

TRANSPORTATION

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Transportation is one of the most difficult issues facing those who care for the elderly, ill, or disabled. After all, if you work—and other family members or friends are unavailable—how will your loved one get to a doctor's appointment?

Because transportation is such a localized issue, every community handles the problem differently. There are, however, some general action steps you can take to find the best available transportation resources.

- 1) Assess transportation needs.

Then consider the following options to find the combination of services that best fits your loved one's situation:

- 2) Types of available transportation.
- 3) Community-based resources.
- 4) Private and non-profit organizations.

1) Assess transportation needs.

Before exploring your options, you need to completely understand your loved one's situation.

- l Driving skills tend to diminish with age or infirmity. If you're uncertain whether your care recipient belongs behind the wheel, use the **Driver Safety Checklist** at the end of this section.
- l How often will your loved one require transportation? Once a month? On a daily or weekly basis? Some services—like taxi cabs—can be prohibitively expensive, especially if used frequently.
- l Where does your loved one need to go? Many urban areas have public transportation, but mass transit is generally designed to get people to and from work—not to and from doctors' offices or grocery stores.

Determining transportation needs is even more difficult if your loved one has personal mobility problems. If this is the case, consider the following:

- l Make allowances for the extra time it may take to complete certain activities. This is especially important when using services like city buses.
- l Make safety a primary concern. Find out if free or low-cost community escort services are available. Contact the local Area Agency on Aging for more information.
- l Make sure that potential transportation services can accommodate people with mobility problems. Does your loved one need assistance getting from a wheelchair into a car? If so, does the driver know how to help?

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TRANSPORTATION

- 1 Make advance arrangements whenever possible. This might include asking an airline for a seat near the front of the plane, arranging for baggage assistance, requesting an aisle chair, and checking with restaurants to make sure they can accommodate your loved one's needs.

In addition, you might want to consider hiring a Private Care Manager or Geriatric Case Manager. These trained professionals can perform a complete assessment of your loved one's needs and work to engage the appropriate services.

2) Types of available transportation

Reservations may be required, and a small fee or donation may be involved, so it's best to thoroughly research the services available in your loved one's area before making a final decision. Services generally fall into three categories:

- 1 **Door-to-Door** (also known as "Demand Response" or "Dial-a-Ride"), refers to a system requiring advance reservations and offering point-to-point or door-to-door transportation from one specific location to another. These services provide flexibility, comfort, and potential for adapting to the needs of each rider. Demand response systems usually provide transportation on an advance reservation basis, often requiring payment of fare or donations on a per ride basis.
- 1 **Fixed Route** and scheduled services transport riders along an established route. Reservations are not required because the vehicles stop at predetermined times and locations. Fixed route services usually require payment of a fare on a per ride basis. Many communities offer discounts to senior citizens.
- 1 **Ridesharing** programs coordinate people who need rides with volunteer drivers. Typically, this service is scheduled transportation with a specific destination. The destination points can include places of employment, nutrition sites, senior centers, and medical facilities.

3) Community-based resources

Community-based programs generally provide transportation to and from doctor's appointments, adult day care facilities, meal centers, and other sites.

- 1 Contact the local Area Agency on Aging.
- 1 The Title VI program of the Older Americans Act promotes nutrition and supportive services, including transportation, to American Indian, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians. To contact your Title VI Program, refer to the government listings in your telephone directory.
- 1 Check the Yellow Pages. Many telephone books have a special section that features the names and addresses of various service organizations. Look under "Transportation" or "Community Services" for agencies that provide transportation for special needs.
- 1 The National Transit Hotline can provide the names of local organizations that provide

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TRANSPORTATION

transportation to the elderly and people with disabilities.

- | The State Unit on Aging is responsible for planning, coordination, funding and evaluating programs for older persons authorized by both state and federal government. Refer to your state government listings for your state's office on aging or department of human resources.
- | Review Medicaid-related transportation alternatives. Medicaid regulations require each state to ensure that Medicaid recipients have access to appropriate transportation to Medicaid-covered services (i.e. doctor's appointments and other medical treatments). To learn more, contact the local Area Agency on Aging.

4) Private and non-profit organizations

In addition to community and government resources, check into private organizations that may offer transportation solutions.

- | Many hospitals, senior centers, retirement communities, and adult day care facilities provide transportation to those who use their services.
- | Some taxicab companies offer discounted rates to senior citizens or disabled persons. Additionally, many are equipped to transport those with mobility or accessibility problems, offering accessible vans and trained drivers. Some communities offer discounted taxi vouchers to the elderly.
- | The American Red Cross, the United Way, the American Cancer Society, and other non-profit organizations may provide transportation services to those who need them.
- | Churches or other community services may provide shuttles.
- | Volunteer fire departments or rescue squads may be willing to meet special transfer needs on a limited basis.

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DRIVER SAFETY CHECKLIST

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The following list can help you evaluate your loved one's ability to drive. Checking multiple items suggests that you should talk with your loved one about his or her driving and look into alternative transportation options.

Check "Yes" or "No"	YES	NO
1) A police officer has given your loved one a warning because of poor driving behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) Your loved one's record shows a pattern of close calls, violations, and/or minor collisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) Driving makes your loved one nervous and anxious.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) It is difficult for your loved one to look over his or her shoulder or to turn his or her head to the side to look before changing lanes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) Driving makes your loved one tired very quickly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) Your loved one has trouble climbing stairs or walking more than one block in a day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) Your loved one often becomes disoriented about where he or she is in relation to home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8) Making good decisions quickly is difficult for your loved one when he or she is driving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9) Your loved one has difficulty with the glare of oncoming headlights, streetlights, or other shiny objects while driving during the day or at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10) Your loved one has a difficult time seeing people, traffic signs, lane lines, or other objects around or on the road.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11) Your loved one often "misses" red lights or stop signs and as a consequence goes through them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	YES	NO
12) Your loved backs into and over things such as curbs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13) Passing cars frighten your loved one due to their noise or speed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14) Other drivers tailgate or pass your loved one most of the time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) Your loved one has a difficult time with hand/foot coordination.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16) Your loved one has mistaken the gas for the brake.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17) Your loved one had a stroke, or has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), dementia, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, seizure or sleep disorders, or uncontrolled diabetes that could affect his or her driving ability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18) Your loved one takes medication for a prior stroke, or for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), dementia, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, seizure or sleep disorders, or uncontrolled diabetes that could affect his or her driving ability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19) Your loved one's driver's license was not checked when he or she turned age 70.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20) Your loved one's driver's license has not been checked every three years since he or she turned 70 (e.g., 73, 76, 79) or annually since he or she turned 80.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>