
VOLUNTARY TRANSFER PROGRAM HANDBOOK

**For city families transferring
To county schools**

**REVISED
JUNE, 2023**

FINAL EDITION

Note: 2023-2024 was the final year for new students from St. Louis City to enroll in a county school district. However, existing student transfers in county schools may remain through graduation if otherwise eligible.



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You can learn more about the VICC and the St. Louis Student Transfer Program by visiting the following website:

www.choicecorp.org

Copies of this handbook and VICC policies and procedures are posted on the VICC website.

VOLUNTARY INTERDISTRICT CHOICE CORPORATION

The Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) was established in 1999 to assist in the transfer of students residing in the city to participating school districts in St. Louis County.

VICC's functions currently include counseling and transportation. VICC also assists families with school transitions if necessary when they relocate to a new address in the city. VICC staff includes five counselors/social workers who assist families with a variety of issues related to the successful transfer of their children. Finally, transportation staff works with bus/cab contractors to coordinate safe and efficient transportation to and from school.

Keep this handbook in a convenient spot. You will need to refer to it often during the course of the school year.

The VICC office is located at:

7425 Forsyth Blvd., Suite 110
St. Louis, MO 63105.

Transportation

Staff: 314.721.8657

FAX: 314.721.4531

For transportation related issues, phone hours are from

6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the school year;

6:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during summer.

Program

Staff: 314.721.8422

FAX: 314.721.3693

Program office phone hours are:

Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

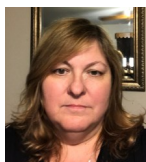
Appointments are preferred for visits to the office. Please call ahead of time to schedule an appointment.

VICC Administration



Paul Northington,
CEO
314.721.8422, ext. 3013
pnorthington@choicecorp.org

VICC Transportation Staff



Tami Webb
Operations Manager
314.721.8657, ext. 3031
twebb@choicecorp.org

The VICC Transportation staff is available:

- To process transportation requests
- To coordinate safe and efficient transportation to and from the participating schools

Routing Specialists

Routing specialists establish bus routes and maintain contact with the contractors serving the various school districts.

Shari Lewis, 314.721.8657, ext. 3039 slewis@choicecorp.org
Responsible for Parkway

Becky Autry, 314.721.8657, ext. 3036 @choicecorp.org
Responsible for Affton, Bayless, Brentwood, Hancock Place, Mehlville, Valley Park, Vo-Tech and Webster Groves

Susan Bien, 314.721.8657, ext. 3034 sbien@choicecorp.org
Responsible for Clayton, Kirkwood, Rockwood, St. Louis Magnet Schools, and Special School District

Alisha Taylor, 314.721.8657, ext. 3033 @choicecorp.org
Responsible for all special activity requests.

VICC Counselors

Generally, counselors are assigned according to the first letter of the student's last name.

<p>A-C</p>  <p>Vickie Williams, M.A. 314.721.8422, ext. 3011 vwilliams@choicecorp.org Part-Time</p>	<p>D-H</p>  <p>Laverne Mitchom, M.S. 314.721.8422, ext. 3020 lmitchom@choicecorp.org Part-Time</p>	<p>I-N</p>  <p>Jennifer Christy, M.Ed.,L.P.C. 314.721.8422, ext. 3021 jchristy@choicecorp.org</p>
<p>O-R</p>  <p>Mildred Scott, M.S.W., LCSW 314.721.8422, ext. 3027 mscott@choicecorp.org Part-Time</p>	<p>S-Z</p>  <p>Mary Schafer Meehan, M.A.,L.P.C. 314.721.8422, ext. 3016 mmeehan@choicecorp.org Part-Time</p>	

Counselors are available:

- To respond to concerns and/or questions from parents, students, school staff or central office personnel regarding any issue that would interfere with the success of a child in the school setting, such as attendance, disciplinary issues, curriculum, achievement, transportation or other concerns.
- To provide assistance for individual students in successfully working within the school district's policy and procedures.
- To work with students and their schools to prevent out-of-school suspensions, especially long-term suspensions, and to help with a student's successful re-entry after a long-term suspension.
- To assist families with transitioning to a new school in their proper attendance area.
- To provide individual, short term counseling or facilitate student groups in the school setting.
- To work with district personnel on a variety of issues relating to campus diversity.

POLICIES FOR VOLUNTARY TRANSFERS

The voluntary student transfer program is administered by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC), an organization that includes representatives from all participating school districts.

In keeping with a neighborhood school philosophy and in order to facilitate shorter and more efficient bus rides, VICC policies define three attendance areas in the city, each of which is linked with specific suburban school districts as listed below. (*Also see map on page 35*).

Area 1 --

- **Clayton**
- **Parkway**
(Central & North High feeder pattern)
- **Rockwood**
(Marquette feeder pattern)

Area 2 --

- **Brentwood**
- **Mehlville**
(Mehlville High feeder pattern)
- **Parkway**
(West High feeder pattern)
- **Rockwood**
(Lafayette High feeder pattern)
- **Valley Park**

Area 3 --

- **Affton**
- **Bayless**
- **Hancock Place**
- **Kirkwood**
- **Mehlville**
(Oakville High feeder pattern)
- **Parkway**
(South High feeder pattern)
- **Rockwood**
(Summit & Eureka High feeder pattern)
- **Webster Groves**

WHEN YOUR FAMILY MOVES

Generally, transportation will only be provided for those students living in the proper attendance area for their school/district. There is no charge for this transportation service.

If you move within your attendance area, you will not have to change districts or schools and transportation will continue to be provided. Please review the map on page 35 to familiarize yourself with the boundaries of your attendance area.

However, if you move into a different attendance area within the City of St. Louis, you have two options:

1. Requesting an Attendance Area Relocation to a school/district within your attendance area during the open enrollment period. (See map on page 35)
2. Provide your own transportation to continue attending your out-of-area school. This can be accomplished in any of two different ways:
 - Complete and sign a Parental Transportation Agreement to drive your child(ren) to and from school;
 - Complete and sign a Safe Haven Form and agree to transport your child(ren) to and from an in-area residence where there is a safe and available existing pre-designated bus stop serving the school. This would apply to all transportation services — regular home to school, school to home, as well as activity, illness and miscellaneous.

