



IDEA 5: GETTING AROUND: TRANSPORTATION IDEAS AND OPTIONS



IN A NUTSHELL:

To become a contributing member of a community, a person must first be able to get around *in* her community. We all know that finding reliable, affordable, flexible and *accessible* transportation remains a large challenge for many New Mexicans both with and *without* disabilities.

We hope this paper will serve as a starting point for thinking in potentially new ways about supporting people with disabilities to get around in their communities.

LIVING IT: A SUCCESS STORY Using Public Transit

When an organization in rural New Mexico decided to close its day centers, the staff looked to community resources to help solve the organization's transportation problem. While the local public transit in the area was limited, staff and the people they support are now using it to make some specific, pre-scheduled trips.

Using public transit increases people's comfort level and presence in the community, reduces people's dependence on the organization and provides additional flexibility as people pursue activities that are meaningful to them.

Ellen was one of the first people in the organization to use the public transit during the day. Ellen has severe cognitive disabilities and is often uncomfortable with transitions and trying new things. However, with staff support and preparation, Ellen comfortably took a bus to the local bookstore that she visits weekly!

BRINGING IT TO LIFE: **THOUGHTS AND IDEAS**

Using and Expanding Your Community's Transportation Resources

As we well know, reliable transportation is often a challenge for people with and *without* disabilities. By working with other community entities to improve transportation, people and organizations get access to more ideas, solutions and funding sources.

- **Consider carpooling.**
Did you know that there are organized carpooling and rideshare programs in most bigger New Mexican cities? For more information go to the New Mexico Department of Transportation's Transit and Rail Bureau website for car and vanpooling opportunities: <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11201>
- **Consider carsharing.**
In many cities, a person can use a car for a few hours without owning it, by becoming part of a "carsharing" network. Consider working with other organizations in the

area to start a "carshare" system in your community. For more information about *carsharing*, see the link in *Check it Out*.

- **Consider taking the bus.** Do you know about the public transit options in your community? For a link to public transit options in your area, go to the American Public Transit Association's New Mexico page at: http://www.apta.com/links/state_local/nm.cfm#A6
- **Get to know your local government.** Do you have a working relationship with your local government? Can you work to improve the transportation options for people with disabilities in the area? For contact information on your area's city council, check out: the State of New Mexico's city and county directory at: <http://www.newmexico.gov/government.php#city>

Individualized Access Selection, Idea 5, Page 2

Look into FTA § 5310 Grants for Purchasing Vehicles

Did you know the New Mexico Department of Transportation will help buy vehicles to assist people with disabilities to get around in their communities? For additional information, contact the Transit and Rail Bureau in the New Mexico Department of Transportation at 505-827-1585 and check out organizations that provide these services in your area at <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11218>

Developing Individualized, Person-Centered Transportation Solutions

- **Invite the person's family and friends to help with transportation.**
Are we using the person's own networks to figure out transportation? For example, if Natalie goes to church every Sunday, have we asked her church if there is a way another member of the church could pick up Natalie (and her direct support staff) before the service?

- **Start small.** Sometimes tackling transportation issues for a large group can be overwhelming. Can you look to address the challenge one person at a time? For person-specific brainstorming, consider contacting the DDS regional coordinator in your area. The coordinator's role is to facilitate quality outcomes in people's lives by providing technical support to organizations. For a list of the DDS regions, see *And Yet More*.

Designing Transportation Options within an Organization

- **Establish a clear organizational purpose about transportation.**
Sometimes conflicts result when people have differing expectations around transportation. Decide as an organization if your role is to support people to build their own capacity to use the community's transportation resources or to provide transportation to them. Make this position clear to people, families

Individualized Access Selection, Idea 5, Page 3

and others on a person's team before services begin.

- **Have a central location.**
If your organization has a drop off site or facility, is it centrally located in the town? Can people walk to at least some activities?

Some Thoughts about Staff Using their Own Cars

- **Do provider agency staff know how to use any of the public transportation options?**
Sometimes staff are uncomfortable using public transportation. See *Check it Out* for a curriculum to train staff about using public transportation options.
- **Give staff the option.**
Oftentimes, we assume staff don't want to use their own cars. However, a staff person may prefer to use her own car when supporting a person.
- **Worried about the quality of staff cars?**
Consider partnering with a local mechanic or auto repair shop to conduct regular spot checks on

staff's vehicles. If your organization is a not-for-profit, the mechanic may donate the service.

- **Increase mileage reimbursement.** Consider increasing your mileage reimbursement in exchange for the expectation of staff assuming appropriate insurance coverage.
- **Consider a mileage cap.** If you don't already, consider putting a mileage cap on staff mileage reimbursement. This will better ensure budget predictability and help prevent "van therapy."
- **Be quick with reimbursements.** Ensure your organization's mileage reimbursement is timely. Sluggish turnaround times often make staff distrustful of the organization and more reluctant to use their own vehicles.

✓ **CHECK IT OUT:** **GOOD RESOURCES**

- New Mexico Department of Transportation, Transit and Rail Bureau
<http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11201>
- For information about *carsharing*, check out <http://www.carsharing.net/>
- "Curriculum to Introduce Travel Training to Staff Who Work with People with Disabilities" available at: <http://www.arcofkingcounty.org/guide/downloads/traveltrain.doc>
- For your local regional coordinator's contact information, see the *And Yet More* part of the *Idea Book*.

TRY IT OUT: ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND COMPELLING QUESTIONS

- If a person works, goes to church, plays on a softball team or participates in another organized activity on a regular basis, talk to the leader of the group

(the boss, the minister, the coach) about figuring out how someone in the group could assist the person in getting to and from the activity.

- If you work for an organization, consider setting up a training session for direct support staff on using the local public transit options. Make sure this training provides a staff person "hands on experience" in finding a route, identifying schedules and pick up locations, and learning how to get to a specific site (like a person's workplace) related to the person she serves.

Individualized Access Selection, Idea 5, Page 5