



School Transportation Director

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Washington School Bus Drivers Learn How to Spot Opioid Abuse in Students

The United States is currently experiencing an opioid epidemic that is touching increasing numbers of communities, schools and families. In 2016, more than 11.5 million Americans ages 12 and older reported misusing prescription opioids — including one in six teens, according to information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This national public health emergency has led dozens of states to declare their own states of emergency and to begin requiring opioid (which includes prescription pain killers, like oxycodone, and heroin) awareness education in their schools.

Educating Drivers

But one school district is taking that a step further and educating its school bus drivers who are often the first and last school staff members that students see every day.

School bus drivers from Monroe School District in Washington recently attended a



weekend workshop about how they might identify a student who has trouble with drugs.

“We care about every child that comes onto the bus, just like they’re our own child because when they come on the bus, they are our children,” said the lead driver trainer, Jonna Critchett.

The workshop focused on children who are not yet old enough to drive but might know where to get a prescription pain killer.

“Fifty-six percent of kids believe they could have access to their parent’s medicine

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In the News

Microsoft Is Working to Make School Buses Wi-Fi Hot Spots

Roughly 70 percent of teachers in the United States assign homework that requires a broadband connection, but 5 million students still don't have access to the Internet at home, according to statistics by the 1Million Project, a nonprofit that aims at helping more students get access.

In an effort to bring more Internet access to rural communities, Microsoft is looking to turn school buses in rural Michigan into Wi-Fi hotspots to help students do their homework.

The tech giant wants to use empty TV airwaves to beam high-speed Internet signals to buses in Hillman, Michigan, reported the *Washington Post*.

"The proposed deployment would help ... by providing high-speed wireless Internet access on school buses as they complete their morning and afternoon routes," read the Microsoft regulator filing to the Federal Communications Commission. "This will allow students without suitable connections at home to complete assignments that require broad-

band Internet access while they are on their way to and from school."

The reason Microsoft needs federal government permission to conduct such a project is because it plans to operate wireless equipment at a power level that could otherwise interfere with other communications.



The radio frequency used by TV broadcasts have the advantage of very long range and good penetration into structures, making it ideal for rural service delivery, according to the blog MSPowerUser.com.

The latest census figures

report that Hillman is a town of about 700 people, noted the *Post*. In that area, only three satellite Internet providers exist. Out of the three, only one provides service that aligns with the federal definition of broadband. Also, cable Internet is basically nonexistent in the area.

According to the *Post* article, Microsoft has plans to link with a regional Internet provider to place broadband base stations along the school bus routes.

Microsoft said it "plans to install special radio antennas on the buses that can communicate with the base stations over the empty gaps between TV channels. If approved, the project would become the company's eighth pilot for the 'TV white spaces' technology in as many months," reported the article.

Similar white spaces programs exist in states including Georgia, Kansas, Maine, Virginia and Washington.

Source: 1millionproject.org; washingtonpost.com, 3/8/18; mspoweruser.com, 3/11/18

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EPA Awards \$8.7 Million to Clean Up More than 450 School Buses In 32 States

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently awarded more than \$8.7 million to replace or retrofit 452 older diesel school buses.

The funds are going to 141 school bus fleets in 32 states, each of which will receive rebates through EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funding, according to an EPA news release. The new and retrofitted buses will reduce pollutants that are linked to health problems such as asthma and lung damage, stated the EPA.

"These rebates are an innovative way to improve air quality across the country and provide kids with safe, reliable transportation to and from school," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in the news release. "Through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, EPA is equipping local school districts with cleaner-running school buses, helping them along the route to healthier kids and communities."

Applicants replacing buses with engine model years 2006 and older will receive rebates between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per bus, depending on the size of the bus. Applicants also had the option of retrofitting school buses with engine model years between 1994 to 2006 with a Diesel Oxidation Catalyst, Closed Crankcase Ventilation

system and Fuel Operated Heater to reduce toxic emissions. EPA will fully fund the cost of these devices up to \$6,000.

EPA has implemented standards to make newer diesel engines more than 90 percent cleaner, but many older diesel school buses are still operating. These older diesel engines emit large amounts of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which are linked to instances of aggravated asthma, lung damage and other serious health problems.

Cost-effective Program

"Since the EPA launched its Clean School Bus USA program 15 years ago, the agency has been working to ensure that the safest way 26 million students get to school, the iconic yellow school bus, is also one of the healthiest," said Charlie Hood, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services. "The DERA School Bus Replacement program has been instrumental in helping school districts and contractors replace older diesel school buses with newer buses that drastically reduce airborne emissions. The program is one of the most administratively simple within the federal government and has been extremely cost-effective

at achieving its intended goals. America's students and taxpayers are the beneficiaries."

