

STN Webinar Series: Addressing COVID-19 Child Passenger Safety Challenges on School Buses
(Q & A segment)
July 22, 2020

Watch the webinar on-demand: <https://stnonline.com/multimedia/free-webinar-addressing-covid-19-child-passenger-safety-challenges-on-school-buses/>.

Question: For the STAR CSRS it says warm soapy water to clean with. What about using seat covers on the CSRS including built in CSRS?

Answer: *Always check with the manufacturer before adding anything to a CSRS because doing so can alter its performance. When a manufacturer certifies their CSRS is compliant to FMVSS 213, they have invested much time and money into a product that is tested as it is according to test procedures prescribed in FMVSS 213. The addition of a cover is beyond what was certified. Covers possibly could impact the ability of any child restraint to meet the dynamic protection performance test requirements of FMVSS 22 depending on the design and materials of both the CSRS and the cover itself. Each manufacturer would have to design and develop a cover specific to each of their products and have to have each product sled tested. All of this is costly for the manufacturer but would be necessary to assure the safety and protection of children being secured in them. To date, the presenters are not aware of any aftermarket seat covers that have been approved by any CSRS manufacturers, but a call to the CSRS manufacturer's customer service is the best way to confirm the latest guidance. Generic covers could never do that and should never be considered as a solution.*

Question: What is the recommendation for number of students per seat. Can we put two in each seat if they both are wearing face masks?

Answer: *This is a local decision that is guided by CDC Guidelines, other professional associations such as the AAP, and state and local regulations and directives. A decision must also take into account any modification that might be needed due to special needs. We have attempted to provide some thoughts as to how to best clean the CSRS no matter how many are put on a seat.*

Question: Is it suggested that we not use the misters that we would use on the traditional buses to spray the bus that have CSRS installed?

Answer: *Our recommendation is to exercise caution in the use of misters and the specific solutions you are misting into the school bus. Chemical disinfectants are generally not recommended for use on CSRS or seat belts. Whether chemical disinfectants are applied using a mister, a spray bottle, wipes, or any other way, the concern is the impact that the chemicals can have on the components they settle on as well as to those passengers that come in*

contact with them. A mister to disinfect the bus is especially worrisome since it affects all surfaces of the bus indiscriminately, including school bus seats, CSRS and belt systems. Obtain the MSDS (Material Data Safety Sheet) from the manufacturer of whatever you are misting. This is usually found online, but if not, the manufacturer is legally obligated to provide it to you. Examine the chemicals it is made up with and their impact to the children as well as to all the materials found inside the bus. Remember, the mist will settle on all surfaces and leave a residue and fumes which will have time to react with the surface material or be transferred to a child as they contact the residue or inhale the fumes. These children who ride in CSRS are likely to be among the most sensitive to these chemicals. In general, the safest approach is to avoid anything that creates a spray coverage that contacts everything and is not rinsed off with water and dried prior to use.

Question: What about disposable wipes for the bus seats? One sheet per seat? Would a new sponge/cloth be recommended to use for each school bus seat so not to spread the virus?

Answer: Disposable wipes come in many types and use different chemicals for their cleaning moisture. In general, wipes that contain disinfecting chemicals should not be used on CSRS or seat belt systems, and their use on other bus surfaces should be assessed to ensure that their use wouldn't harm students with particular chemical sensitivities. As we have stated, find out what the chemicals are and what the impact of these chemicals are to your children and to the materials that wipe is used on. Depending on the wipe chemicals and it being ok for both all your students and the seat vinyl, you may be able to wipe the vinyl surface of a seat itself, but you must be careful not to permit that wipe to contact any stitch threads, restraint components, or anything else. Since this process is difficult and accidental contact with non-vinyl cover components is next to impossible, the safest approach would be to stay with a water/mild soap washcloth wipe you make up. You still want to check with the manufacturer of the bus seating to ask for advice. The presenters are not authorities on how many bus rows could be cleaned by one wipe, but using one sheet per seat seems like a reasonably conservative approach.