OTHER POLICIES

- Under federal law, special transportation provisions apply to students of families in transition (families who become homeless). Contact your school district's homeless coordinator for more information.
- Students who have not attended school during the first three weeks of classes will lose their placement.
- Students who withdraw from the program will not be able to reenroll into the program.
- Transfers of students between county districts will not be allowed, except when a child's residency has changed between attendance areas or in extenuating circumstances.
- An appeals procedure for student placement in extenuating circumstances is available.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT TRANSFER ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

Students currently participating in the VICC program have already received one transfer with unrestricted athletic eligibility when they initially transferred to a county district. As long as the student maintains his/her current district placement in accordance with transfer policies, he/she shall retain unrestricted eligibility. The student will also be allowed one return transfer to the home school or a transfer to a school within their correct attendance area with unrestricted eligibility. Any subsequent transfers shall fall under MSHSAA By-Law 238 and restriction on eligibility may apply.

All students enrolled in the VICC program are assigned to a school that is available in the attendance area which corresponds to the students' residence, except under circumstances allowed by the transfer policy. Any such students requesting assignment outside of their attendance area who subsequently request to transfer to another county school, even if it is within their proper attendance area, shall do so with restricted eligibility according to MSHSAA rules.

A student may not transfer between county schools within his/her assigned attendance area and maintain unrestricted eligibility.

A student may not transfer to a new school with unrestricted eligibility unless there is a change of residence as defined in MSHSAA By-Law 238 under which they will remain eligible.

A student transferring a second time back to a school shall do so with restricted eligibility.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Students receiving special education services at their current school are eligible to participate in the voluntary choice program as long as services are provided in a regular classroom setting at least 60% of the time, subject to space and program availability in the selected county district/schools.

Students who have been referred for special education services and are currently in the special education evaluation process are not eligible for transfer until after the evaluation is completed, including, if applicable, the development of an individual education plan (IEP).

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from school is provided by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) for students enrolled at schools in their proper attendance area. The phone number for the transportation staff is **314.721.8657**.

It is important to note that transportation may include students enrolled in grades K-12 riding together when deemed necessary.

Bus cards with the pick-up/drop-off location, time and name of the transporter will be mailed to transfer families about two weeks before school begins. If you do not receive your card by **one week before the start of school**, contact the principal at the school your child will be attending.

During the school year, new cards will be mailed every time a change is made to the bus/cab route. Route changes tend to be more frequent on VICC bus/cab routes as the average number of changes that effect transportation for each student is 1.9. Keep this in mind when adjusting for before and after school care. Please review each new card carefully for new or changed information and the effective date. Destroy all old cards.

TRANSPORTATION

Students are to board their bus at their assigned morning bus stop daily. A student may also board at an existing BUS STOP on THEIR ASSIGNED TO SCHOOL ROUTE if necessary. Students must only exit the bus at THEIR ASSIGNED PM STOP ON THEIR ASSIGNED ROUTE HOME unless prior permission has been granted by the VICC Transportation Office. The permission must be granted prior to pm dismissal. Once bus leaves school and is in route no changes will be made.

Kindergarten students cannot be dropped at their designated stop without a secondary grade level student or an adult physically present to receive that child unless prior arrangements have been made with the VICC transportation office.

Transportation service will be provided through the use of school buses, taxi cabs and individual providers. VICC Transportation Department personnel will evaluate various modes of transportation and determine which will be used, based on safety, economy and efficiency.

Parents should communicate directly with the bus or cab provider with concerns when:

- Looking for lost items left on the bus or cab
- Checking on activity bus or cab location
- Questions or cancellations when the VICC transportation office is closed.

Refer to your child's bus card for the appropriate bus/cab company. See directory on page 37 for contractor phone numbers.

Parents should communicate directly with the VICC transportation office with:

- Overall routing issues or concerns
- Pick-up or drop-off location concerns
- Concerns with driver or contractor
- Requesting cab or other alternative transportation service in the event your bus/cab does not show.

If there is a transportation issue or problem that has not been resolved to your satisfaction by the transportation office, you may appeal the matter in writing to: VICC, 7425 Forsyth Blvd., Suite 110, St. Louis, MO 63105, Attn: CEO. You will receive a written response within 10 days.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are to board their bus/cab at an assigned stop on their bus/cab route. They must arrive at their designated pick-up location **5 minutes before** the scheduled pick-up time, and remain at least **15 minutes after** the pick-up time, before calling the transportation staff for advice on possible alternative transportation. **The child must be visible at the bus/cab stop during this time, not seated in a car or standing in a building.** If your children are not at the stop a full 5 minutes before the scheduled arrival time and do not wait the full 15 minutes after the schedules time and they miss the bus/cab, it will be ***your responsibility*** to get them to school for that day. The Transportation Office does not send alternative transportation in such instances. If a student who normally rides a cab to school is taken to school by a parent but needs transportation home at the end of the day, the parent or school must contact the transportation office to arrange for the afternoon cab at least 60 minutes prior to dismissal.

For the safety of all children, students must obey general safety rules as well as those established by the school district they are attending. You should obtain a copy of your district's bus/cab regulations and review them with your child. Violations of safety rules can result in a student being removed from riding the bus/ cab either on a temporary or permanent basis. If a transportation suspension occurs, it becomes the parents' responsibility to transport the child to and from school for the duration of the suspension.

GENERAL BEHAVIOR/SAFETY RULES

Appropriate behavior on the buses or in cabs is expected of all students participating in the voluntary transfer program. Disciplinary problems may result in suspension from transportation. If a transportation suspension occurs, transportation to and from school becomes the parents' responsibility.

Please review these rules with your child. Violations can result in suspension from transportation.

