



## Companion Resource for Families

**Your voice matters!  
Asking for a safe trip to school**

Families and students with disabilities know better than anyone what makes going to school hard. You are the experts on your own lives. However, in an emergency, it can be difficult to know who to talk to or what to say to get the support you need.

This guide, **“Your Voice Matters,”** is a tool to help you speak up. It gives you clear lists of what to ask for—like safe roads, accessible transport, and inclusive schools—and helps you create simple messages to demand your rights.

**How to use it:** You can use this document on your own, or with a group.

- **Pick a “Focus Area”:** Look at the tables in this guide. Do you have problems with the road to school? With the bus? With the cost? Find the section that matches your problem.
- **Use the “Simple Messages”:** We have written down clear examples of what to say to leaders. You can use these messages to explain what is wrong and what needs to be fixed.
- **Find Partners:** You do not have to fight alone. This guide explains how to find and join a local Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) so you can advocate together.

**Use this guide to tell local leaders and schools what changes they need to make so every child can go to school and learn.**

## ASK FOR SAFE ROADS AND PATHS TO SCHOOL

The path outside the school gate needs to be safe for everyone—if the road or sidewalk is dangerous, your journey is blocked.

Focus Area	What to Ask For
<b>Clear Paths</b>	Demand paths and sidewalks are <b>free from obstacles</b> . Ask for ramps where the curb meets the road and stable/firm ground surfaces.
<b>Designs for All</b>	Ask people who design paths and buildings to <b>make things usable by all people</b> from the start (this is called Universal Design).
<b>Safe Crossings</b>	Make sure there are clear and safe spots to <b>cross busy roads</b> .
<b>Repair Plans</b>	After a storm or disaster, demand that fixing <b>infrastructure prioritises accessible design</b> .
<b>Safe Waiting Spots</b>	Ask for <b>shelters or shaded areas</b> along the way or at the school that are accessible to everyone and protect against the weather.

## ASK FOR SCHOOL RIDES THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE

If walking is too far or impossible, transportation must be available and accessible.

Focus Area	What to Ask For
<b>Accessible Vehicles</b>	<b>Lobby for accessible school buses or vehicles</b> that have ramps and safe, secure seats for children using mobility aids.
<b>Services Must Come to the Student</b>	Ask that services, like transport, <b>come to the children</b> who cannot get to a central meeting point.
<b>Essential Tools Ready</b>	Demand that <b>assistive devices</b> (like wheelchairs or white canes) are thought about in emergency plans so they are available when you need them to travel.

## ASK FOR HELP WITH HIGH COSTS

High costs should never stop a child from going to school.

Focus Area	What to Ask For
<b>Money Help</b>	Advocate for allowances or financial help to lower transport costs for families with children who have disabilities.
<b>Existing Financial Programs</b>	Work with government cash transfer programs to ensure they cover transport costs or the cost of devices needed for school.
<b>Explain the Burden</b>	Clearly tell officials that the extra costs related to disability are a huge burden on your family, making education impossible without support.

## ASK FOR SAFETY EVERYWHERE

Ask for safety measures that protect children from risks and ensure their journey is secure, especially during emergencies.

Focus Area	What to Ask For
<b>Emergency Safety Plans</b>	Insist that school evacuation and emergency plans include accessible routes to safety for children with disabilities.
<b>Clear Warnings</b>	Demand <b>accessible warning systems</b> for emergencies that share information clearly in formats everyone can understand (like simple language, large print, or sign language).
<b>Safe Temporary Spots</b>	If school moves during a crisis, demand that the <b>new location is safe and physically accessible for all children.</b>

## HOW TO DELIVER A CLEAR MESSAGE

**Use Your Experience to Prove the Problem:** Your family's experience is the best proof of the problem. Use this experience to argue for change.

- **Be Involved:** Demand to be included in assessments or surveys about the journey to school so you can map and identify the specific barriers you face.
- **Insist on the Facts:** Ask that records and information collected (data) are separated by age, gender, and type of disability. This information helps target resources where children with disabilities need them most.
- **Share Your Preferences:** Make sure you tell authorities how you prefer to get information and how you prefer services (like transport schedules) to be delivered (location and time).

**Don't Fight Alone – Get Help!** You need partners to help push for big changes.

- **Partner with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs):** Work closely with OPDs. These groups are experts who can offer technical support, share information, and help review policy.
- **Bring Ministries Together:** Ask that different government departments—like the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Finance—work together to provide resources and safe routes.
- **Find Community Allies:** Work with parents, local leaders, and other community groups who care about education and safety to make your voice stronger. Families should be given guidance on advocating for safe and accessible transport options.

**Know What to Say (Develop Simple Messages):** Advocacy messages must be short, clear, and tell people exactly what you want them to do.

1. **Name the Problem:** (Example: The local school bus has stairs, so my child cannot ride it.)
2. **State the Goal (What You Want):** (Example: The school needs a bus with a lift/ramp by the next school term.)
3. **Name the Decision Maker (Who Can Fix It):** (Example: The Ministry of Transport.)

Example Message: **“The cost of a taxi to school is too high and makes education impossible. We need the Social Welfare department to provide a transport allowance now.”**

**Make Sure Everyone Can Understand the Message:** Advocate for communication that includes everyone.

- Demand that all school or transport information (like policies or schedules) is given in **multiple easy-to-read formats. This includes oral, sign language, easy-to-read, large print, and Braille.**
- Involve people with disabilities in creating these accessible materials to ensure they are easy to find and useful.