Question: Students who can't stay safely seated on the vehicle should be using safety restraint system, regardless of the current pandemic, right?

Answer: Generally speaking, yes. However, sometimes behavior management approaches may be used to keep students properly seated without having to use a CSRS. IEP teams will need to reassess these cases if responses to the pandemic disrupt behavior management arrangements. If behavioral management approaches are not successful, an assignment to a CSRS may be necessary for the safety of the child as well as the other students. Also consider that all students should be using safety restraints for their protection in the event of any crash event and to improve the overall behavioral environment of the school bus, enabling the driver to focus on their driving the bus safely.

Question: The AAP has suggestions to help a child become more comfortable wearing a face mask at www.healthychildren.org and click on Masks for Kids.

Answer: *Thank you for the resource. The AAP's Healthy Children website (www.healthychildren.org) has great information for parents and other caregivers about masks. In addition, click On the Go under Safety & Prevention to find lots of other resources about the proper use of child car seats. Do what is necessary not just for the sake of the child wearing the mask but for the sake of the children surrounding the child as well as for the bus driver and others who help to safely transport that child on the school bus.*

Question: We are instructing the bus driver to sanitize their buses after each school that has been delivered to school or to home. This could be up to 3 times in the morning and 3 times in the afternoon. We are providing each bus with a sanitizing sprayer. The driver will complain or try to avoid doing this and with this level of sanitation will our equipment breakdown quicker??

Answer: *We are with your driver on this when it comes to the use of sprayers. See our previous comment regarding the use of misters. A sprayer is just a more powerful version of the mister. One of the main points we wanted to get across in this webinar was that transporters should stop and consider the ingredients in any cleaning, disinfecting, or sanitizing method they plan to use on the bus. It is a valid concern that a sanitizing spray might contain chemicals that could be dangerous for children (especially preschoolers and children with special needs). In addition, use—and certainly prolonged, frequent use—could indeed lead to safety equipment deterioration.*

Question: Can we refuse transportation to non-IEP students that can not follow the rules?

Answer: *This is a question to take up with your district leadership and will depend on the particular circumstances. You also have to be certain that this student does not have a 504 plan which requires accommodations to provide safe and appropriate transportation services.*

Question: Are CSRS required to be installed by a certified technicians?

Answer: *Just like any child restraint, the intent is that they are installed by responsible caregiver. It is up to your district to determine who installs them. That person does not need to be a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST), but that person should have basic training on installation of CSRS's and be able to identify when they are having an issue with their installation and just as important, know where to get help when they do have that issue. Likewise, the driver or attendant securing a child to that installed restraint does not have to*

be a CPST, they need to have a basic training in proper child securement and know where to get help when concerns arise. A child passenger safety technician (CPST) is certified to educate others so they can properly use CSRS. CPSTs are an excellent resource for providing training to your staff so they can learn how to properly install CSRS. A local CPST might be able to provide some assistance, especially with securement concerns. To contact a CPST—or learn how to become one—go to <https://cert.safekids.org>.

Question: Can you use any products long as you dilute it with water (5% product of your choice with 95% water would work and be safe to use)?

Answer: *Dilution does not remove the chemical of concern; it only reduces amount of application and may enable that chemical to wash into pores and cavities it could not do if it were not reduced. The chemical still can potentially impact the child and/or material it is applied to. Use only the mild soap and water discussed in the webinar when cleaning CSRS, unless otherwise stated by the CSRS manufacturer.*

Question: What type of soaps do you recommend for cleaning?

Answer: *From our webinar, examples of mild soap for your cleaning are as follows:*

- *Ivory Detergent*
- *Dreft Detergent*
- *Woolite Detergent*
- *Dawn Dishwashing Soap*

The soap used should be a mild soap with as few chemical additives as possible. Beware of versions of these cleaners with the same brand name, such as antibacterial or other versions with harsher chemicals, as these may not be approved. Remember that you will wipe off the soap residue with a water-dampened cloth after you apply the soap wash.

