TITLE OF LESSON: DIABETES—FACTS, HISTORY & the FUTURE

Objectives of Lesson: At the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

1. Name two ways to reduce the risk of diabetes.
2. Name two requirements in the new Washington State Authorized School Bus Driver Diabetes Exemption Program.

Equipment for Lesson: none required

Introduction:

Diabetes is a condition we are seeing more frequently in our professional and personal lives. Diabetes is considered epidemic in the United States. We will all benefit from having facts on this topic so that we can have a better understanding of our fellow bus driver and keep watch on ourselves as well as family and loved ones.

Our presentation will focus on
• Facts surrounding diabetes and driving.
• A brief history on commercial drivers license requirements for individuals with diabetes.
• Information regarding a new Washington State Authorized School Bus Driver Diabetes Exemption Program.

Presentation:

Diabetes and Driving:
Over the last 20 years, the understanding of diabetes has grown immensely along with an increased ability to predict and control its effects. Chapter 392-144 Washington Administrative Code (WAC) has been revised to deal with an individual who is a diabetic being treated with insulin. School bus drivers, who have diabetes requiring treatment with insulin, may continue to maintain a school bus driver authorization. If a driver follows its doctor’s recommendations and
regularly monitors their blood sugar level, they are able to drive a school bus without any risk to the safety of the students in their care.

**Facts about Diabetes:**
Diabetes is a disease in which:
- The body does not produce or properly use insulin.
- Obesity and lack of exercise appear to play a role.
- 20.8 million or 7% of the population in the USA is afflicted.
- Every 21 seconds a new case of diabetes is diagnosed.
- 14.6 million people have been diagnosed with diabetes, and
- 6.2 million people are unaware that they have the disease.

A common perception is that a diabetic can slip into a coma if their blood sugar is too low. This condition is called hypoglycemia, which can be monitored and successfully managed. In the past, the phrase “insulin dependent diabetic” was not uncommon usage. Today, the preferred (and more accurate) usage is “diabetic treated with insulin”.

The American Diabetes Association defines the major types of diabetes as
- Type 1 diabetes.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- Gestational diabetes, and
- Pre-diabetes.

We will give you a handout at the end of this presentation, which will provide information about the types, causes, and symptoms of diabetes. It is important to remember that people with diabetes can live long, healthy, and happy lives. It is also important to remember that maintaining appropriate weight and regular exercise can reduce the risk of diabetes.

Now, let’s move on…

**Commercial Driver’s Licenses and Diabetes—Past History:**
A quick look at history will show us how the federal government has responded to commercial drivers with diabetes. These are just some of the most recent changes:
1998 United States Congress passed legislation requiring the US DOT to re-evaluate its blanket restriction on commercial driving by people with diabetes who are treated with insulin.

2003 Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announced a diabetes exemption program which:
   • Provided for individual assessment, and
   • Contained a number of provisions to ensure safety.
     Very few individuals were eligible to apply for a CDL because they had to have a 3-year driving history in interstate commerce to qualify.

2005 The FMCSA 3-year rule was eliminated. This change had far-reaching effects in many different kinds of employment that involve driving.

2008 The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Pupil Transportation, has initiated a diabetes exemption program for school bus drivers.
   • This program allows a school bus driver who is diabetic being treated with insulin to maintain or acquire a school bus driver authorization.

Overview of the New Diabetes Exemption Program:
The School Bus Driver Diabetes Exemption Program is a new and effective way for drivers to maintain a school bus driver authorization. Some of the requirements of the program include:

   • A specific, detailed examination by a licensed physician.
   • Self-testing every six months to confirm the history of blood sugar levels.
   • An annual vision exam by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
   • Testing blood sugar levels within one hour of going on duty and approximately every four hours during duty hours.
   • Maintaining a log of blood sugar test results for the last six months.
   • Participating in a diabetes education program at least every three years.

