
    - Valid medical certificate (pocket card)
    - Drivers record of duty status (log book); ask driver if they have enough hours remaining to perform the trip.
    - Vehicle registration card (Make sure license plate and VIN# matches the registration card)
  - TRIP LEADER
    - An individual who is assigned to assure that there is always an adult awake and monitoring the driver's performance.
    - If leader/chaperone feels uncomfortable at any time with the bus and/or driver performance, they should stop the trip immediately.
- Provide list of approved carriers and general information to select from