

Pasco County Public Transportation Unaccompanied Children Policy

It's our goal to provide transportation for persons of all ages. Nonetheless, to safely use the PCPT bus transit system, customers must be able to understand written signs and displays, such as those which show bus destinations and route numbers, and to follow instructions issued verbally by employees or over the public address systems on buses. Riders should also have the maturity to be able to react to unexpected situations that may arise in any transportation system, such as route delays, cancellations or other service disruptions. For these reasons, PCPT recommends that children under the age of 8 be accompanied by an adult or a responsible youth (at least 12 years old) when riding public transportation buses.

Children age 8 and above may ride alone, but we strongly suggest the following:

1. Children should carry identification showing their name, address, home phone number and the name and phone number of the person who will be meeting them.
2. Parents and guardians should review the details of the trip with their child prior to travel, including the bus route they will be riding and the locations where they will be getting on and off the bus. For young children, this information should be given to them in writing, as there are a number of routes and connection points, which may confuse a small child in the excitement of traveling.
3. We urge you to establish a specific location at the destination point of where your child will be met.
4. No child should be traveling unaccompanied during hours of darkness.

The most important point is to make sure that the child knows that if they have any questions or problems, they should request assistance from the driver.

PCPT is charged with providing safe and reliable service for all of our customers. We therefore cannot neglect these responsibilities in order to monitor unaccompanied children. Please do not expect our drivers or customer service representatives to ensure that children board the correct bus, nor expect drivers to provide supervision over children on buses or to put the child off at their destination.

When there is a major incident that results in the cancellation or delay of route service for an extended period of time, it is our policy to attempt to notify the guardians of the unaccompanied children, if that information is available. If not, we will notify the Pasco County Sheriff's Office. If you are meeting an unaccompanied child and are told that bus service is suspended, we suggest you first call the Customer Information Center (727) 834-3322 (West Pasco) or (352) 521-4587 (East Pasco).

Know the Rules...When Your Child is Traveling Unaccompanied by Bus

The purpose of this publication is to guide parents and their children in a way that will help prevent a negative experience and ensure a safe journey for your child from start to finish. Appropriate planning for bus travel with your child is the best way to guard against potentially unsafe situations.

To assist you in this process, it helps to know that there are some consistencies among transportation providers. For instance, Greyhound and Amtrak, the nation's primary bus company and passenger railroad respectively, do not allow children who are younger than the age of 8 to travel unaccompanied. While children who are older than 12 are considered an adult in many aspects and may travel unaccompanied as any adult would without restrictions, children between the ages of 8 and 11 should only be allowed to travel unaccompanied under the conditions noted below.

- An adult designated by the child's parent or guardian should meet the child at the applicable predetermined bus stop destination location.
- Bus trips should be scheduled during daylight hours.
- A responsible adult should bring the child to the bus pick-up location and provide the child with identification showing their name, address, home phone number and the name and phone number of the person who will be meeting them.

The general rules noted below will help make the travel experience for your child safer and more enjoyable.

1. Review the specific requirements of the trip with your child.
2. Unaccompanied children should sit directly behind the driver.
3. As with any experience, "practice makes perfect." Thus, it is a good idea to take some practice runs with your child so they understand the procedures and become comfortable with the process. Let your child know the types of things to expect. Instruct your child to follow general safety rules like remaining seated while onboard. Advise your child that the bus driver is the "helping adult" to seek out when needing assistance, needing answers to questions, feeling uncomfortable, or becoming confused by anything or anyone.
4. You should remain at the pick-up location until the bus leaves. Should a delay occur, your child will be much more comfortable waiting with you versus waiting alone. And if the trip is canceled or redirected, you will want to be there to make alternative arrangements.
5. Be prepared to show identification when you bring your child to the bus and advise the adult(s) picking up your child that they may have to show identification when they pick up your child. Make certain you have a back-up plan for the person(s) meeting the bus at the destination, in case they are delayed. Make certain that your child knows the person he or she is traveling to meet, so that an unfamiliar person does not meet him or her, and advise your child never to leave the boarding area with anyone you have not authorized to pick him or her up.
6. Your child must have the correct pass or denomination of money for the bus fare.
7. Children may use hand-held video games, mp3 players, radios, tape players, CD players, and portable television if they use headphones and the equipment is not noisy or intrusive to other passengers. Consider equipping your child with a cellular telephone so that delays or problems may be communicated to you. Cellular telephone use is

allowed, but conversations must be conducted in a low-key manner and the ring tones must not be noisy or intrusive to other passengers.

8. As in any social situation, it's okay for your child to be polite but restrained. Caution your child not to reveal any personal information about him or herself to other passengers.

**PCPT
TRANSIT BUS SERVICE
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN (Ages 8 – 11)
SUGGESTED CHECK LIST**

(Parent/guardian should complete the following and ensure the child carries it with them.)

Name of Child: _____

Age of Child: _____ **Home/Cell Phone Number:** _____

Destination: _____

PCPT urges you complete the following actions prior to your child's unaccompanied travel on a PCPT bus:

- _____ 1. Review the specific requirements of the trip.
- _____ 2. Remind your child to sit directly behind the driver.
- _____ 3. Instruct your child to follow general safety rules like remaining seated while onboard.
- _____ 4. Advise your child that the bus driver is the "helping adult" to seek out when needing assistance, needing answers to questions, feeling uncomfortable, or becoming confused by anything or anyone.
- _____ 5. Remain with the child at the pick-up location until the bus departs.
- _____ 6. Be prepared to show identification when you bring your child to the bus and advise the adult(s) picking up your child that they may have to show identification when they pick up your child.
- _____ 7. Make certain you have a back-up plan for the person(s) meeting the bus at the destination, in case they are delayed.
- _____ 8. Make certain that your child knows the person he or she is traveling to meet and advise your child never to leave the boarding area with anyone you have not authorized to pick him or her up.
- _____ 9. Ensure your child has the correct pass or denomination of money for the bus fare.
- _____ 10. Children may use hand-held video games, mp3 players, radios, tape players, CD players and portable televisions if they use headphones and the equipment is not noisy or intrusive to other passengers.
- _____ 11. Consider equipping your child with a cellular telephone so that delays or problems may be communicated to you. Cellular telephone use is allowed, but conversations must be conducted in a low-key manner and the ring tones must not be noisy or intrusive to other passengers.
- _____ 12. Caution your child not to reveal any personal information about him or herself to other passengers.