If a driver is diagnosed with diabetes, they may not require treatment with insulin. As their medical condition changes, they may need to have insulin to assist their body with control of blood sugar levels.
   • If a driver starts insulin treatment, there is a waiting period to establish stable control.
     a. An individual diagnosed with diabetes (previously treated with oral medication and now requiring insulin) is required to have at least a one-month period on insulin to establish stable control.
b. An individual newly diagnosed with diabetes and must start insulin, is required to have at least a two-month period on insulin to establish stable control.

**Trainer Note:** Check with your district’s administration regarding allowances for sick leave or other leave of absence during the waiting period required in this program. Questions should be answered according to district policy and procedure. Some options could include accrued sick leave, light duty or shared leave.

**Trainer Note:** At this point, the regional transportation coordinator will provide an update to Driver Trainer Instructors on the next three items.

- Current status on the Diabetes Exemption Program.
- Instructions on how to access the OSPI documents for the Diabetes Exemption Program and the web location for Form SPI 1643 at [http://www.k12.wa.us/transportation/publications.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/transportation/publications.aspx)

**Additional requirements for school bus drivers who are diabetic being treated with insulin:**
The new diabetes exemption program allows you to have a school bus driver authorization. In addition, the Department of Licensing (DOL) has requirements for your CDL. It is highly recommended that you obtain all required DOL forms before you begin your medical visits.

- To comply with commercial driver’s license requirements, the school bus driver will also have to do one of the following:
For driving ONLY within Washington State:
1. Have a physician complete the (one page) Commercial Driver License Intrastate Medical Waiver Application from DOL (Form-DLE-520-066 (R/2/08)W).
2. Have DOL reflect the approved Intrastate Medical Waiver on the CDL.

For driving that includes trips ACROSS state lines:
1. Apply for and be approved in the Federal Diabetes Exemption Program, which is processed by FMCSA. Expect a six month processing time period when dealing with the FMCSA program. While OSPI will accept the FMCSA requirements as meeting the WAC criteria, FMCSA will not accept the OSPI program as meeting their requirements.
2. Submit all appropriate documents (including):
   a. US DOT Medical Examination Report.
   c. Vision Evaluation Checklist, and
   d. Copy of driver’s license and motor vehicle record.

Comment: Most drivers will likely find it to be too much hassle to deal with the federal program. That’s fine, as long as they understand their CDL is only good in Washington State.

Summary:

School bus drivers with diabetes requiring treatment with insulin are now allowed to drive school buses in the state of Washington as long as they meet stringent criteria. Today we discussed several facts regarding diabetes, a condition that we are seeing more often in our professional and personal lives. We have presented some information for your understanding such as:

- For the past 10 years, commercial driver license requirements have changed to make more allowances for drivers with diabetes.
- Diabetes can be successfully managed.
- Washington State authorized school bus drivers meeting certain criteria will be able to apply for an exemption to start or maintain a career in school bus driving.
As always, the number one rule in school bus transportation is safety. As we enter a time when the laws change, the door has opened for drivers who are diabetic being treated with insulin. The dedication of these drivers who show diligence in healthy lifestyle habits, self-monitoring, and in meeting strict testing criteria is to be commended. Knowing the facts helps in our understanding of others and enables us to take care of ourselves and those close to us.

**Evaluation:**

**Questions:**

1. Name two ways to reduce the risk of diabetes.

2. Name two criteria an individual with diabetes treated with insulin will need to meet in order to hold a school bus driver authorization in the state of Washington.

**Answers:**

1. Diet and exercise.

2. There are a number of criteria required for those treated with insulin to include:
   - An examination by a licensed physician.
   - Testing every six months to confirm the history of blood sugar levels.
   - An annual vision exam by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
   - Test blood sugar levels within one hour of going on duty and approximately every four hours during duty hours.
   - Maintain a log of blood sugar test results for the last six months.
   - Participate in a diabetes education program at least every three years.

**Handout:**

As promised earlier, we are providing a handout (H-1). This is an overview of diabetes which will give you more information on the types, causes, and symptoms of diabetes.