

Models and Methods

Communities throughout the country organize volunteer driver programs to provide transportation to older adults for many reasons.

WHY THEY ARE NEEDED AND HOW THEY DO WHAT THEY DO

According to clinical studies, next to losing their loved one, and for some even above losing their loved one, losing their ability to drive is the most traumatic event in life. Unfortunately, the same conditions that make it difficult or impossible to drive often make it difficult or impossible for nondrivers to access traditional transportation services. The resulting isolation can be associated with depression, anxiety, and a lesser view of self. However, volunteer transportation options quite often meet the needs of many older adults and have a positive impact on health, socialization, and quite often the ability to age in place.

The story of the impact of volunteer driver programs is told in many communities. Although there is limited data that paint a national picture, information gleaned from the STAR Awards program, funded by Toyota, paints a picture of the experience and value of almost 150 volunteer driver programs in 37 states. Few of them operated on annual budgets of more than a million dollars, and almost 70% had budgets of less than \$100,000. More than 50% reported grants as their primary funding source. The vast majority did not charge for rides and provided services in addition to transportation. They exhibited low program expenses and passenger costs because most did not pay drivers or have vehicles owned by the organization. These programs involve volunteer drivers who used their personal vehicles to provide rides.

The data, which reflect a self-selected number of volunteer driver programs, show us that many volunteer driver programs have been in operation for a considerable period, are quite small, do not charge passengers for rides and look to government grants for funding. The majority of their passengers are unable to drive and a large number are older adults. Their primary destinations are medical-related appointments, which in addition to doctors' offices also include physical non-emergency health-related services, therapy services, and dialysis centers. Although the majority operated in urban areas, a large number also took passengers to rural destinations. Not only did the programs mobilize volunteers to drive passengers, but programs also mobilize the vehicles of their volunteer drivers. In addition to providing volunteer transportation, the majority also provided services in addition to transportation.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAMS

As a method of transportation service delivery volunteer driver programs: 1) provide low-cost service; 2) supplement existing services; 3) offer transportation assistance; 4) deliver services in urban, rural, and suburban communities; and 5) engage members of the community in a unique type of volunteerism. In addition to great variation in size, they also show great variation with respect to their ridership, sponsorship, method of organization, community relationships, and driver/passenger responsibilities.

Just as there are many methods of service delivery, there also are many models for providing those services. This information sheet presents several models and illustrates how they organize service delivery activities for their volunteer driver program. The program profiles describe models and methods of some of the best-known and most successful volunteer driver programs in the U.S.

EXAMPLES

SHEPHERD'S CENTER OF AMERICA VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

The Shepherd's Center of Kernersville – Kernersville, North Carolina. This Shepherd's Center identified the need for transportation in Kernersville, Walkertown, and the surrounding service area. A team of volunteer drivers provides transportation for older adults and adult persons with disabilities to medical appointments, the grocery store, post office, banks, and other destinations necessary for daily living. While services are provided door-to-door, when requested the volunteer will assist the rider into the destination location. The drivers use their vehicles and are provided orientation and training. Rider registration is entered into the Shepherd's Center's database and transportation guidelines are provided. The program is funded through donations, grants, and other sources. Social media, the Shepherd's Center's website, public relations campaigns, and collateral material are marketing resources utilized to engage riders, volunteers, and stakeholders. <https://shepctrkville.com>

BROKERAGE VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

Ride Connection - Portland, Oregon. Ride Connection was founded in 1986 under the auspices of the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (Tri-Met) of Portland. Prior to its initiation, various social service and community agencies provided transportation to their clients. Its mission is to coordinate organizations in the region with the priority of ensuring access to reliable and accessible transportation. In fulfilling its mission, Ride Connection coordinates a network of community partners in three counties. Its partners provide and coordinate transportation options primarily for anyone who is 60 and older (and anyone who has a temporary or permanent disability) in need of reliable and accessible door-to-door transportation.

Some of Ride Connection's partners also transport young people and others who lack transportation. In addition to coordinating transportation activities, Ride Connection offers a variety of other services: "Ride Wise" for public transit training; "Ride About" shuttle service to grocery stores and neighborhood centers services; "Work Link" and

Job Access for getting people to work; and “Ride Together” for empowering passengers to recruit their volunteer drivers. Ride Connection’s partners pay drivers and own their vehicles as well as involve volunteer drivers and their personal vehicles. Ride Connection receives funding from Tri-Met, from private foundations, and from both corporate and individual donations. <https://rideconnection.org>

MULTI-COUNTY RURAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

Prairie Hills Transit - Spearfish, South Dakota. Prairie Hills Transit began as an affordable transportation service for older adult passengers in 1989, and since that time has evolved into a community transportation service for the general public. It provides transportation services (including some volunteer transportation services) to 15 communities in the Black Hills of South Dakota. All communities in its service area of 12,000 miles, except two of the smallest, offer transportation Monday through Friday, and the two larger communities offer transportation service seven days a week.

