

# *Transportation Program Training Packet*

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## Welcome

- On behalf of (\_\_\_\_\_):Sponsoring Organization) we would like to welcome you to the Volunteer Driver Training Program. We thank you for considering dedicating your time and talents to give of yourself to help others.
- restrooms, questions/ comments to notecards for end or for 1:1 questions

## Introduction

Transportation is a link to independence, quality of life and social interaction. This is especially true for older adults who no longer drive and are therefore reliant on others for their transportation needs. Availability of affordable and accessible transportation is frequently identified as a gap for older adults. Volunteer community-based transportation alternatives are very important. Our goal is to maintain a mobile older population. We also realize that there are those with life changing health issues that are not “older adults” that can benefit from our program as well.

## Who Are We Serving, Who Are We

We serve elderly, mild to moderately disabled, and those going through a difficult situation. We refer those we cannot transport to Metro Mobility and other metro transportation services that provide a broader range of services than those our volunteers can provide, i.e. In-wheelchair transportation.

The Volunteers are neighbors helping neighbors with a desire to reach out to those around them. Our volunteers are:

- Compassionate, caring people who share a commitment to helping others
- Male and female
- From all adult ages
- From all walks of life
- Sharing the same goal .... To make a positive contribution to someone else's life.

Volunteers:

- Decide which services they will provide
- Tell us when, where and how often they will serve
- Find joy and satisfaction by putting their faith into action and serving others.

## Challenges For Caregivers In Regards To Transportation

Caring for a loved one can affect both work and family life. Transportation can be especially taxing and time consuming. According to an AARP survey of family caregivers (1997), eight out of ten caregivers reported helping with transportation. In a survey on community transportation by AARP (1997), two thirds of non-drivers who were surveyed reported getting rides from family and friends to get where they need to go. The difficulties encountered in the area of transportation, such as handling a wheelchair or other assistive device, agitation, and distracting behaviors, may cause some family caregivers to stop transporting their loved ones or only transport them for the most essential appointments. Over time, this can lead to frustration and eventually isolation for both family caregivers and their loved ones. Family caregivers often rely on trial and error to solve their transportation challenges.

## Potential Challenges For Volunteer Drivers

We will address some potential challenges, as well as safety and other issues. Our goal is to give you many tools to help you feel more comfortable providing transportation to a family member, a friend, and also to your community.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is the interaction between you and the person for whom you are serving. Positive communication can make your trip much more enjoyable and reduce the potential for frustration.

Good communication goes hand in hand with listening and is a skill that is learned in stages.

#### Principles of Good Communication

- Use positive and helpful body language (be aware of what your facial expressions are telling them. Are you showing interest in what they say?)
- Speak directly and clearly.
- Be patient. Take your cues from the rider's behavior.
- Allow plenty of time for a response.
- Do not interrupt.
- Keep directions simple by explaining them one step at a time. Reintroduce steps when necessary.
- Use easy to understand language.
- Don't overwhelm the person with too much information.
- Be calm, or at least attempt to appear calm. (especially your tone of voice!)
- Empathize. Try to put yourself in his place, so that you can see their point of view.
- Avoid argument and criticism. This puts others on the defensive.
- Ask questions. Encourage your client to talk.

#### If Your Client Has A Hearing Impairment

- Face your client when you speak.
- Lower the pitch of your voice.
- Do not over-articulate.
- Rephrase your statements for clarity.
- Allow enough time for a response.
- Don't shout. Shouting raises the pitch of your voice. Older people more often lose the ability to hear higher pitches than lower pitches.

### **SENSITIVITY**

Older adults may develop conditions which require sensitivity

1. An older person's pride may be at stake—be patient and empathetic. There are some conditions to be especially mindful of because they may cause your client difficulty during the transportation experience. For many older adults, transportation represents their independence and is a vital connection for their socialization and recreational interests. Making the transition to depending on others for their transportation is often difficult and a source of concern and frustration for them. Unexpected situations and/or reactions may emerge. Further, clients would rather not be a burden or cause any hardship or

inconvenience. Therefore, they may not always ask for rides for social purposes, or what may be considered less “essential” trips than for purposes such as medical appointments and grocery shopping. Further, just one incident of insensitivity can affect an older adult and prevent them from asking for a ride again.

