



Preventing Sexual Abuse and Molestation (SAM) Claims at the Bus Stop

Student safety is paramount in all facets of a school environment—classrooms, sports fields, hallways and, yes, even bus stops. Pools can help member districts with bus stop safety in a few practical ways.

Make sure districts are familiar with how to identify registered sex offenders within their boundaries.

As a best practice, districts should assign stops that do not require students to walk past the home of a registered sex offender (RSO). State law may not explicitly prohibit an RSO from living near a school bus stop. Pools can encourage districts to plan around RSO residences by taking the following measures:

- Identify RSOs within district boundaries using appropriate law enforcement websites.
- Have the transportation director sign up for law enforcement email alerts when an RSO moves into the district.
- Use a routing program that identifies bus stops in close proximity to an RSO.
- Relocate RSO-adjacent stops whenever possible.
- Reassess stop locations frequently to account for the inevitable movement of the RSO population.

If a particular stop cannot be relocated, consider reversing the approach to the stop so that students walk across the street from the RSO's residence. Ideally, this can be accomplished without lengthening the ride for students or requiring them to cross a busy street.

Be vigilant about safety policies for special-needs students.

Special-needs students may be especially vulnerable in the transition from bus to home. To safeguard them, encourage districts to adopt policies requiring:

- Door-to-door bus service, with a parent/guardian at the bus stop to receive the special-needs student.
- An approved list of all persons authorized to receive the student.
- Photo identification from any unfamiliar person and dispatch approval before student release to the unfamiliar person.
- No release of a student to any unauthorized person.

Communicate with students that the bus stop is considered school property.

SAM claims are often student to student, and harassment can occur at the bus stop before transportation arrives. Students may be more reluctant to commit bad acts if they understand that bus stops are considered school property where penalties for bad acts are the same as if they occurred on “official” school grounds. Districts can consider communicating this in the student handbook and other avenues of communication.

► **For more information on Risk Program Administrators, please contact us at info@riskprogramadministrators.com.**

Sources: 2019 PBMI Report; 2020 PSG Specialty Trend Report

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