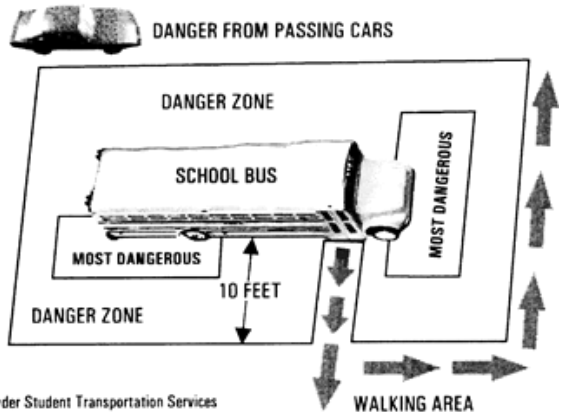
- Obey the driver promptly.
- Smoking, eating or drinking are not permitted.
- Remain seated until the bus/cab arrives at your stop.
- Refrain from using loud, offensive or obscene language.
- Do not damage the bus/cab in any way.
- Do not throw objects on the bus/cab or out of the windows.
- Do not tamper with the emergency door except in the case of a real emergency and only under the instruction of the driver.
- Fighting, scuffling, creating loud disturbances or displaying gang signs are not permitted.
- Weapons of any type are prohibited.

Please also talk with your child about these important safety rules:

- Avoid the **Danger Zones** next to the bus where the driver can't see you. (*See below.*)
- If you must cross the street after you get off the bus, wait for the driver's signal to you and then cross in front of the bus.
- Do not stand or walk in the **Danger Zones** 10 feet around the bus (*See image below*)
- Don't try to pick up something dropped near the bus because the driver might not see you.
- Remember that other motorists don't always stop for a stopped school bus. Use extreme caution whenever getting on or off the bus.
- Never run back to the bus, even if you dropped or forgot something.

School Bus Danger Zones:

**Avoid the
Danger
Zones -
10 Ft
Around the
Bus.**



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PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Transportation may run late and/or routes may frequently change — especially during the first few weeks of school. Please make sure your child knows exactly what to do if the bus/cab does not arrive. This includes knowing where to go and whom to call. Also make sure your child knows what is expected when he or she is dropped off at the bus stop at the end of the school day. If you normally meet your child at the bus stop, be sure your child understands what to do if you are not there.

Please advise your child(ren) that the school bus will be equipped with a sign displayed behind the loading door that will indicate the route number.

It is the goal of the Transportation Program for buses/cabs to arrive at the designated time, but because of traffic patterns that exist within St. Louis City and County and the vast area served, this is not always possible.

If the transportation route to which your child(ren) is assigned does not operate in a timely manner, or other problems arise, please communicate individually with the building principal where your child(ren) attend. The building principal will be in constant communication with the proper transportation authorities.

It is important for parents to keep the school as well as the district contact person (see page 30) informed of any changes in the home phone number or the cell or alternative/emergency phone number for your child. If either phone number changes, be sure to notify your child's school and request that the information be forwarded to the VICC Transportation Office.

TRANSPORTATION FOR KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

A bus or cab is not allowed to drop a kindergarten age child off at his or her designated stop unless there is an **adult (or middle or high school student 13 years or older) present to receive the child**. This applies to regular transportation, as well as emergency transportation. If other arrangements need to be made, please contact the VICC transportation office.

STUDENT SAFETY

Help us keep your children safe as they travel to and from school. Certain types of children's clothing can create a hazard as your child exits the bus. Especially dangerous are jacket and sweatshirt drawstrings, long backpack straps, long scarfs or any other loose clothing. Such clothing can become caught in the bus handrail, door or other bus equipment as the child exits the bus. Please take the time to check your children's clothing. Also talk with your child about the behavior and safety rules listed on pages 9-10. School bus safety is a team effort.

SMOKING BY DRIVERS

By contract, cab and bus drivers are not to smoke when children are in their vehicles. Parents are asked to help by reporting infractions of this rule directly to the transportation office, 314.721.8657. Be sure to indicate the bus/cab route number. The driver will be disciplined if found to be smoking while driving students.

IF YOU MOVE

If you move, it could affect your child's ability to continue at his or her presently assigned school. Please see page 5 for details. If you move within your attendance area during the summer break, according to the map on page 35, call the principal at the school your child will be attending, and that district's contact person immediately to give them the updated address and phone number. (See page 30) **Do not call the Transportation Office**. All districts have central office personnel who work all summer to handle such situations. Please remember, **it takes up to 10 working days to set up a new bus stop**.

Students are allowed to receive transportation from an address other than home, such as a babysitter or licensed daycare, as long as the address is within the zone and not a parent's or student's place of

employment. The service does have to be consistent Monday-Friday. No alternating days.

Do not delay notifying school district personnel of your address or phone number change. If you wait until just before school begins to notify your school of a change, your child may not have transportation from the new location for the start of school.

If you are going to move during the academic year, be sure to notify your building principal or district contact person in plenty of time to have the new transportation arranged by the time that you move. Refer to page 5 if you are considering moving.

Once your student boards the pm bus at school, he/she will be transported to their assigned designated drop off point. No drop-offs at other locations will be allowed.

REQUESTS FOR CHANGE

Bus stops are generally located at street corners. Requests for changes in locations of bus stops generally cannot be honored unless the existing location poses a threat to the child's safety. Work site locations cannot be used as bus stops. All requests for changes must be submitted **in writing** to the VICC Transportation Office, 7425 Forsyth Blvd., Suite 110, St. Louis, MO 63105.

Letters should indicate

- the reason for the request for change,
- the current location of the bus stop,
- the location desired,
- the name of the child,
- the bus route information (*pick-up time, route number, etc.*)

Please note: A stop location may change as your student progresses to the next building level. This occurs during stop consolidation for junior/senior high.

Please include the name of the school the child will be attending and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day and your home address. The transportation staff will telephone you if they have additional questions, and may telephone or write you to let you know if they will be able to make the change.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

To improve communication with parents regarding transportation and their child's participation in the St. Louis Student Transfer Program, the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation has instituted a telephone broadcast system, similar to ones used in many participating school districts.

This system, provided by GroupCast/School Reach, allows VICC to quickly send all households and parents a pre-recorded message (or text message if applicable) by phone within minutes of a transportation emergency or unplanned event that could significantly delay a child's pick-up or drop-off from school. These emergencies include traffic jams, bus breakdowns, inclement weather, accidents, construction delays, etc. The service may also be used from time-to-time to communicate general program announcements or reminders.

