Colorado Safe Routes to School

Futures in motion

Handbook for School Crossing Guard Sponsors

COLORADO
Department of Transportation

1 Introduction

School crossing guards play a vital role in fostering a safe and comfortable environment for students walking and bicycling to school. School crossing guards help create gaps in vehicle traffic, remind drivers of the presence of people walking, help instill safe walking skills in students and their families, and indicate when people driving should yield.

Training is an essential step to help ensure that school crossing guards are performing their duties properly and safely. The Colorado Department of Transportation and the Colorado Safe Routes to School Program compiled this document, the Handbook for School Crossing Guard Sponsors (Handbook), to provide consistent guidance to assist in hiring and training new and existing school crossing guards.

The content of the Handbook aligns with the current edition of Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and Colorado state law. Resources from the National Center for Safe Routes to School's Crossing Guard Guidelines and California's School Crossing Guard Training Program were also used in the development process.

This Handbook outlines local school crossing guard program administration, procedures and considerations for implementation. To find materials for training new and existing school crossing guards, please see the School Crossing Guard Training Manual.

2 Definitions

Colorado Revised Statute 13-21-115.6 defines the following terms:

- **School crossing guard** means any person eighteen years of age and older acting with or without compensation who supervises, directs, monitors or otherwise assists school children at a street or intersection.
- **School crossing guard sponsor** means any governmental agency or subdivision, including but not limited to any county, city, city and county, town, or school district, and any individual, volunteer group, club, or nonprofit corporation that sponsors, organizes or provides for school crossing guards.

For the purposes of providing clear guidance in this Handbook and the Manual, definitions are also provided for the following terms:

- **School crossing guard candidate** means any person who is working towards becoming a school crossing guard, but has not yet completed all necessary training and assessments.
- **School crossing guard trainer** refers to someone who is an experienced school crossing guard or law enforcement officer who is familiar with the contents of this document and the Manual and, at the discretion of school crossing guard sponsors, trains new and existing school crossing guards.
- **Gaps in traffic** means there are no vehicles approaching the crosswalk or that there are no vehicles within 100 to 200 feet (about half a football field or one soccer field) from the crosswalk. A significant part of a school crossing guard's duty is to find a gap in traffic to allow students and other pedestrians to cross safely.

3 School Crossing Guard Sponsor Responsibilities

As mentioned in the previous section, school crossing guard sponsors are those agencies that sponsor, organize, and/or provide for school crossing guards. This means that they are the fiscal and implementing agencies for school crossing guard programs and therefore are responsible for:

- Obtaining a school crossing guard trainer and training school crossing guards
- Hiring and managing school crossing guards
- Providing uniforms and equipment to school crossing guards
- Identifying where school crossing guards are needed
- Addressing liability and risk management

The following sections provide more guidance on these responsibilities.

3a. Obtaining a School Crossing Guard Trainer and Training School Crossing Guards

As mentioned previously in this document, materials for training new and existing school crossing guards can be found in the School Crossing Guard Training Manual. The Manual is laid out in a "train-the-trainer" format to help school crossing guard sponsors with guidance on how to train and vet potential new and existing school crossing guards. Consistent training will help to ensure that school crossing guards throughout Colorado have the skills to perform their duties safely and properly.

Who can train school crossing guard candidates on roles, responsibilities, protocols, and procedures is left to the discretion of school crossing guard sponsors. With that, it is recommended that a school crossing guard trainer be an experienced school crossing guard or law enforcement officer. Additionally, they should be familiar with the contents of this document and the Manual.

The Manual is made up of four (4) components:

1. School Crossing Guard Training Presentation
2. Testing
3. Practical Training
4. Field Assessment

Completion of each component is recommended to equip school crossing guards with the skills and knowledge appropriate for the job. Upon completion of all training components, including Field Assessment, it is left to the discretion of school crossing guard sponsors to determine each school crossing guard candidate's mastery of crossing policies and procedures before assignment to a school crossing location.

Training can be used during the hiring of new school crossing guards or during refresher training or reassignment of seasoned school crossing guards. Training is recommended to occur during the first month of employment and once every two years of duty.

3b. Hiring and Managing School Crossing Guards

Even if a school crossing guard is an unpaid volunteer, they still must meet these minimum qualifications.