Since 2008, the DERA program has funded more than 700 clean diesel projects across the country, reducing emissions in more than 70,000 engines. A comprehensive list of the 2017 DERA school bus recipients can be found at www.epa.gov/cleandiesel/clean-diesel-rebates.

"The National School Transportation Association (NSTA), and private school bus contractors around the country, congratulate EPA and those receiving rebate awards for the purchase of new clean vehicles and equipment," said NSTA President Blake Krapf in the EPA news release. "On behalf of private school bus companies serving school districts around the country, we have strongly supported the DERA program. It is another way we can provide the safest and cleanest form of transportation for our precious cargo of school children and for the communities in which they live."

- For more information about the DERA program, visit www.epa.gov/cleandiesel.

Source: epa.gov, 3/8/18

In the News

Charter Bus Carrying Texas Students Crashes in Alabama, Killing Driver and Injuring Dozens

A charter bus transporting Texas high school band students recently fell into a 50-foot ravine in Baldwin County, Alabama, on its way back from Orlando, Florida, to Houston. The driver was killed and dozens others were injured.

According to a report by CNN, the bus struck a bridge support when it landed in the ravine. So inspectors closed the Interstate 10 in both directions temporarily to make sure the bridge was sound.

“The bus came to rest on one side down in the ravine. Those had to either be brought up by ropes or rappelling individuals from the fire department during the rescue operation. Some were carried out by either deputies or other law enforcement,” Baldwin County Sheriff Huey Hoss Mack said to CNN, explaining that the depth of the ravine complicated rescue efforts.

Mack said the bus was traveling west, carrying the students

home from Central Florida when it drove into the median on Interstate 10 and then into the ravine at Cowpen Creek, early in the morning.

About six Medevac helicopters were sent to the area and transported patients to hospitals, the sheriff said. One person was in critical condition at press time and five others were in serious condition. The rest of the injured suffered minor wounds, he added.

Source: cnn.com, 3/13/18

Former Chattanooga Driver Found Guilty in Crash that Killed Six Students

The driver involved with the November 2016 school bus crash in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that killed six children was found guilty on numerous charges. The driver was transporting 37 students from Woodmore Elementary School when the bus he was driving flipped over and crashed into a tree, killing six children between the ages of 6 and 10, noted a report by CNN.com.

At that time, the driver was arrested and charged with 34 crimes, including six counts of vehicular homicide. During the most recent trial, a video from the bus was played in court that

appeared to show the driver with his cellphone in hand as children boarded the vehicle.



According to ABC News, prosecutor Crystle Carrion argued, “It all could have been avoided if [the driver] had slowed down below the speed limit and stayed off his phone.”

However, the driver denied he was on the phone when the crash occurred. He said he was traveling 35 mph when he approached a curve, and another vehicle veered into his lane, according to an Associated Press (AP) article published by MySanAntonio.com.

But Chattanooga police officer Joe Warren testified that no evidence suggested the second vehicle was in Walker's lane. Warren estimated the driver was traveling 50 mph in a 30-mph zone, reported the AP.

Sources: mysanantonio.com, 2/28/18; ajc.com, 3/1/18; tennessean.com, 3/1/18; cnn.com, 3/1/18; abcnews.go.com, 2/27/18

In the News

Georgia Driver Charged with Homicide After Fatal Accident

Following a Jan. 29 school bus crash where five students were injured and one died in Houston County, Georgia, the driver was recently charged with vehicular homicide.

The driver from Warner Robins, Georgia, turned herself in to authorities. She was also charged with reckless driving, according to a report by *The Telegraph*.

Authorities stated that the driver was operating a 2000 Bluebird bus carrying 35 students on the way home as she entered a left curve too fast and began to exit the roadway to the right.

The bus drove off the roadway and onto its side.

The bus slid for about 15 to 20 feet, noted Warner Robins police Assistant Chief. The posted

speed limit is 25 miles per hour on that stretch of roadway.

Five students were hurt and another was ejected from the bus. She was critically injured and passed away overnight.

If convicted of vehicular homicide, a felony, the driver would face three to 15 years imprisonment states Georgia law, according to *The Telegraph* article.