This system will simultaneously call a home and one additional cell or alternate/ emergency number for each student's family who needs to be contacted and will deliver a message from Tami Webb, transportation operations manager, or another official with the transfer program. Calls will be delivered to both live (in person) responders and answering machines. Calls not answered and busy signals will be automatically retried by the system two additional times in 15 minute intervals after the initial call. Please remember if you have not heard from our office and there is a question regarding transportation please call the transportation office at 314-721-8657.

Your child's school will also continue to separately announce school closings due to snow or weather, via the media or their own phone system. However, in the event your child's district is open, but road conditions are such that VICC's transportation department feels it is not safe to transport students to school, VICC will use this separate system to notify families attending the affected districts in addition to making the standard media announcements.

For this notification system to best operate, it is imperative that you **keep your school aware of any future changes in your home and/or cell or alternate/emergency phone numbers.** Your school then updates VICC's parent contact records so a separate notification to VICC is not necessary.

INCLEMENT WEATHER TRANSPORTATION

The voluntary student transportation staff would like to remind you of the following procedures:

1. Transportation service will be provided whenever school is in session, unless weather conditions make it unsafe. **If school is in session, but it is not safe to transport students**, the following announcement will be made by the designated radio station: *“Deseg transportation for the voluntary student transfer program to the following school districts will not operate (list of districts will follow.)”*

This announcement will be made on the following radio and television stations:

A.M. Station — KMOX, 1120.

Television — KSDK-5, FOX-2, KPLR-11, KMOV-4

Each district, and individual schools within the districts, may have varying policies regarding absences when school is open, but Voluntary Student Transportation services are not running. It is the responsibility of the parent and/or the student to become acquainted with these policies. **Whenever possible parents should try to make alternative transportation arrangements if school is in session when transportation is not operating. Parents and/or students should make arrangements for making up work missed due to weather-related transportation absences.**

2. **If the district your child attends cancels school because of inclement weather, transportation service will also be cancelled.** The school district your child is attending should notify you of the radio and/or television stations on which its school closings will be announced.
3. The transportation staff asks for your patience while waiting for your child’s bus/cab during inclement weather. Road and/or traffic conditions could cause the bus/cab to be delayed while in route to its pick-up and drop-off points. Please have your child dress appropriately for the conditions.

4. If the district your child attends announces **an early dismissal because of inclement weather conditions developing during the school day, transportation will be dispatched to the school as quickly as possible.** Early dismissals may result in students being dropped off earlier than normal. Parents who normally are not at home when their children return from school are encouraged to provide their children a way to access their home, or make arrangements for them to stay with a friend or neighbor until the parent or guardian returns home.

TRESPASS POLICY

It is a crime to trespass on a school bus. To help insure the safety of students riding buses to school, the VICC Board adopted and enforces the following trespassing policy:

“Trespass on a school bus shall be defined as anyone who gains unauthorized or unlawful entry. Any VICC-designated person, contractor or school staff whose job responsibilities require him/her to be on a school bus shall be authorized and not be considered trespassing. Only with prior approval from VICC or a contractor may any parent, guardian or member of the general public be allowed on a bus.”

Violators of this policy may be charged with trespass.

Parents/guardians are expected to maintain appropriate behaviors when dropping or picking up their student from the bus stop. Inappropriate behaviors may result in your student's loss of transportation privileges.

VIDEO/AUDIO CAMERA POLICY

Video/audio cameras will be placed on buses/cabs to record activity to help ensure the safety and security of all passengers. Only authorized persons may view tapes of bus/cab rides. Authorized personnel would include school district officials, VICC officials and contractor officials. Parents of students involved in an incident may be allowed to view the tapes only with the permission of the school district involved and VICC.

STUDENTS RIDING WITH OTHER STUDENTS

The VICC Transportation Department understands the importance of providing not only an appropriate learning environment, but also a social connection between the students participating in the voluntary program and resident students of the participating school districts. It is, therefore, the intent of the transportation department to allow students to ride the bus with other students with special permission. It is, of course, the number one priority of this department to maintain the safety/security of all students involved. The following guidelines have been developed to ensure the safest, most secure program available:

- Students must be part of the voluntary transfer program and/or a resident student of the participating school district riding with a transfer student.
- Similar service is provided by participating school.
- The program is for regular Home to School/School to Home transportation. Due to the difficulty of scheduling transportation, to/from activities, weekends and non-school day functions are prohibited.
- The intent of this program is for special occasions (*for example Birthday Parties, Special Events, Sleepover, etc.*) and not to be used on a regular reoccurring basis (*for example not for baby sitting or regular days of the week, etc.*)
- These special riding privileges are on a space available basis only. Space is particularly limited on cab routes.
- **Must have prior approval from your student's school and the VICC transportation office.**
- Student(s) must have a signed note from parent/guardian giving permission to go home with another student and also from the parent/guardian of the student whose home they will be going to.
- Arrangements must be made through your student's school prior to the p.m. bell.

ACTIVITY TRANSPORTATION

Before and after school activity transportation is available for students attending middle school and high school who participate in school sponsored activities and clubs that meet the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidelines. Elementary activity transportation is provided on a limited basis for tutorial or remedial classes. All activity transportation must be scheduled through your student's school. If your student is scheduled via cab transportation and that transportation is not needed, please cancel by first calling your student's school and if you are not able to reach them, please call the VICC transportation office during normal business hours. If you are calling before or after normal hours, please call the service provider (bus company or taxi service).

GOOD ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

Did you know that the average transfer student misses school about once every two weeks or between 16 and 18 days each year? Good attendance is just as important in school as it is for work. Studies have shown that good attendance correlates with good grades. Likewise poor attendance patterns often go hand in hand with below average grades.

Please help your child understand the relationship between attendance and success in school.

In addition to affecting your child's achievement, missing school can also impact funding of the transfer program and related programs at your school, because state funding for education increases and decreases in step with student attendance.

Your efforts to be sure your child is at school each day will greatly improve his or her chances of success and at the same time help the transfer program. VICC hopes you'll agree that both are worthy causes.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS

Every school district offers a program that provides free or reduced cost meals to qualified students. These meals include lunch and, at many schools, breakfast as well.

