# Operational Policy: Transportation of Ākonga in BLENNZ Vehicles (NAG 5)

## Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ

## Statement of Intent:

The Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of ākonga during periods of time they may be transported in BLENNZ vehicles, and the safety of adults in those vehicles. The definition of vehicles includes those that are leased, BLENNZ owned or hired, when used for BLENNZ business.

It is BLENNZ policy that ākonga are not transported in staff personal vehicles. In addition it is BLENNZ policy that all ākonga travel in the back seat of any BLENNZ vehicle being used.

This policy must be read and signed by staff prior to the first time they transport any ākonga in BLENNZ vehicles. It must then be reviewed and re-signed each time the policy is updated.

## Policy Requirements:

1. Written permission must be obtained from parents/caregivers prior to any transportation of ākonga unaccompanied by parents/whānau. This may be through educational placement enrolment forms, an Annual Permission statement, or EOTC forms, or one off approvals in writing from parents/caregivers.

Satellite classes must ensure that parents/guardians have given approval for any travel including one-off and regular travel to the Homai Campus.

2. RAMs (Risk Assessment and Management) or SAPs (Safety Action Plans) will be completed and authorised as appropriate for all activities involving transportation in vehicles. RAMs or SAPs are not required for whānau travelling with their own tamariki.

3. It is parent/caregiver responsibility to transport ākonga to clinic appointments or to regular EOTC activities e.g. curriculum days, a music group or iPad group that meets at a Visual Resource Centre each week. Should this not be possible, prior approval must be sought from the appropriate line manager for staff to pick up or drop off ākonga. This does not preclude an RTV scheduled to be working at a school, transporting ākonga at that school on that day to a Visual Resource Centre and return, however permission as in (1) above must be sought, and it remains the parent/caregivers responsibility to transport ākonga home.

4. Supervised loading and unloading of ākonga into and out of vehicles will occur at all times.

5. Wherever possible loading and unloading will occur in a designated place or in a clear zone with no hazards e.g. power poles, drains, trees etc.

6. Any person required to drive the BLENNZ Homai Campus vans must be approved by a member of the Senior Management Team and complete the vehicle usage form and a license sighted. Training will be offered in the use of BLENNZ vans. Training is essential for those using wheelchair accessible vehicles.

7. Drivers and passengers must wear a seat belt. The driver is responsible for ensuring ākonga are restrained in appropriate seat belts or child restraints as quoted from the NZ Transport Agency website below:

| **Age of Ākonga** | **The Law says you must:** |
| --- | --- |
| Until their 7th birthday | Correctly secure in an approved child restraint |
| From their 7th to their 8th birthday | Correctly secure in an approved child restraint if one is available in the vehicle (and if not, in any child restraint or safety belt that is available) |
| From 8th birthday to 14 years old | Must use safety belts if available. If not available, they must travel in the back seat (NB: whilst this is the law, as noted in the Statement of Intent, it is BLENNZ policy that all ākonga be transported in the back of any vehicle being used and they must use seat belts. They must not be transported in a vehicle without seat belts.) |
| Over 14 years old | Must use safety belts where they are available. |

International best practice recommends the use of an appropriate child restraint (or booster seat) until the child reaches 148cm tall or is 11 years old. Child restraint and medical professionals recommend that babies be in a rear-facing restraint until as old as practicable, at least until they are 2 years of age (see NZTA link below).

8. BLENNZ vehicles must not be used to transport family, friends or extended whānau of staff without the permission of the appropriate Co-ordinator or Senior Manager. If a BLENNZ vehicle is required to be used in an emergency situation information pertaining to the reason for this should be provided to the appropriate Co-ordinator or Senior Manager as soon as possible after the emergency situation has been resolved.

9. The driver is responsible for ensuring any equipment being transported is securely stored to minimise injury to passengers and/or the driver should an accident occur.

10. For staff and ākonga safety, wherever possible it is recommended that there be a minimum of two adults present when transporting ākonga. Where this is not possible, staff should ensure that departure and destination arrival is documented and/or sighted by others. Staff should be mindful of appropriate staff:ākonga ratios in terms of support to those travelling.

11. If at any time the driver believes it is unsafe to continue due to inappropriate or unsafe behaviour of ākonga, they can pull over, call their line manager and then follow their line manager’s instructions (which may include calling the police).

12. Any exceptions to the above policy need to be made on an individual basis through a Co-ordinator, Senior Manager or the Principal.

## Supporting Documents:

[NZ Transport Agency: Use of Child Restraints](https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/vehicle-safety/safety-belts-and-restraints/child-restraints/using-child-restraints-in-new-zealand/)

BLENNZ Child Protection Policy and Appendices

BLENNZ Use of Vehicles Policy

BLENNZ Homai Campus School Taxi Transport Management Plan

Approved: 

Date: 8 February 2022

Next Review: 2026

## Declaration:

I have read and am aware of the obligations and responsibilities that relate to the policy on transportation of ākonga in BLENNZ vehicles. I understand that any breach may be investigated. Such investigation will follow policy and procedures outlined in the BLENNZ Concerns and Complaints Policy and the appropriate Collective Employment Agreement.

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(Name)

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(Signature)

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(Date)