Source: macon.com, 2/23/18

Positive News

Minnesota Celebrates Second Annual School Bus Driver Appreciation Day

The second annual School Bus Driver Appreciation Day was held across Minnesota on Feb. 28, 2018. The theme this year was “Celebrating our Humble Heroes.”

The Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation encouraged school districts and their families to show their gratitude to school bus drivers on that day for the work they do every day keeping students safe on the road.

“The State of Minnesota appreciates school bus drivers and recognizes the invaluable contributions they make to public education and student safety,” read Governor Mark Dayton’s proclamation that Feb. 28 was “School Bus Driver Ap-

preciation Day” in the state of Minnesota.

“When parents put their children on a school bus in the morning, they expect them to come home at the end of the day,” said Lt. Tiffani Nielson, Minnesota State Patrol to the *Daily News Media*. “Bus drivers are dedicated to keeping our children safe, making it possible for parents to know their children are in good hands when they travel between home and school each day.”

The state requires the transportation supervisor of each district to do a ride-along with the drivers each year.

“When the kids get on the bus, it’s, ‘Good morning, Ted. Good morning, Bob.’ The driv-



ers know the kids that well. The kids hop on the bus and I hear, ‘Hi, how ya doing?’ like they’re talking to a friend,” Henry Peck, transportation supervisor for Breckenridge School District, who has been a bus driver for 23 years, told the paper. “It goes along with the love of kids. If you care enough about the kids to know their names and greet them, they’ll realize this person isn’t just doing this for a paycheck.”

Sources: wahpeytondailynews.com, 2/28/18; mn.gov, 2/28/18; mnapt.org, 2/28/18

Questions & Answers

Q&A with School Safety Expert Adam Coughran, MA



Adam Coughran, M.A., is the President and Co-Founder of Safe Kids Inc., which created the H.E.R.O. program, a curriculum designed to teach students how to implement four simple strategies when faced with violence: HIDE! ESCAPE! RUN! OVERCOME! Adam has nearly two decades of experience in law enforcement and is a former national active shooter instructor and current adjunct faculty member at several Southern California universities. Adam assembled a team of experts from law enforcement, education and other professions to help empower students, schools and communities to survive an active shooting or violent event.

Q: Following the most recent tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, what is your latest safety advice for school administrators? What are the typical failings of schools?

A: Active shooters represent a multi-dimensional threat and must be met with a corresponding adaptable response. To

provide a safe learning environment for their students, administrators need to have three pillars of safety embedded in the culture of their school/s:

- **Strong physical security measures:** Critical components include school resource officers, security guards, controlled access and video surveillance.
- **Training and education:** Students AND teachers need to be provided with strategies to help them react to violence, including drills, training programs and response policies.
- **Involved staff and student body:** A culture of awareness and preparation must be instilled in the student body. Faculty should be invested in the social-emotional well-being of students and be on the lookout for behavioral indicators of violence.

Q: What is your advice for teachers in the classroom?

A: We teach the H.E.R.O. response, which consists of four simple strategies that can be used to survive violence: HIDE! ESCAPE! RUN! OVERCOME! If a teacher is caught in a classroom when an active shooter incident breaks out, it's absolutely critical to lock all doors to the classroom and turn out the lights. Next, a barricade should

be constructed and curtains or other window coverings should be used to block the view inside the classroom. Desks and chairs can be piled in a tangled knot against the door to prevent the shooter from entering.

If the shooter begins to break through the door and barricade, teachers should help their students ESCAPE! through a window or into an adjoining classroom.

If there isn't an opportunity to escape, teachers and students should prepare to OVERCOME! the shooter. In the H.E.R.O. program, we don't encourage students to physically attack the shooter.

Instead, we encourage them to act as a team to yell, scream, and throw items at the shooter to distract them and break their psychological momentum. If the teacher is physically capable and confident, we do encourage them to physically OVERCOME! the shooter by any means necessary.

Q: In the current climate, what can they do to protect their students from a school shooter?

A: To protect our students, we must give them appropriate strategies to survive. Lockdown-only solutions are no longer considered the "Standard of Care" by the federal gov-

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Questions & Answers

Q&A with School Safety Expert Adam Coughran, MA

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ernment. As we saw at Stoneman Douglas High School, a simple lockdown strategy can be completely ineffective against active shooters. Students need to know when and how to HIDE! ESCAPE! RUN! and OVERCOME!

Q: What advice do you have for school bus drivers? What can they do to prevent weapons on buses? Or to prevent fights or general discontent on the bus?

