

▶ *Hanover Risk Solutions*

A Guide to Hiring Charter Transportation

Often, schools utilize the service of outside charter transportation companies, be it for a field trip, a recreational outing, an athletic event, or some other activity. You can reduce the risk to students through careful selection of the transportation company. The following are important considerations when selecting a transportation company:

How safe is the bus company?

When hiring a bus company it is important to know if the drivers are qualified and drug and alcohol-free. You also need to know if the buses have been properly maintained and are in good operating condition. The bus company must respond favorably to the following questions.

- Do drivers have a current Commercial Driver's License with a "passenger" endorsement?
- Does the company require that its drivers take physical examinations?
- Does the company have a drug and alcohol testing program for drivers?
- Does the company consider driver fatigue in assigning work schedules?
- Will the driver be able to complete the planned trip within the legal limit of driving hours? If not, will a second driver or overnight rest stop be necessary to perform the trip legally?
- Are the buses inspected annually? By whom?
- Does the bus company have the required public liability insurance?
- What procedures exist for roadside emergencies and breakdowns?

- What's the company's safety record and accident history? Background checks should be completed through local regulatory authorities or the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT). Also, be sure to comply with all Federal, State and local laws on background checks.
- Does the bus company subcontract for equipment and/or drivers? If so, they should provide you with the name of the second bus company so you can check its background as well?

Asking questions is a great start, but it's not enough. To help assure that the company you are selecting is well-qualified, you may need to enlist the help of someone who understands the answers. Hanover's Risk Solutions department is always ready to help.

Not all bus companies are equally safe.

Whether you're relying on an existing vendor or choosing a new charter transportation company, it's a good idea to make sure their safety record is satisfactory. The U.S. DOT keeps records on every bus company that operates in more than one state. To access this information, all you need is the company's U.S. DOT number.

With the U.S. DOT number, you can use the “SAFER SYSTEM” at www.safersys.org or <http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/SMS/>. There you’ll find a history on the company including: whether the company has authority to transport passengers in interstate commerce; the company’s accident history, safety rating and insurance status; their performance during roadside inspections; whether the company has been examined by a law enforcement or regulatory professional; and on-road performance and investigation results.

It is also important to know that there are many federal regulations in place for interstate operators and that states apply similar regulations for their intrastate operators—from the number of hours a driver can operate a bus to medical standards for bus drivers. If you experience an unsafe trip in which students are injured or, you believe, endangered by the actions of the bus company, call 1-888-DOT-SAFT (1-888-368-7238).

 [To learn more about Hanover Risk Solutions, visit hanoverrisksolutions.com](https://www.hanoverrisksolutions.com)

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