

285.1 When entitled to state aid.

1. *a.* The board of directors in every school district shall provide transportation, either directly or by reimbursement for transportation, for all resident pupils attending public school, kindergarten through twelfth grade, except that:

(1) Elementary pupils shall be entitled to transportation only if they live more than two miles from the school designated for attendance.

(2) High school pupils shall be entitled to transportation only if they live more than three miles from the school designated for attendance.

(3) Children attending prekindergarten programs offered or sponsored by the district or nonpublic school and approved by the department of education or department of health and human services or children participating in preschool in an approved local program under [chapter 256C](#) may be provided transportation services. However, transportation services provided to nonpublic school children are not eligible for reimbursement under [this chapter](#).

(4) Districts are not required to maintain seating space on school buses for students who are otherwise to be provided transportation under [this subsection](#) if the students do not or will not regularly utilize the district's transportation service for extended periods during the school year. The student, or the student's parent or legal guardian if the student is less than eighteen years of age, shall be notified by the district before transportation services may be suspended, and the suspension may continue until the student, or the student's parent or legal guardian, notifies the district that regular student ridership will continue.

b. For the purposes of [this subsection](#), "high school" means a school which commences with either grade nine or grade ten, as determined by the board of directors of the school district or by the governing authority of the nonpublic school in the case of nonpublic schools.

c. Boards in their discretion may provide transportation for some or all resident pupils attending public school or pupils who attend nonpublic schools who are not entitled to transportation. Boards in their discretion may collect from the parent or guardian of the pupil not more than the pro rata cost for such optional transportation, determined as provided in [subsection 12](#).

2. Any pupil may be required to meet a school bus on the approved route a distance of not to exceed three-fourths of a mile without reimbursement.

3. In a district where transportation by school bus is impracticable, where necessary to implement a whole grade sharing agreement under [section 282.10](#), or where school bus service is not available, the board may require parents or guardians to furnish transportation for their children to the schools designated for attendance. Except as provided in [section 285.3](#), the parent or guardian shall be reimbursed for such transportation service for public and nonpublic school pupils by the board of the resident district in an amount equal to eighty dollars plus seventy-five percent of the difference between eighty dollars and the previous school year's statewide average per pupil transportation cost, as determined by the department of education. However, a parent or guardian shall not receive reimbursement for furnishing transportation for more than three family members who attend elementary school and one family member who attends high school.

4. In all districts where unsatisfactory roads or other conditions make it advisable, the board at its discretion may require the parents or guardians of public and nonpublic school pupils to furnish transportation for their children up to two miles to connect with vehicles of transportation. The parents or guardians shall be reimbursed for such transportation by the boards of the resident districts at the rate of twenty-eight cents per mile per day, one way, per family for the distance from the pupil's residence to the bus route.

5. Where transportation by school bus is impracticable or not available or other existing conditions warrant it, arrangements may be made for use of common carriers according to uniform standards established by the director of the department of education and at a cost based upon the actual cost of service and approved by the board.

6. When the school designated for attendance of pupils is engaged in the transportation of pupils, the sending or designating school shall use these facilities and pay the pro rata cost of transportation except that a district sending pupils to another school may make other arrangements when it can be shown that such arrangements will be more efficient and

economical than to use facilities of the receiving school, providing such arrangements are approved by the board of the area education agency.

7. If a local board closes either elementary or high school facilities and is approved by the board of the area education agency to operate its own transportation equipment, the full cost of transportation shall be paid by the board for all pupils living beyond the statutory walking distance from the school designated for attendance.

8. Transportation service may be suspended upon any day or days, due to inclemency of the weather, conditions of roads, or the existence of other conditions, by the board of the school district operating the buses, when in their judgment it is deemed advisable and when the school or schools are closed to all children.

9. Distance to school or to a bus route shall in all cases be measured on the public highway only and over the most passable and safest route as determined by the area education agency board, starting in the roadway opposite the private entrance to the residence of the pupil and ending in the roadway opposite the entrance to the school grounds or designated point on bus route.

10. The board in any district providing transportation for nonresident pupils shall collect the pro rata cost of transportation from the district of pupil's residence for all properly designated pupils so transported.

11. Boards in districts operating buses may transport nonresident pupils who attend public school, kindergarten through junior college, who are not entitled to free transportation provided they collect the pro rata cost of transportation from the parents.

12. The pro rata cost of transportation shall be based upon the actual cost for all the children transported in all school buses. It shall include one-seventh of the original net cost of the bus and other items as determined and approved by the director of the department of education but no part of the capital outlay cost for school buses and transportation equipment for which the school district is reimbursed from state funds or that portion of the cost of the operation of a school bus used in transporting pupils to and from extracurricular activities shall be included in determining the pro rata cost. In a district where, because of unusual conditions, the cost of transportation is in excess of the actual operating cost of the bus route used to furnish transportation to nonresident pupils, the board of the local district may charge a cost equal to the cost of other schools supplying such service to that area, upon receiving approval of the director of the department of education.

13. When a local board fails to pay transportation costs due to another school for transportation service rendered, the board of the creditor corporation shall file a sworn statement with the area education agency board specifying the amount due. The agency board shall check such claim and if the claim is valid shall certify to the county auditor. The auditor shall transmit to the county treasurer an order directing the county treasurer to transfer the amount of such claim from the funds of the debtor corporation to the creditor corporation and the treasurer shall pay the same accordingly.