A: School bus drivers are a critical link in the chain of school safety. Recently, we saw an Ohio student get on a bus with a rifle and a bag containing diversionary devices. Drivers must be alert to certain behavioral cues and suspicious items. People carrying concealed weapons, or other items they want to hide, tend to subconsciously “protect” their contraband by hovering their hand over it or placing it awkwardly behind their body.

Be aware of other physical cues such as large concealing coats on warm days, sweating needlessly while on the bus, fidgeting or other signs of excessive nervousness. Remember, if you’re not used to seeing a certain student carrying a large item or acting nervously, a simple question could help reveal their true intentions.

Q: Is there advice you have for school staff that they should relay to parents?

A: Parents should be strongly discouraged from coming to a school during or after an active shooting or critical incident. In the past, frightened parents have rushed to schools after these events, causing congested roadways that prevent first responders from reaching the scene in a timely manner.

Review or institute a reunification plan that requires parents to meet away from the school and make sure the reunification plan is provided to parents before a critical incident occurs. Have resources in place to communicate with parents during critical incidents in order to provide the most current and relevant updates.

Q: We’ve all heard of run, hide, fight. Is this still good advice to staff and students? If so, please explain how it works. If not, what other advice do you have?

A: Run, hide, fight is a set of violence-survival strategies suggested by the federal government for adults. With the H.E.R.O. program, we don’t encourage students to fight, but instead encourage them to OVERCOME!

We define fighting as someone who tries to hurt others, whereas overcoming is doing

what is necessary to get away from someone trying to hurt you.

Additionally, we encourage children to ESCAPE! from a room and RUN! when the danger in the room exceeds the danger outside the room. Active shooter incidents are fluid and dynamic. To survive, students and teachers need to physically and mentally rehearse effective strategies long before a shooter steps foot on campus.

Q: What is the single most important thing to remember as a school employee when it comes to safety at school?

A: Be aware and prepared to react to violence with an effective strategy.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

A: In any violent event, it is important to listen to your body. The natural reaction of your body will be fight, flight or freeze. Empower yourself and your children to do what they feel is most appropriate given the circumstances.

The H.E.R.O. program was created by a team of experts in law enforcement, education, psychology and human performance. It consists of age-appropriate lesson plans, journaling, activities and drills that teach children and educators how to survive violence.

- For more information, visit www.safekidsinc.com.

Washington School Bus Drivers Learn How to Spot Opioid Abuse in Students

Continued from page one

cabinets,” said Amy Austin, an outreach specialist with Snohomish County’s Opioid Project. “Ninety-five percent of parents believed their child would never get into their medicine cabinet.”

Getting as many people informed about the epidemic is what is going to help most, added Austin.

One mother whose children ride school buses every day in the school district told Q13 Fox news that she worries if bus drivers will know which signs indicate that a child is abusing opioids.

“I’m a little uncertain about it. I don’t know if they’re going to have the proper training,” she said.

Increasing Communication

But helping spot signs of abuse can come from building relationships with kids, which is what school bus drivers do, said Critchett. She added that sometimes drivers spend more time with kids than their own teachers.

“If [students] are happy and ‘go lucky’ and usually that’s their behavior, and now they wear a hoodie and they’re withdrawn. They used to sit in the back and now they’re in the front, something’s up. And we need to ask what’s up,” said Critchett.

The school bus drivers were taught what signs to look for and encouraged to share their concerns with supervisors if they believe the student is having trouble with addiction.

“There are a lot of kids out there where ... opioids [are] a way for them to escape the pain they don’t want to feel,” Austin said to HeraldNet.com.

“Home medicine cabinets are the new drug dealer for chil-

dren,” she added.

- For more information on opioid education in schools and for parents, visit Operation Prevention which partners with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) at www.operationprevention.com.

Sources: healdnet.com, 3/12/18; q13fox.com, 3/12/18

Signs of Opioid Use and Abuse in Children

- Negative changes in grades
- Skipping classes or school
- Dropping longtime friends
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Changes in appearance: lack of grooming or hygiene
- Changes in general behavior, including sleeping and eating habits

Source: operationprevention.com, 2017

Signs of Opioid Overdose

- Marked confusion, delirium or acting drunk
- Frequent vomiting
- Smaller (pinpoint) pupils
- Extreme sleepiness, or the inability to wake up
- Intermittent loss of consciousness
- Breathing problems, including slowed or irregular breathing
- Respiratory arrest (absence of breathing)
- Cold, clammy skin or bluish skin around the lips or under the fingernails

Source: americanaddictioncenters.org