To participate, you must submit an application to your child's school and meet certain guidelines established by the United States Department of Agriculture. You should receive a blank application from your child's school during the first few weeks of classes. If you do not, please contact your child's school to request one.

The free or reduced cost meals can be a bonus to your household budget. And by just submitting an application, you will also be supporting the overall student transfer program since extra state funding is received by VICC for all qualified students who submit applications.

So please consider applying even if your child does not plan to actually participate. You'll be supporting the transfer program either way.

RIGHTS OF PARENTS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act states that school policy must contain information on “how the agency or institution informs parents and students of their rights.”

It is important for parents to request a written copy of the school policy. Parents should note all procedures which need to be followed. If there are questions about policy, call the district.

In the case of a suspension of over ten days, the parents may appeal the suspension to the school board. State law requires that “the notice and the hearing shall follow as soon as practicable.” Parents should take care to **notify the district in writing** that they are requesting an appeal hearing and that they expect the hearing to follow as soon as possible.

If you are unable to resolve an issue with your school district about a short-term suspension or another concern, other avenues you may pursue include:

- Seeking assistance and district counseling, being certain the proper school district procedures have been followed.
- Seeking assistance from VICC by calling a counselor. VICC counselors (*see page 3*) assist families in the transfer program who encounter difficulties at their host schools.

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT

The Missouri Safe Schools Act governs issues concerning student discipline and safety. These regulations apply to all public schools in the State of Missouri. Among the regulations that may have specific interest to you are the following:

- The law requires that each school district have a written discipline policy. Request a copy of this policy from your child's new school.
- The law states that any student on a suspension may not re-enroll in **any school** until the suspension period is over.
- The law requires a conference prior to re-admission of a student suspended for more than ten days for an act of school violence, or where the student poses a threat of harm to self or others.
- Each school district is to maintain records of any serious violation of the discipline policy. These records are to be sent to any school the student later attends.
- Prior to registration, proof of residency for the student must be established. Giving false information regarding residency is now defined as a Class A misdemeanor.

For more information about the safe schools act, call your district contact person. (See page 30.)

REINSTATEMENT POLICY FOR ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

City parents of interdistrict transfer students need to be aware of a St. Louis Public School policy that is being enforced on an individual student basis.

Any voluntary transfer student who has received a long-term suspension or an expulsion from a county school and is seeking reentry into the St. Louis Public Schools must have his/her request for reinstatement reviewed by staff appointed by the

SLPS Superintendent.

No student will be considered for reinstatement until the suspension period is over. The student then is expected to initially return to his or her county school. Should the student then desire to re-enroll in a St. Louis Public School, there is a procedure to follow. A request must be made for re-enrollment and an appointment date established. The case is discussed at that time.

Each request is handled on an individual basis. As part of the review, the staff examines the reason for the long term suspension (*defined as a suspension lasting more than 10 days*) or expulsion and reviews pertinent data particular to this case to ascertain that the student received due process.

If the offense is the same type of infraction for which the St. Louis Public Schools would issue a long term suspension/expulsion and if the student has received due process in his/her county school, then the request for reentry is denied at that point.

Parents must encourage their children to be mindful of their behavior and to act in accordance with school district policies to avoid such suspensions because a suspension could mean that the student will be out of school for a long period of time. Such an interruption in education makes academic progress more difficult.

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION

REGARDING STUDENT RECORDS MAINTAINED BY VICC

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords to parents/guardians (“parents”) of students, and to students themselves who are over 18 years of age (“eligible students”), certain rights with respect to the student’s education records. Although FERPA does not apply to VICC, VICC as a matter of policy intends to comply with the provisions of FERPA and to afford parents and eligible students certain rights set forth in FERPA with respect to education records maintained by VICC.

These rights, as they pertain to education records maintained by VICC, are outlined below:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day VICC receives a written request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to VICC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. VICC's CEO or his/her designee will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

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2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask VICC to amend a record should write VICC's CEO, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If VICC decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, VICC will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
 3. The right to provide written consent before VICC discloses personally identifiable information ("PII") from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school or VICC officials with legitimate educational interests. A school or VICC official includes a person employed by VICC as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, counselor or support staff member; a person serving on VICC's Board; a person (including a volunteer) or contractor outside of VICC who performs an institutional service or function it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, transportation contractor or transportation manager) and who is under the direct control of VICC with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records; any of the member school districts participating in VICC and the school officials, employees and agents of such districts; or a parent, student or other person serving on an official VICC committee or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school or VICC official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her responsibilities with respect to transfer students and the transfer program. Upon request, VICC discloses education records without consent to officials of a school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.
 4. Although not applicable to VICC, FERPA generally affords the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged violations of FERPA by school districts receiving federal funds. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that schools receiving Federal funds, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, VICC may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written

consent, unless you have advised VICC to the contrary in accordance with VICC procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow VICC to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school or VICC publications. Examples include:

- VICC newsletters;
- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

If you do not want VICC to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify VICC in writing within 20 days after this notice has first been disseminated in the school year. VICC has designated the following information as directory information:

1. Name
2. Grade Level
3. Dates of Attendance
4. Degrees, Honors, and Awards Received
5. Photograph
6. Participation in Officially Recognized Activities and Sports
7. Weight and Height of Members of Athletic Teams
8. The Current and Most Recent Previous Educational Institution Attended by the Student

Any claims or disputes arising under or relating to the matters set forth in this notification are subject to the binding arbitration provisions and remedial limitations contained in paragraphs 23 and 24 of Appendix C of the 1999 Settlement Agreement.

ADJUSTMENT TIPS

FROM EXPERIENCED TRANSFER PARENTS

For a Successful Transfer Experience

You need a commitment to making the experience work.

- Don't give up if you encounter a problem. Work to find a solution. Explore all resources available to you. If you have a concern, call your VICC counselor for advice or assistance as soon as possible. *(See page 3.)*
- Come into the program with a strong sense of self-esteem and pride in your heritage.

