



Health & Safety Alert #26-02-07

Leaving Individuals Unattended in Vehicles

The purpose of this Alert is to heighten the awareness of county boards and providers on the dangers of leaving people unattended in vehicles and on the need for good systems to prevent such occurrences.

Leaving someone unattended in a vehicle may create a serious risk of harm to that individual. Some of these include frostbite or hypothermia in the winter and heat exhaustion or heat stroke in the summer. In addition, individuals may leave the bus, or may have a seizure or other health-related emergency.

It is important that good systems be put in place to account for individuals and that staff are well-trained and follow the system. Some examples are:

Occupied or Empty Bus Sign System

A sign is attached to the inside, back of a van or bus that reads occupied when individuals are on the bus and changed to empty when the passengers all get off. The driver is responsible at the end of each run to walk to the back of the vehicle and change the sign. It is important to walk through and check each seat as there have been several situations where the individual was not visible from the front.

Bus Attendance

Taking bus attendance is another important aspect of ensuring individuals are entering and exiting the vehicle. Follow-up should always occur when a rider is absent from getting on the bus.

The above systems should be complemented by a system in the school, workshop, or day habilitation. If the person does not show up and is not on the call-off list, then a call is made to their home.

It is important to note, that many county boards and providers have very good systems already in place for accountability. With these good systems, we would like to encourage everyone to make sure they are being followed as well. Several of the incidents have occurred when the identified procedure was not followed.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

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