Minimum Qualifications

Because school crossing guards are responsible for the safety of students, the MUTCD states that they should possess the following minimum qualifications:

A. Average intelligence;

B. Good physical condition, including sight, hearing, and ability to move and maneuver quickly in order to avoid danger from errant vehicles;

C. Ability to control a STOP paddle effectively to provide approaching road users with a clear, fully direct view of the paddle's STOP message during the entire crossing movement;

D. Ability to communicate specific instructions clearly, firmly, and courteously;

E. Ability to recognize potentially dangerous traffic situations and warn and manage students in sufficient time to avoid injury.

F. Mental alertness;

G. Neat appearance;

H. Good character;

I. Dependability; and

J. An overall sense of responsibility for the safety of students.

These are minimum qualification requirements for school crossing guards. School crossing guard sponsors can add to these when soliciting school crossing guard candidates. A sample school crossing guard job description can be found in Attachment A.

Chain of Command

Any request by school personnel or others outside a school crossing guard's chain of command (e.g., to change their schedule or procedures) should be made through their supervisor.

Schedule and Placement Changes

A policy should be in place whereby a school crossing guard's supervisor should notify them of any school schedule change or special school function that would affect their work schedule. In addition, if a school crossing guard is reassigned to a crosswalk other than the one at which they were trained to work, the supervisor should confirm that the school crossing guard is aware of the new conditions and check that they are able to perform all duties satisfactorily at the new location.

A substitute school crossing guard should have sufficient experience and be familiar with the crossing procedures appropriate for any school crossing to which they might be assigned. If a community service officer, traffic control officer, or other employee is available for substitute school crossing guard duty, they should complete the same training as a regular school crossing guard.

Emergency Response Plan

If any emergency response plan has been adopted that involves a special procedure for a school crossing guard, the school crossing guard should be briefed on the procedure. A school crossing guard sponsor should have a plan for contacting on-duty school crossing guards in case of an emergency. If the school has a school emergency plan, school crossing guards should have a copy of this plan.

First Aid

School crossing guard sponsors are strongly encouraged to provide first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training to all school crossing guards. School crossing guards who have not received proper training should not provide first aid or CPR while on duty. All school crossing guards should be prepared to take reasonable action to help an injured child or contact emergency responders.

3c. Providing Uniforms and Equipment to School Crossing Guards

A school crossing guard's uniform and equipment consists of four standard pieces:

Reflective Safety Vest or Outerwear

The **reflective safety vest or outerwear** should be high-visibility retroreflective safety apparel labeled as ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 2 (MUTCD Section 7D.04).

The reflective safety vest or outerwear must be the top most layer of the school crossing guard's attire.

STOP paddle

The STOP paddle should be an octagonal shape. The background of the STOP face should be red with at least 6-inch series upper-case white letters and border. The STOP paddle should be at least 18 inches in size and have the word message STOP on both sides. The paddle should be retroreflectorized or illuminated when used during hours of darkness, such as before sunrise or after sunset (MUTCD Section 7D.05).

Option:

The **STOP paddle** may be modified to improve visibility by incorporating white or red flashing lights on both sides of the paddle. Among the types of flashing lights that may be used are individual LEDs or groups of LEDs. The white or red flashing lights or LEDs may be arranged in any of the following patterns:

A. Two white or red lights centered vertically above and below the STOP legend;

B. Two white or red lights centered horizontally on each side of the STOP legend;

C. One white or red light centered below the STOP legend.

A series of eight or more small white or red lights having a diameter of 1/4 inch or less along the outer edge of the paddle, arranged in an octagonal pattern at the eight corners of the STOP paddle (more than eight lights may be used only if the arrangement of the lights is such that it clearly conveys the octagonal shape of the STOP paddle);

Reflective Safety Hat

If a **reflective safety hat** is worn, it should have the same high-visibility retroreflective safety apparel labeled as ANSI 107-2004 standard performance for Class 2 as the reflective safety vest or outerwear (MUTCD Section 7D.04).

Whistle

A **whistle** can be used be only as a warning device to alert a motorist who is unresponsive to the display of the STOP paddle. If a whistle is used, it should remain in the school crossing guard's mouth as they step into the crosswalk to conduct crossing procedures.

3d. Identifying Where School Crossing Guards are Needed

Many factors contribute to the need for a school crossing guard at a particular location. MUTCD Section 7D.02 states that adult crossing guards may be used to provide gaps in traffic at school crossings where an engineering study has shown that adequate gaps need to be created and where authorized by law. However, engineering studies are not always feasible nor do they always provide enough context to inform decisions about school crossing guard placement at individual crossing locations. Therefore, the following additional factors should be considered, in consultation with school officials, law enforcement, and school crossing guard sponsors, when assessing locations for school crossing guard placement:

Age of students

Younger students, such as elementary and middle school students, have a harder at intersections because they have more difficulty judging the speed and distance of approaching vehicles. They may be more tempted to cross during an unsafe gap in traffic.