Expectations for Both You and Your Child Should Include:

- Understanding that the school transfer will be a new experience, and that there will be changes.
- Enter the program with a positive attitude, and be prepared not only to broaden the perspectives of others, but be willing to broaden your horizons as well.

Specific Suggestions

- Learn all you can about your new school system and your new school.
- Prepare, or help your child prepare, a biography to introduce your child to his/her new teacher. Include things like samples of work, learning styles, test scores, hobbies, personal interests.
- Become involved and be accessible. Make it a point to attend all parent-teacher conferences.
- Volunteer to help with school or after school activities.
- Attend PTO meetings, open houses, etc.
- Offer your expertise to the school.
- Let your child's teacher know you will always be happy to hear from him or her, and that you want to be an active participant in your child's education.

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- Be sure the school always has current phone numbers for you on file.
 - Know the school rules, discuss them with your child and let your child know that you expect him/her to follow the rules. Let the child know how you will respond if he or she disregards the rules.
 - Be sure you and your child know the school's consequences for specific disciplinary infractions. What you may define as a "simple prank" or "horseplay" may warrant a two-day suspension, according to your child's school policy.
 - Know that school calendars vary from district to district. Spring break, for example, may not be at the same time in your new district as it is for the St. Louis Public Schools. Other holidays, teacher training and record keeping days may vary as well. Become familiar with your school's schedule.
 - Know whom to contact to answer your questions. Find out your child's teacher's name and phone number, as well as that of the school counselor and principal. There is space in the front of this booklet to record this information.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Assistance is available from the VICC for parents of transfer students who are interested in forming a group to meet and address issues related to parent involvement, or other topics of concern.

Groups can be scheduled at the request of parents, or school administrators. Workshops can be held at any convenient site in the city, such as a church, school or community center, at the VICC office or at a suburban school.

If you would like to schedule a meeting or a workshop on a specific topic for parents at your school or if you want more information, please contact Laverne Mitchom, 314.721.8422, ext. 3020.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Successful communication with your child's school will help your child have a positive educational experience.

Parents and schools must communicate. It is that simple. Both the parent and the school have a common goal — the education of the student. The more the parent and the school, which includes not only the teacher, but the counselor and principal as well, share information about the student's life in school — classroom performance, behavior and other activities — the more open the lines of communication will become.

The following are some tips and suggestions from the VICC counseling staff for good communication between parent, child and school.

- Good communication is the key to lasting relationships. Remember to communicate the positive as well as the negative.
- Good communication begins with listening. Then take the next step by discussing concerns.
- Good communication means showing mutual respect for respect for another person's point of view.
- Good communication means people can agree to disagree to disagree, yet work together toward resolution.
- Good communication means a willingness to discuss concerns discuss concerns in a calm and rational manner.
- Good communication often means being flexible when attempting to find a solution to a problem.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Read and review school rules, district policies and procedures.
2. Discuss school rules, policies and procedures with your child. State laws regarding school safety have changed recently. Find out what changes exist in your school district's regulations and how these changes could affect your child.
3. Remain calm when talking with teachers, counselors or principals about academics, discipline and/or suspensions. (*Remember, problems cannot be solved if everyone is shouting.*)
4. Do not make hasty decisions when angry. First, try to calm down

and allow your mind to clear before you decide to talk with school personnel or remove your child from his/her school. Get all the facts, consider your alternatives and make a reasoned decision when, and only when you are calm. If you act in haste, you may regret it later. Once a child has been withdrawn from a school, it may not be possible to reinstate him or her.

5. Listen to the whole story if your child has a discipline problem. This means listening to your child's version, as well as the school's and that of everyone else involved.
6. Keep the lines of communication open with your school by attending parent-teacher conferences, open houses, PTA-PTO meetings and any other activities for parents or families. Call to see if carpooling or other arrangements are available. Offer your assistance if you can.
7. Make every effort to inform your school district of address changes and telephone numbers to avoid problems in case of an emergency. If you plan to move, please give the school advanced notice.
8. Always call to let the school know when your child is unable to report to school because of illness, hospitalization, death of a family member or other reason. If a difficult situation occurs at home that affects your child's attendance or behavior, it is important for you to let the school know so that they can better understand your child and be of assistance.
9. Remember, the school district may call the state-wide child abuse/neglect hotline for students who are absent excessively (*more than five days*) without proper notification. By law, children must attend school regularly until the age of 16.
10. Review and discuss school bus safety rules with your child to avoid suspensions from the bus. Remember, if your child is suspended from the bus, you must transport your child to and from school, so that he or she will not miss valuable school days. Behaving properly on the bus/cab is extremely important for everyone's safety.
11. Call your school and the Voluntary Student Transportation Office, 314.721.8657, regarding any transportation concerns, such as late pick-ups, late arrivals, bus suspensions and after school activity buses. If you need additional assistance, you may call a VICC counselor at 314.721.8422. (See page 3.)
12. Contact your child's school about additional educational services if

needed. Also let them know you are willing to help monitor your child's educational progress.

13. Suspensions will occur if your child is fighting, disrespectful to authority figures and/or refuses to follow a teacher or school staff member's directions when asked. Remember, a prank or horseplay could cause a suspension from school. Schools will not tolerate inappropriate behavior from anyone.
14. Always call your school district if you are unclear about school rules and policies.
15. Be willing to go to the school to discuss concerns whenever it is necessary. Your presence at school will make a significant difference.

Hopefully, these tips and suggestions will serve as a guide for you when you have concerns to address with your school district.

Remember, when in doubt about how to handle a situation, contact your VICC counselor for assistance. (See page 3.) Counselors are always available for you.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

to Obtain from Your Child's New District/School

You should request and review carefully with your child the following information which will help familiarize both of you with your new district, their rules and expectations.

- School Handbook
- School and/or District Calendar
- School and/or District Homework Policy
- School and/or District Discipline Policy
- School and/or District Attendance Policy
- School and/or District Dress Code
- School Buzz Book (*generally not available until after school begins.*)
- Information about parent-teacher organizations, open houses and other school activities in which you may want to participate.