14. Resident pupils attending a nonpublic school located either within or without the school district of the pupil's residence shall be entitled to transportation on the same basis as provided for resident public school pupils under [this section](#). The public school district providing transportation to a nonpublic school pupil shall determine the days on which bus service is provided, which shall be based upon the days for which bus service is provided to public school pupils, and the public school district shall determine bus schedules and routes. In the case of nonpublic school pupils the term "school designated for attendance" means the nonpublic school which is designated for attendance by the parents of the nonpublic school pupil.

15. If the nonpublic school designated for attendance is located within the public school district in which the pupil is a resident, the pupil shall be transported to the nonpublic school designated for attendance as provided in [this section](#).

16. a. If the nonpublic school designated for attendance of a pupil is located outside the boundary line of the school district of the pupil's residence, the pupil may be transported by the district of residence to a public school or other location within the district of the pupil's residence. A public school district in which a nonpublic school is located may establish school bus collection locations within its district from which nonresident nonpublic school pupils

may be transported to and from a nonpublic school located in the district. If a pupil receives such transportation, the district of the pupil's residence shall be relieved of any requirement to provide transportation.

b. As an alternative to paragraph "a" of [this subsection](#), subject to [section 285.9, subsection 3](#), where practicable, and at the option of the public school district in which a nonpublic school pupil resides, the school district may transport a nonpublic school pupil to a nonpublic school located outside the boundary lines of the public school district if the nonpublic school is located in a school district contiguous to the school district which is transporting the nonpublic school pupils, or may contract with the contiguous public school district in which a nonpublic school is located for the contiguous school district to transport the nonpublic school pupils to the nonpublic school of attendance within the boundary lines of the contiguous school district.

c. If the nonpublic school designated for attendance of a pupil is located outside the boundary line of the school district of the pupil's residence and the district of residence meets the requirements of [subsections 14, 15, and this subsection](#) by using [subsection 17, paragraph "c"](#), and the district in which the nonpublic school is located is contiguous to the district of the pupil's residence and is willing to provide transportation under [subsection 17, paragraph "a" or "b"](#), the district in which the nonpublic school is located may provide transportation services, subject to [section 285.9, subsection 3](#), and may make the claim for reimbursement under [section 285.2](#). The district in which the nonpublic school is located shall notify the district of the pupil's residence that it is making the claim for reimbursement, and the district of the pupil's residence shall be relieved of the requirement for providing transportation and shall not make a claim for reimbursement for those nonpublic school pupils for which a claim is filed by the district in which the nonpublic school is located.

17. The public school district may meet the requirements of [subsections 14 through 16](#) by any of the following:

a. Transportation in a school bus operated by a public school district.

b. Contracting with private parties as provided in [section 285.5](#). However, contracts shall not provide payment in excess of the average per pupil transportation costs of the school district for that year.

c. Utilizing the transportation reimbursement provision of [subsection 3](#).

d. Contracting with a contiguous public school district to transport resident nonpublic school pupils the entire distance from the nonpublic pupil's residence to the nonpublic school located in the contiguous public school district or from the boundary line of the public school district to the nonpublic school.

18. The director of the department of education may review all transportation arrangements to see that they meet all legal and established uniform standard requirements.

19. Transportation authorized by [this chapter](#) is exempt from all laws of this state regulating common carriers.

20. Transportation for which the pro rata cost or other charge is collected shall not be provided outside the state of Iowa except in accordance with rules adopted by the department of education in accordance with [chapter 17A](#). The rules shall take into account any applicable federal requirements.

21. Boards in districts operating buses may in their discretion transport senior citizens, children, persons with disabilities, and other persons and groups, who are not otherwise entitled to free transportation, and shall collect the pro rata cost of transportation. Transportation under [this subsection](#) shall not be provided when the school bus is being used to transport pupils to or from school unless the board determines that such transportation is desirable and will not interfere with or delay the transportation of pupils.

22. Notwithstanding [subsection 1, paragraph "a"](#), subparagraph (1), a parent or guardian of an elementary pupil entitled to transportation pursuant to [subsection 1](#), may request that a child care facility be designated for purposes of [subsection 9](#) rather than the residence of the

pupil. The request shall be submitted for a period of time of at least one semester and may not be submitted more than twice during a school year.

[S13, §2794-b, -c, -d, -e; SS15, §2794-a, -g; C24, 27, 31, §4179 – 4181, 4184, 4186; C35, §4179 – 4181, 4184, 4186, 4233-e5; C39, §4179 – 4181, 4184, 4186, 4233.5; C46, §276.26, 276.28, 276.29, 276.32, 276.34, 279.20, 285.1, 285.5; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §285.1]

85 Acts, ch 212, §21; 86 Acts, ch 1246, §135; 87 Acts, ch 6, §1; 87 Acts, ch 115, §42; 87 Acts, ch 233, §488; 88 Acts, ch 1263, §11; 93 Acts, ch 127, §4; 94 Acts, ch 1060, §1, 2; 95 Acts, ch 209, §15; 96 Acts, ch 1129, §113; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 2007 Acts, ch 148, §9; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §109; 2021 Acts, ch 80, §153, 154; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1052

Referred to in §257.16C, 257.31, 282.1, 282.18, 285.2, 285.3, 285.11, 321.18, 331.502

Parent or guardian required to transport pupil participating in open enrollment without reimbursement to receiving district's regular school bus route; §282.18

Subsection 1, paragraph a, subparagraph (3) amended