

Let's help persons with disabilities during the current pandemic: Suggestions for advocates and for transport personnel

Each country, city, and town has its own specific situation and needs. Vehicle fleets vary from large buses to smaller buses, taxis, and "three wheelers" such as auto-rickshaws. Your area may have transportation shut down or greatly reduced and there may be a lack of supplies such as face masks, disposable gloves, hand sanitizers, and vehicle sanitation materials. You must deal with many issues. This sheet focuses on a single important issue which is easily forgotten: Transport for at-risk persons with disabilities in the midst of the current pandemic. We urge everyone to follow the directives of their national and local governments and health agencies.

To provide transportation for persons with disabilities

- **Friends, family, and NGOs supporting persons with disabilities who are at risk need to advocate for transport.** Contact health and transport agencies. Persons with disabilities should make themselves known to local governments, stating their needs clearly, including exact information on where they need to go, where they live, and other needed data.

- **Transportation personnel and advocates need to plan how to serve persons with disabilities:**

1. Contact government and medical agencies (hospitals, clinics) to establish criteria for essential medical trips. Medical agencies need to make a contact list of those of their clients with disabilities for whom transport to a medical facility is required, for example for kidney dialysis, blood transfusions, chemotherapy, or treatment for symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) **or** for whom deliveries of equipment are needed to where they live, for example to replace oxygen tanks. Also include input by advocates for essential trips not yet on the lists of health agencies .

2. Learn from medical staff about their hours of service and the best time for transportation to arrive.

3. Contact transport providers such as bus, jitney, taxi, and door-to-door services, including any volunteers who own a vehicle and are willing to help, as well as local NGOs with vehicles. Sometimes communities of faith (churches, temples, mosques) may provide volunteers. Prepare a plan that meets the needs of (1) the health agencies, (2) transport service providers and volunteers, and (3) the persons with disabilities who need the transportation.

4. Paratransit operators should arrange a return trip for persons with disabilities to assure that they are able to return after a visit to a medical facility. This may require adjusting drop-off and pickup times. For self-protection from the virus, drivers should avoid entering medical facilities when possible.

For basic essential information on coronavirus and public transportation, go to these websites to learn about ways to protect drivers and passengers from the virus.

1. Corona Transport Knowledge Platform at <https://www.transformative-mobility.org> for the latest information on public transportation issues and coronavirus, with examples from many countries

2. World Health Organization at www.who.int for the latest information on COVID-19 including personal protection measures

3. Hesperian Foundation at www.hesperian.org for clear general advice about COVID-19 for persons in lower-income countries

Compiled by Access Exchange International (AEI), San Francisco, USA. Visit AEI's website at www.globalride-sf.org for contact information. We welcome your comments or suggestions.