CONTACT PERSONS

FOR VOLUNTARY TRANSFER FAMILIES

Each district accepting voluntary transfer students has a designated contact person who coordinates the district's administrative responsibilities for the transfer program and serves as the liaison between the district and VICC.

Affton

Dr. Chris Daughtry
314.633.5920

Bayless

Chel'Lee Whitten
314.256.8658

Brentwood

Dr. Alex Tripamer
314.962.4507

Clayton

Ms. Robyn Wiens
314.854.6023

Hancock Place

Dr. Thomas Dittrich Jr.
314.544.1300 x501

Kirkwood

Dr. Matt Bailey
314.213.6100 x7819

Mehlville

Ms. Vesna Hajric
314.467.5229

Parkway

Ms. Monica Goodlett
314.415.9060

Rockwood

Dr. Steven Hankins
636.733.2189

Valley Park

Ms. Megan Stryjewski
636.923.3626

Webster Groves

Ms. Hollie Henderson
314.918.4003

Special School District of St. Louis County

Emily Boeckmann
314.989.8125

TUTORING SERVICES

*This information is provided as a public service only.
VICC cannot guarantee the quality of services or
staff available at these agencies.*

If you feel that your child needs help with academics, consult with your child's teacher, counselor or building principal. Many schools offer in-school tutoring, including peer tutoring. There are also many free or low-cost tutoring services in the City of St. Louis.

The following is a list of agencies that have indicated they offer tutoring services. Be sure to call the program or programs in which you are interested, to confirm sites, times, etc. You can also call a VICC counselor for more information.

(See page 3 in this handbook.)

Mathew-Dickey Boys' and Girls' Club

4245 N. Kingshighway 63115

<https://www.bgcstl.org/mathewsdickey/>

314.382.5952

By appointment; Grades K-8. Please call for details.

YMCA Community Literacy

<https://gwymca.org/programs/education-tutoring>

314.776.7102

Free reading and math tutoring, mostly virtual with an option for some one-on-one. Open to school aged children (mid-1st through 12th grade) who are struggling with reading or math. Call to enroll your child.

Midtown Community Services

1202 S. Boyle 63110

<https://www.midtownstl.org/youth-development-programming>

314.534.1180

Contact: Director of Youth Programming

Available to any student living in the city of St. Louis who is enrolled in the afterschool programs. Please call first.

Unleashing Potential

School Age Services -- **314.383.1733**

<https://upstl.org/>

Homework assistance and enrichment in four primary focus areas -- math, literature, character education and fitness and nutrition-- for ages 5-12. Child must be registered in the afterschool program to attend.

Please call or visit www.upstl.org for locations and times.

City Recreation Centers Homework Help

No fee. Call location for times and grade levels.

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/parks/recreation/centers/>

12th & Park Center

1410 S. Tucker

314.589.6142

Marquette Center

4025 Minnesota

314.353.1250

Buder Center

2900 Hickory

314.664.0327

Tandy Center

4206 Kennerly

314.652.5131

Cherokee Center

3200 S. Jefferson

314.664.0582

Wohl Center

1515 N. Kingshighway

314.367.2292

Gamble Center

2907 Gamble St

314.531.0505

Boys & Girls Club of Greater St. Louis

2901 N. Grand Ave. 63107

314.335.8000

<https://www.bgcstl.org>

\$25 annual membership fee. Call or visit www.bgcstl.org for more details.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

OF THE ST. LOUIS STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAM

In response to a 1972 lawsuit filed by Minnie Liddell and other parents, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in 1980 that the St. Louis Public School Board of Education and the State of Missouri were responsible for illegally maintaining a segregated school system. In 1981, the Appeals Court therefore directed that a voluntary interdistrict plan be worked out between the city and county schools. A pilot program with six school districts began.

By 1983, a Settlement Agreement was reached with all school districts in the metropolitan area that included multiple components, including the transfer of black city students into primarily white suburban districts and white suburban students into magnet schools in the city. Transportation and tuition costs were fully paid by the State of Missouri. The preliminary goal for suburban districts was to reach Plan Ratio (a 15 percent increase of all African-American students in the district including resident students.) The ultimate goal was for districts to achieve the Plan Goal which was a 25 percent black student population.

In 1999, the case was released from federal supervision when a new Settlement Agreement was reached which allowed for continuation of new students entering the voluntary transfer program and the St. Louis Magnet Schools for at least 10 more years. In a programmatic change for the city to county component of the transfer program, four attendance zones were established in the city (currently three as revised), each linked with specific suburban school districts. Transportation is now only provided for students who comply with this attendance area structure.

Virtually all of VICC's funding to support the transfer program is received through the State of Missouri's normal public school aid sources. These state aid payments simply follow the students to the program. No special or additional revenues are received so there are no extra costs to Missouri taxpayers. VICC then uses these funds to provide transportation service and to pay tuition amounts to participating school districts.

The 1999 Settlement Agreement included language specifying that

the program could be extended and continue to accept new students in the future. A five-year extension pursuant to this provision was unanimously approved by the VICC Board in June, 2007, with a second five-year extension approved in October, 2012 and a final five-year extension approved November, 2016. As a result, new students continued to be enrolled by districts through the 2023-2024 school year with the emphasis on siblings during the final five years, and with 2023-2024 being the last year for new students to enter the program. Once enrolled, students can remain at their chosen school district though high school graduation provided residency, eligibility and attendance area requirements are met.

