

Transportation Ministries for Seniors and Vulnerable Adults



Transporting vulnerable adults can be a complicated process for any driver to undertake. It is critical for ministries to consider varying levels of ability and needs of the passengers to ensure the safety of all. Some vulnerable adults may have issues with mobility, cognitive or reasoning skills, socio-emotional challenges, or difficulty with communication. Transporting seniors and vulnerable adults goes beyond just driving; churches that have an outreach ministry offering transportation to seniors and/or vulnerable adults should require volunteers and staff to have appropriate training before they get behind the wheel. **Considerations for Your Ministry**

There are many considerations to assure your ministry can meet the specific needs of the seniors and vulnerable adults to offer a transportation outreach ministry. Please review the following:

- Only qualified drivers should be behind the wheel. Special training and experience are required to operate 15-passenger vans and require that your drivers have both.
- Drivers should be physically able to assist the passengers in and out of vehicles (including any packages and/or mobility devices).
- Insurance Board recommends adopting a “rule of three” (always having two adult volunteers and/or staff present when transporting seniors and vulnerable adults). This helps ensure the protection of seniors and vulnerable adults as well as the drivers and congregation.
- Vehicles with a higher compartment level may not be accessible to everyone if a lift is not present. Make sure to have a full understanding of the ability and needs of the passenger to ensure the passenger can access the vehicle.
- Specific equipment (such as steps) may be installed on a vehicle to improve accessibility (steps should be permanent equipment and meet all U.S. Department of Transportation/National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and manufacturer specifications).
- A transportation plan should be communicated with the passenger, as well as all coordinators at the pick-up/drop-off location.
- Drivers and their vehicles are the biggest component of this service. Drivers must not only be screened for their driving and background but also skilled in working with elderly and vulnerable adults to provide caring assistance with physical and mental needs.
- Vehicles should be maintained regularly and carry proper/sufficient insurance for this type of transportation. The drivers should be familiar with the vehicle they are operating.
- Due to the nature of full transportation service (such as assisting passengers while walking), commercial general liability insurance should be in place for the church and homeowner’s insurance for the driver.
- Program instructions should be provided to drivers in the form of a manual that addresses issues such as the scope of vehicle permissive use, cell phone use, alcohol policy, seat belts, and driver qualification or record checks and driver training. There should be a set of rules that make up a written driver agreement including accident reporting, vehicle inspections, and maintenance.

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Considerations for Drivers

- Ensure that wheelchairs or equipment are secured or fastened to the vehicle/floor with wheelchair brakes locked and passengers secured into their chairs or seats.
- Check equipment for defects or other maintenance concerns. This includes the vehicle and any wheelchair lift or equipment. These checks should be performed before and after a trip.
- When passengers are entering or exiting, always choose a flat path, clear of debris and easily accessible. Ensure that the vehicle is on flat ground to help prevent wheelchairs from tipping or people from falling.
- If using a lift to accommodate loading wheelchairs and passengers, make sure brakes are locked and any gate is secure.
- Ensure that an appropriate number of staff are available to assist before, during, and after transport.
- A cell phone or other means of communication should be in the vehicle in case of an emergency but should ONLY be used when the vehicle is safely parked or used by the other volunteer/staff member that is not driving.
- Check the tire pressure at least once a week. This is extremely important because proper tire pressure lessens the chance of a rollover accident—especially for 15-passenger vans.
- Always require all passengers to wear seat belts.
- If using a 15-passenger van, ensure that passengers as well as cargo, are forward of the rear axle to help reduce the chance of a rollover accident.
- Keep speeds under 50 miles per hour while always observing posted speed limits. Be mindful of road conditions and reduce vehicle speed during bad weather or when traveling on roads that are unfamiliar or hard to navigate.

Please consult a driving or transportation professional for specific advice regarding your transportation services.

Please note the below links as additional resources for your transportation program:

- [IB's webcast for churches and drivers entitled "Best Practices in Transportation for Your Ministry"](#)
- [Transportation component of IB's LC manual](#)
- [Link to the IB webpage containing other transportation resources for participants](#)

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