Distance of crossing from school and adjacent land use

In general, crosswalks that abut a school or are within 1/4-mile of the school entrance are more likely to receive higher volumes of students walking and bicycling to school. Also, the proximity of a school to residential neighborhoods may increase the potential number of student pedestrians, more so than proximity to other uses.

Collision history

All collisions along the roadways surrounding a school should be reviewed and analyzed. Various attributes of these collisions (type, frequency, time of day, etc.) should be analyzed to determine their relevance to school safety and the need for school crossing guards.

Presence or absence of traffic control

Traffic control devices, such as STOP signs or traffic signals, may or may not be present at a school crossing. Pedestrians crossing at crosswalks without traffic control, or an "uncontrolled crossing", even those where there is a high-visibility crosswalk, may be harder for people driving to see. A school crossing guard at an uncontrolled crossing location can assist in providing adequate gaps in traffic for pedestrians.

Vehicle speed

Crossing a higher speed roadway may require a school crossing guard because students, especially younger students, have a harder time judging necessary stopping distance than adults and may have a harder time identifying safe gaps in traffic.

Volumes of vehicle traffic and pedestrians

Vehicle traffic and pedestrian volumes at the intersections should be monitored, as should current and projected pedestrian demand based on school demographics.

Road conditions (width, number of lanes)

The complexity of the crossing may lead to the need for a school crossing guard. Also, wide streets with multiple lanes may require the use of multiple school crossing guards.

Sight distance

Sight conditions are measured from the students' and drivers' perspectives and calculated using actual vehicle operating speeds. Temporary obstructions (such as parked cars or snow) may also be factors that affect sight from a student or driver's perspective.

3e. Addressing Liability and Risk Management

The following sections of the Colorado Revised Statute 13-21-115.6. Immunity from civil liability for school crossing guards and sponsors provide the following protections against liability and risk:

> **(2) Any school crossing guard and any school crossing guard sponsor shall be immune from civil liability for any act or omission that results in damage or injury if the school crossing guard was acting within the scope of such persons official functions and duties as a school crossing guard unless the damage or injury was caused by a willful and wanton act or omission of the school crossing guard.**
>
> **(3) Nothing in this section shall be construed to abrogate or limit the sovereign immunity granted to public entities pursuant to the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, article 10 of title 24, C.R.S.**

School crossing guard sponsors can further reduce their liability risks by training school crossing guards well and putting systems in place that anticipate and avoid potential problems. Following a standard curriculum like that provided in this document and the Manual will not only help avoid injuries, but will also help protect from liability claims. In addition, if school crossing guards are well trained and

have an understanding of the importance of their roles and responsibilities, they are less likely to act in a negligent manner.

Supporting guidance on managing risk can be found in Crossing with Confidence by ChangeLabSolutions. While written for the state of California, it outlines the following five (5) key strategies that provide significant protection from liability for any school crossing guard program while simultaneously enhancing effectiveness:

1. Clearly specify when and where school crossing guards will operate. Public entities should identify the exact intersections where school crossing guards will be located, specify the hours school crossing guards will be on duty, and set a start date. As a general rule, schools with school crossing guard programs will be protected from liability if a student is injured while crossing outside of a scheduled school crossing guard shift or location.

2. Properly screen, train, and equip school crossing guards. School crossing guards have the important responsibility of ensuring a safe crossing for students. Therefore, they must be carefully selected, trained, and equipped. School crossing guards should be criminally screened and receive proper training. School crossing guards should also be outfitted with the proper equipment, such as vests and STOP signs.

3. Prepare for school crossing guard absences and changes in school schedules. Once a program is established, school staff, parents, and students will rely on it. It is essential that there are contingency plans to provide substitute school crossing guards when there are absences or changes in school schedules.

4. Educate teachers, school Staff, students, and families. It is important that teachers and other school staff understand the hours of school crossing guard operation and other program parameters. The same is true for students and their families. School principals must also ensure that teachers release students from school while school crossing guards are working.

5. Verify adequate insurance. Insurance provides additional protection for public entities. Before beginning any new program, public entities should review their insurance policies. If a school or municipality hires an outside contractor to operate the program, make sure the contractor is adequately insured. If the program uses adult volunteers, consider extending workers' compensation coverage to them to protect both the volunteers and the public entity.

Colorado Safe Routes to School

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