Question: If you have a built in CSRS within the bus seat and have a positive Covid kiddo that has used that seat, what would be the protocol when you can't remove the seat?

Answer: *At minimum, using PPE, close up the vinyl flap to cover the 5-point harness and ensure that that bus row will not be used for a minimum of 7 days, making it very clear that the area should not be touched. Your local jurisdiction may have additional precautions, however, such as removing the entire bus from use. Such decisions must take into account the specific circumstances of the incident, including the local risk level.*

All the cleaning materials and process identified in the webinar are just as applicable to the built-in CSRS. The limitation is that you lose the flexibility to rotate the CSRS into different positions that improve cleaning access. However, because of the nature of the design, there may be fewer areas to clean. Also, new built in child seat designs may permit you to remove

the entire school bus seat back for access or replacement or even remove the child seat module itself depending on the design. Consult the manufacturer of your school bus seat for specific procedures that you could consider.

Question: Can Apple Cider Vinegar be used?

Answer: *Great question because it demonstrates why we have to be cautious with every chemical cleaner we consider for our school buses, even those we think should be acceptable. Apple cider vinegar is approximately 94% water, 5% acetic acid, and 1% other chemicals depending on the manufacturer choices. One of the plastics used for a critical component in IMMI buckles has limited resistance to Acetic Acid, even in this 5% solution state. How that works out in day to day usage in cleaning the buckle is unknown without extensive testing. That is why, as a manufacturer, IMMI's direction is not to use it in the cleaning process of its safety restraint systems.*

To clean CSRS, use only products that the manufacturers indicate in instructions, which typically include only mild soap and water. We are not aware of any manufacturers that have specified apple cider vinegar among approved agents for cleaning their CSRS. Furthermore, there is no evidence to support using apple cider vinegar for COVID-19.

For cleaning other touch points on a bus, products that have been proven to be effective at deactivating SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, should be used. A list of chemicals that are registered with the EPA as proven to have antimicrobial properties (effective against SARS-CoV-2) can be found at www.epa.gov (search List N) .

Your question suggests that you are interested in a disinfectant that is safer for humans, which is great. This list from the Responsible Purchasing Network includes products from the EPA's List N that are the safest from the perspective of protecting human health from toxic risks that are not known to cause cancer or asthma:
https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20Safer%20Disinfectants%20List_March%2026%2C%202020.pdf.

The city of San Francisco also conducted a study of safer disinfectants, which can be found here:
https://sfenvironment.org/sites/default/files/fliers/files/sfe_th_safer_products_and_practices_f_or_disinfecting.pdf.

Question: What supports/measures are being done to support the bus driver? Are there safety shields being installed or are they wearing face shields? Will they be required to wear gloves?

Answer: *The answer to this question will vary by locality; there is no standardized response among all transporters. Good topic for another webinar.*

Question: Can the students' temperature be checked before they get on the bus?

Answer: *Again, the answer to this question will vary by locality, as plans vary. Some areas have decided to use temperature screens as a precaution, while others have chosen not to put this onus on the transportation team. It should be considered that any activity which adds to the loading/unloading time creates an increased safety risk to all bus passengers in the event that it may prompt an increase in the number of those who illegally pass a stopped school bus. Care must also be taken to avoid students congregating when having their temperature taken, especially in the "Danger Zone" directly surrounding the bus. In addition, exposure to the heat or increased physical activity can cause a rise in body temperature registering undue alarm. As a result, many districts have opted for the more conservative approach of requiring parents to take their child's temperature before getting on the bus while keeping them home if it is elevated.*

Question: Will the soap and water solution kill the virus?

Answer: *We talk about killing viruses, but since viruses aren't alive, they can't be killed. However, soap is effective at removing viruses from surfaces. That is why we are told to wash our hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water.*

Question: The mild soaps recommended was Ivory, Dreft, Woolite, and Dawn. That is for washing bus seats. How do you suggest we 'Disinfect' the bus?