2. Older persons are not disabled because they are old. However, the aging process may result in disabling conditions. These conditions may reduce physical strength and stamina, balance and capacity to understand or make reasonable decisions, etc. so it is important to try to be understanding and patient. It helps to be aware of and sensitive to the changes associated with aging when caring for an older adult. *Many of the human body's functions are affected by aging, resulting in problems with vision, balance, and pain, and can create transportation challenges.*

Vision Impairment: When transporting someone with a vision impairment, it is good to explain exactly what you are doing and why. If he uses a cane or dog guide, always lead by standing on the opposite side of the cane or the dog and stay one-half pace ahead. Ask if he would like assistance before providing it. If possible, have him exit from the nontraffic side of the car, and try to be specific when giving directions on the first visit to a location (i.e., to your right/left, approximately 100 feet, etc.)

Problems with Balance: Loss of muscle strength and coordination, arthritis in the knees and ankles and changes in the inner ear all hinder balance – especially as people age. This can make getting in and out of a car and positioning in the car difficult. Allow someone who has problems with balance plenty of time to enter and exit the car. It may take a few extra seconds for him to gain balance when moving from a sitting to standing position.

Pain: Older adults experience pain from a multitude of conditions—some short term, some periodic, and some chronic or long term. For example, people with joint pain, such as arthritis, may find it painful to enter and exit a vehicle. To be sensitive to this, give your passenger extra time and provide assistance with a gentle touch. Additionally, people with dementia can become agitated due to pain, especially if they cannot verbally communicate what they are feeling. If asked a yes or no question about this, they may be able to tell you whether they are experiencing pain.

## **PREVENTING AGITATION**

While empathizing with your client fosters good communication, it also can prevent agitation. Remember to use the principles of good communication as discussed earlier. A person with dementia or another cognitive impairment may exhibit resistive distracting agitated behaviors.

Some agitation can be reduced by following some tips:

- Have patience—try not to rush. He may not understand what is happening and could become agitated. Be mindful that body language often speaks louder than words and that he will likely respond to your body language.
- Call ahead. When you are going to a new place with your client for the first time, try to call ahead and find out which entrance to use. This way you can avoid getting in and out of the car multiple times.

- Be prepared with activities. Encourage reminiscence. Recognize that repetition can suggest important feelings about certain topics and ask about the feelings behind the memories. Sharing memories can be a rewarding experience for both you and your client. Be prepared with relaxing music, sunglasses, photos or food in case they are needed during the ride.
- Avoid arguing with your client whenever possible. It is often less frustrating to try to go along with what he believes than trying to convince him of what is really happening.
- Stay calm
- Suggest that your client use the bathroom before each trip. Having to use the bathroom during transport can cause agitation—especially if your client cannot express this verbally.
- Give clear step-by-step directions
- The environment of the vehicle can be a cause of agitation, especially if the person whom you are transporting cannot communicate discomfort. Assess the temperature, keep the vehicle clutter-free and try to reduce glare on bright days.
- One cause of increased agitation is referred to as Sundowner’s Syndrome. Sundowner’s may cause a person with dementia to become more anxious or agitated in the evening, as the environment that your client was in during the day may be confusing to him when it becomes dark. Therefore, scheduling trips during the day is one way to avoid some agitation.

## **DEALING WITH AGITATION**

Sometimes agitation cannot be avoided. However, there are ways to handle it if you are prepared.

Agitation or the attempt to leave the vehicle may be the result of a desire to meet former obligations that no longer exist, lack of awareness of current surroundings while desiring to perform another task, or an inability to communicate basic needs. If your client becomes agitated, resistive or argumentative because of a belief that he should be going somewhere other than your destination, it is often helpful to agree and act as if you are going along with his plan – even use it as a discussion topic – while you actually are proceeding with your original plan and destination. This approach, as opposed to arguing, disagreeing or re-orienting, is called “Validation.” In other words, you are validating your client’s beliefs, leading to more cooperation. For example, ask your client why he does not want to get in. If he can tell you what he believes is happening, “validate” his belief by going along with the story and incorporating the need for the car ride into the story. This is usually more effective than arguing with someone with dementia, as he may not have the ability to understand the reality of the situation even after many attempts on your part. If your client becomes agitated or resistive while attempting to enter the car or during the ride, try to determine the cause of agitation—especially if it might stem from a situation that happened prior to getting in the vehicle.