To Learn More About the St. Louis Student Transfer Program

VICC website: www.choicecorp.org

William H. Freivogel: "St. Louis: Desegregation and School Choice in the Land of Dred Scott," Century Foundation Press, 9/18/2002
<http://www.tcf.org/Publications/Education/freivogel.pdf>

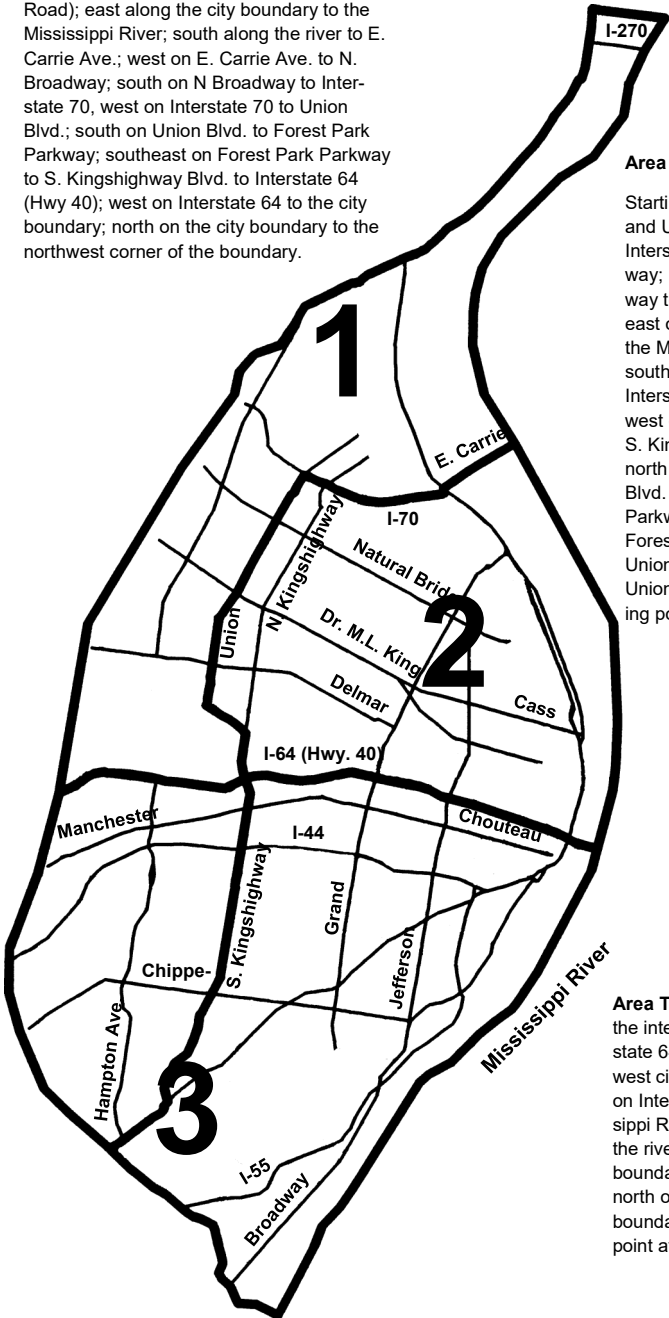
Gerald W. Heaney and Susan Uchitelle. Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis. St. Louis, MO: Reedy Press (Distributed by University of Nebraska Press), 2004.

Amy Stuart Wells and Robert L. Crain. Stepping Over the Color Line: African-American Students in White Suburban Schools. Yale University Press, 1997.

Area One — Starting at the northwest corner of the city boundary (near the intersection of Riverview Drive and Coal Bank Road); east along the city boundary to the Mississippi River; south along the river to E. Carrie Ave.; west on E. Carrie Ave. to N. Broadway; south on N Broadway to Interstate 70; west on Interstate 70 to Union Blvd.; south on Union Blvd. to Forest Park Parkway; southeast on Forest Park Parkway to S. Kingshighway Blvd. to Interstate 64 (Hwy 40); west on Interstate 64 to the city boundary; north on the city boundary to the northwest corner of the boundary.

Area Two— Starting at Interstate 70 and Union Blvd.; east on Interstate 70 to N. Broadway; north on N. Broadway to E. Carrie Ave.; east on E. Carrie Ave. to the Mississippi River; south along the river to Interstate 64 (Hwy 40) west on Interstate 64 to S. Kingshighway Blvd.; north on S. Kingshighway Blvd. to Forest Park Parkway; northwest on Forest Park Parkway to Union Blvd.; north on Union Blvd. to the Starting point at Interstate 70.

Area Three — Starting at the intersection of Interstate 64 (Hwy 40) and the west city boundary; east on Interstate 64 to Mississippi River; south along the river to the south boundary of the city; north on the city west boundary to the starting point at Interstate 64.



IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**Voluntary Interdistrict
Choice Corporation
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Monday through Friday
314.721.8422**

Call this number if you have questions about the voluntary student transfer program. Staff members can assist you if you need help with a problem that you are unable to resolve with your school.

**School Violence Hotline
1.866.748.7047**

The School Violence Hotline was established by the State of Missouri through a grant from the Department of Public Safety and is staffed Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The goal is for the Hotline to become a centralized reporting and referral mechanism to assist local schools and law enforcement agencies in the identification of actual or potential acts of violence in our schools and the intervention to prevent or minimize those acts. Make a call to report threats against students, teachers and schools.

**SAFE Schools Hotline
314.889.7233**

The St. Louis County Police SAFE Schools Hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for any citizen who wishes to report any activity that may affect the quality of life in the school environment. Calls are confidential.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation
Transportation Office
6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Monday through Friday
314.721.8657

Any transportation problem or concern should be addressed by first calling the contractor. If the contractor is unable to resolve the concern, then call the transportation office.

Bus Companies

Missouri Central South 314.762.0318

Missouri Central Brown Base 314.887.9140

Both serving various routes for all VICC districts.

Cab Companies

County Cab..... 314.995.6720

Laclede Cab 314.652.4435

Metro West Transport..... 314.427.3456

United Cab 314.241.8294

EMT 314.781.6400

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Please fill in the following information, and keep this booklet in a handy location. This information will be helpful to you if you have questions concerning any aspect of your child's experience in the Voluntary transfer program.

Student Name: _____

School District: _____

District Contact Person: _____

Contact Person's Phone Number: _____

School Attending: _____

Address: _____

Principal: _____

Secretary: _____

Counselor: _____

Secretary: _____

Home Room Teacher: _____

Home Room Number: _____

School Hours: _____

PTO President's Name: _____

and Phone Number: _____

Bus Route Number: _____

Bus Pick-Up Point and Time: _____

Note: 2023/24 was the final year of new acceptances into the program. Applications are no longer being accepted.

Existing students in the program may remain in the program through high school graduation if they remain otherwise qualified.

Copies of this handbook and VICC policies and procedures are posted on the VICC website.

www.choicecorp.org