Answer: *Following proper cleaning procedures, the virus can be eliminated from surfaces. Currently, cleaning with mild soap and water is the only method that manufacturers allow for CSRS and school bus seats seat belt systems. Many other bus surfaces can be both cleaned and disinfected, but be sure that any disinfectant used contains chemicals that are effective at deactivating SARS-CoV-2 (as listed at [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov)). Ideally, effective chemicals that are also safer for human contact should be used, as listed at: [https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20Safer%20Disinfectants%20List March%2026%2C%202020.pdf](https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20Safer%20Disinfectants%20List%20March%2026%2C%202020.pdf).*

Whatever method is used to apply disinfectants, directions for the specific disinfectant must be followed to ensure safety and effectiveness.

Question: I believe it's ethyl alcohol not ether alcohol

Answer: *That is correct but ethyl alcohol or ethanol still differs from the other commonly used cleaning alcohol, isopropyl alcohol.*

Question: Do you have a list of EPA-registered disinfectants that could be safely used on the school buses?

Answer: *As was stated in the webinar, there is no one magic cleaner/chemical that can be used safely and properly throughout a school bus because the school bus is an assembly of many different items made of different materials and serving different functions. Each high contact item and item of concern needs to be independently studied to determine what cleaners are appropriate for use. Disinfectants should not be used on CSRS, unless specifically allowed by the CSRS manufacturer. For cleaning other surfaces, some effective disinfectants are also less toxic to humans. A list of some of these can be found here:*
https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20Safer%20Disinfectants%20List_March%2026%2C%202020.pdf.

Question: Hand Sanitizer is not allowed on a bus, how can you say to hand sanitize between kids on a bus?

Answer: *We heard from some webinar attendees that they are not allowed to use hand sanitizer on the bus, but that is not a general rule. The National Association of Pupil Transportation, on a web page devoted to COVID-19, states:*

GENERAL GUIDANCE

We continue to call your attention to some basic guidance about precautions you and your team can take in relation to the COVID-19 virus. This particular list was taken from the website of the National Association of School Nurses but is also consistent with the CDC lists:

- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds*
- *If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands*
- *Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces*

On a bus in which CSRS are used, the presenters believe that hand hygiene is extremely important to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and use of hand sanitizer by the adults who handle CSRS is an important component of that. We'd urge transporters with a no-hand-sanitizer policy to reconsider whether use of hand sanitizer under these circumstances can be an exception.

Question: That is true for special needs, but buses have a.m. high school routes, and a.m. elementary routes for non special needs seating. Are you suggesting cleaning between each?

Answer: ***Decisions about when to clean are the decision of the local district based on the guidance of the state and other agencies with expertise in this matter. We did not state a recommendation about cleaning between routes. Perhaps you can contact one of us with further clarification on your question.***

Question: On the integrated seat, would the full seat need to be quarantined for the 7 days? How much of the seat would need to be unused?

Answer: ***Yes, at the very least, it would certainly be prudent to quarantine the full seat for 7 days if an integrated seat was used by a student with or exposed to COVID 19. Depending on your local district rules, based on the guidance of the state and other agencies with expertise in this matter, more extreme precautions may need to be implemented.***

Question: Could you use any solution diluted in water?

Answer: ***No. Use only the mild soaps discussed in the webinar when cleaning CSRS, unless otherwise stated by the CSRS manufacturer. Dilution does not remove the chemical of concern, it only reduces amount of application and may enable that chemical to wash into pores and cavities it could not do if it were not reduced. The chemical still can potentially impact the child and/or material it is applied to.***

Question: Hand Sanitizer is considered flammable that is why it is not allowed on School Bus now.

Answer: ***We cannot account for why some transporters do not allow hand sanitizer on the bus. Although hand sanitizer is alcohol based, in small individual bottles there is a low risk from a fire hazard stand point. However, a large multi gallon dispenser could place it under the regulations of NFPA 30 as a flammable and combustible liquid. Since it is a chemical in the hands of children and therefore could be used inappropriately, perhaps that is why it may not be allowed on a school bus.***

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