Next time, you could try going for a brief walk together before entering the car, allowing time for him to calm down. Sometimes agitation can stem from forgetting how to enter the car. Patience and simple directions may be enough to diffuse the situation. Seat your client in the rear passenger-side seat so that the steering wheel is out of reach and

he is not directly behind you. This way you can avoid being startled from behind when you are driving. If your car has child safety locks, it's always a good idea to have them on – allowing the rear door to be opened only from the outside. This will ensure that the door cannot be opened by your client while the car is moving. There are also seat belt buckle guards (Child Resistant Seat Belt Buckle Guard –reduces the chance of unbuckling seat belt while vehicle is moving. child resistant seat buckle guard. )

## **PROVIDING PHYSICAL ASSISTANCE**

*Show Easter Seals video here: “Transportation Solutions for Caregivers: A Starting Point” (TRT 13:34). To obtain video- see order form included*

*\*\*Video can replace discussion in training session to drivers–the information below is to take with them for self-review.*

Whether helping your client into the car, transferring from a wheelchair to the car, or handling a wheelchair (or other device such as a walker), it is important to use proper body mechanics. Most muscle strain injuries are preventable.

### Body Mechanics:

- Plan the lift – check the area for slippery spots or possible tripping hazards. Wearing appropriate non-skid footwear will be safer for both you and for the person whom you are assisting.
- Use proper stance – spread your feet to shoulder’s width apart.
- Keep your head and upper body as upright as possible.
- Lower your hips to the height of the object you intend to lift by bending your knees and hips rather than your back.
- Lift with your legs.
- Do not attempt to lift with your back alone.
- When lifting, do not rotate your spine; shift the position of your feet to turn (pivot).
- Know your limits.
- Push or pull an object instead of lifting whenever you can.
- Carry weight as close to your center of gravity as possible.
- Bear weight on your forearms rather than your hands.

### Wheelchair Transfers:

When transferring and positioning from a wheelchair to a car:

- Depending on your program, you may wish to consider having the person you are helping wear a gait belt, if one is available (Gait/Transfer Belt: Assists in safe transfer and ambulation while helping reduce caregiver back injuries. Gait / Transfer Belt
- Try to remember: the slower you go, the faster things get done. Give both yourself and the passenger enough time.
- Open the car door.
- Stand with your back to the inside of the car door and pull the wheelchair toward you – between the car door and seat.

- Talk your client through the transfer process step by step so that he can assist if possible.
- Hold on to the gait belt and help him to a standing position – using your legs to pull up for strength.
- Have your client lean weight forward toward you and put his arms around your shoulders (not your neck), if possible.
- Carefully pivot yourself and your client so that his backside is toward the inside of the car.
- Help him sit on the seat with his legs still out of the car – be careful that his head clears the door frame while he is sitting down.
- Once sitting and given a moment to gain balance, help move his legs into the car
- Assist with the seat belt and close the door before going to the drivers seat.

### Positioning:

If your client has had a stroke and has right-sided or left-sided paralysis, weakness or neglect, seat his affected side nearest the door (i.e., if left-sided weakness, seat on driverside of back seat). This can aid with balance and allows you to position the weak side into the car and also encourages your client to assist. The seat belt with shoulder strap can be of great help with balance in the back seat. It may also be beneficial to keep a pillow in the car for positioning. It can be difficult to assist someone who has had a stroke or has limited movement or understanding to get positioned comfortably in the car, especially if he cannot assist. A few helpful ideas:

- Have your client wear a gait belt for a secure place for you to hold while assisting.
- To make it easier to swing his legs in while in a sitting position on the car seat: Place a towel on a plastic bag on your cloth seat or directly on your leather seat. Then, help your client sit on the towel covered seat. Next, go to the other side of the car and pull the towel toward you to slide him further into the car. (Or you can purchase a Swivel Seat Cushion that works like a Lazy Susan @ swivel seat cushion)
- Finally, pivot his legs into the footwell of the car.

## **Safety Considerations For Volunteer Drivers**

It is of paramount importance that volunteers value safety and employ safe driving techniques. SAFETY FIRST...

1. Allow time to drive and arrive safely.
2. Your vehicle should not be driven if any unsafe conditions are apparent.
3. It is required that all passengers wear seat belts during the operation of the vehicle. If your passenger refuses to wear a seat belt, do not transport that person unless they show a signed statement from their doctor as to a medical reason not to wear. The driver is responsible for the occupants of his/her car!
4. If you are transporting a child it is recommended that children under 13 years of age be placed in the rear seat; child restraints (seats, chairs) are recommended for all children under 80 pounds. At minimum by Minnesota State Law (MN child passenger restraint statute 169.685), you are required for a child under the age of 4 must be secured in a safety approved child restraint seat, and anyone under 20 pounds & less than 1 year old must be in the back seat and rear facing. The

rider should provide the restraint seat. (MN Legislature Revisor Statutes: 651-296-2868; MN Attorney General's Citizen Assistance: 651-296-3353.

5. NEVER drive when tired or taking medication that causes drowsiness.

Report program problems as accurately and descriptively as possible. Constructive comments or suggestions are always welcome.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

It is wise to be prepared for the unexpected! Emergencies may arise and will require good judgment on your part. The following guidelines are intended to help you in the event of an emergency.

### **A. Accidents**

- Volunteer drivers must never leave the scene of an accident
- Always report every minor or major situations (even fender benders) to the Transportation Coordinator, even if there is no apparent damage. Calling for a police report would be recommended. Remain calm. Document so no details are forgotten (see "Incident Report").
- Do not make statements about who is at fault to anyone except police.
- In the event of a serious accident, call 911 and wait for an ambulance to arrive. Do not attempt to move the victims/passengers. Administer first aid if the situation is life threatening to your passengers and you are trained.

### **B. Bad Weather**

- Volunteers should never feel obligated to drive if roads are hazardous or foul weather threatens driver or passenger safety.
- If weather conditions require you to seek safety, do so immediately. Passengers may not like having to wait out a storm; but you, the driver, must consider safety first. If possible, call the (Sponsoring Organization) or the Transportation Coordinator to notify of your situation and whereabouts.
- If assistance is needed, call a local police department.
- We recommend that volunteer drivers always carry a first aid and/or safety survival or winter survival kit.

### **C. Ill Passengers**

- The Transportation Coordinator will always try to inform you of passengers that have special problems and what to expect. Nevertheless, emergencies may arise, so be prepared. Always report situations to the Transportation Coordinator—both minor and major concerns so that possible future needs can be anticipated.
- If a passenger becomes ill, stay calm and call 911 for emergency medical services if life threatening symptoms.
- Passengers who communicate distress should not be ignored
- Knowing symptoms and basic 1st aid steps will help you to stay calm.

### **D. Controlling Exposure to Body Fluids (Blood Borne Pathogens):**

- Volunteer Driver will wash hands well before picking up rider
- Volunteer Driver will wash hands well after dropping off rider

- Volunteer Driver will wash hands well as soon as possible after giving assistance to rider.
- Volunteer Driver will wash hands well after exposure to any body fluids.

Note to Facilitator: Show proper glove removal so as not to contaminate self when removing soiled gloves. Could hand volunteers first aid kit here:

Could be put in a zip lock bag

- a. Half dozen gloves
- b. Dozen bandaids
- c. Small bottle of hand sanitizer, ie. Purell or hand wipe towelettes

## Conclusion

Based on all we have covered in this session, would you feel good having your loved one transported by this program? That is the reason for all of the specifics we covered. Not to frighten anyone, but instead to set our expectations to help reduce every one's liability risks.

Volunteers want to know what is expected of them. Volunteers want to know how to handle certain situations.

Your congregation will want to be committed to providing a safe, quality service for their passengers and the volunteers that make this program possible! With your assistance we can provide a really valuable service.

Were there any questions that you noted during the presentation? Let's take them now.

What experiences do you have with volunteer transporting that you would like to share?

We thank you for your support and welcome your input.

If you would please sign your Code of Conduct

Then please fill out your evaluations.

Give both to your trainer

If you have any further comments or suggestions call (name of contact).

Disclaimer:

Although the information and recommendations contained/ presented have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable (Sponsoring Organization) makes no guarantee as to, and assumes not responsibility for, the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of such information or recommendations. Other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.

We would like to thank Easter Seals for allowing full use of their program: "A SOLUTIONS PACKAGE for Volunteer Transportation Programs" funded by the Administration on Aging National Family Caregiver Support Program. 800.221.6827 . We have modified their information to fit our volunteer program.