The needs of its older adult passengers are met with accessible vehicles, same-day service for unexpected medical appointments, and special group shopping trips. Riders from different communities share trips to Rapid City where most specialized medical services are available. By being integrated in communities as a regional transit provider, Prairie Hills Transit keeps older adults’ costs low by sharing resources. According to its director, without its transportation services, many older adult passengers would lose access to health care in local communities and in the larger cities, nutrition, and social outlets. Consequently, many would lose their independence. <https://prairiehillstransit.com>

MULTI-COMMUNITY PROGRAM COOPERATION

Faith in Action Caregivers - Austin, Texas. This program was started in 1985 with funding from The Robert Wood Johnson’s Faith in Action Program. The initiative addressed the need for older adult mobility by supporting eight Faith in Action Programs. The Faith in Action Caregivers was later initiated to serve the Austin metropolitan area. The programs are in cities including Austin, Georgetown, Round Rock, Pflugerville, Cedar Park, and Leander.

The volunteer-based services of the members provide a variety of support services but emphasize transportation. The group provides rides to older adult passengers with volunteer drivers providing rides using their own vehicles. The collaboration among members includes development of brochures, a newsletter, public relations campaigns, and fundraising. Although individual members of the group continue to provide rides, the members no longer operate as a group of eight members. **(The program has evolved over time and is now initiated by individual volunteer driver programs in the Austin area).**

AAA SPONSORSHIP OF VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

The Area Agency on Aging - Fortuna, California. This AAA identified the need for transportation in Fortuna and in the rural areas of Humboldt County. The program operates solely to provide transportation to and from healthcare appointments in Humboldt County. It is entirely funded by donations and grants. Older adults (age 50 and

over) who live independently and have limited resources are eligible for transportation. Potential passengers are screened and must agree to the program guidelines before rides can be scheduled. Screening may be done by phone or with a signed rider guideline form that may be mailed or faxed. The Fortuna County program enables volunteer drivers to self-direct their schedules by encouraging contacts. The program provides considerable information about volunteer driver program information via numerous videos. <https://a1aa.org>

SENIOR CENTER SPONSORSHIP OF VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

The Senior Service Center - Hyannis, Massachusetts. Senior Service Center offers Silver Express volunteer transportation to life-sustaining, life-maintaining, and life-enriching destinations. The program enables older adults to stay connected to their community, provides them with a sense of independence, reduces social isolation, and makes it possible for them to age-in-place in their homes.

Volunteer drivers are trained to understand the needs of older adults with dementia and mobility impairments, and to ensure that they reach their destinations safely. Utilizing volunteer drivers allows the program to significantly expand service delivery to clients. It would not be possible to operate this successful program without them; the program's ability to meet client demand and serve older adults living in remote and isolated areas of town would be severely hindered. <https://town.barnstable.ma.us/seniorservices/>

MEALS ON WHEELS VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

Westminster Cares, Inc. - Westminster, Vermont. Westminster Cares involves volunteer drivers to take meals to people in all parts of Westminster, Vermont once a month. This Meals on Wheels Program also involves volunteers as drivers for Westminster residents, 60 years of age or older and adults with disabilities. Volunteers take their passengers to doctor's appointments, shopping, hairdressers, or local programs. A 24-hour advance notice is required. There is no charge for transportation services, however, donations are accepted. <https://westminstercares.org>

RSVP SPONSORED VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

Central Iowa RSVP - Story City, Iowa. This RSVP supplements existing public transportation services by providing the recruitment and management of volunteers who give rides to county residents. The purpose of this program is to provide people needing rides with safe, reliable, and affordable transportation to and from essential services. RSVP manages and schedules a pool of trained volunteer drivers who provide rides to mostly elderly residents who need rides to in-county medical appointments. The objectives of the transportation program are to improve access to necessary services, to have a positive effect on the recipient's sense of well-being, and to provide a service needed to remain living independently. <https://vcstory.galaxydigital.com>

ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM INITIATIVE

Catholic Charities - Santa Clara, California. Catholic Charities Day Break program has served vulnerable older adults for over 40 years. Its services include multi-service senior centers, ombudsman, and programs including older adult nutrition, mental health, substance abuse, adult day care, and transportation. While the program occasionally drives older adults to adult day care centers, volunteers primarily drive and escort them to their medical appointments and grocery shopping. The volunteers remain with the passengers—from the moment that they pick them up at the door to when they return home to make sure that passengers are safely reunited with their families or friends. In training the drivers, Day Break staff say they closely follow the Beverly Foundation’s “5 A’s of Dementia Friendly Services.”

Availability: the volunteers provide an escorted transportation service along with much-needed socialization for older adults, providing any assistance as needed.

Accessibility: the volunteers are educated about dementia and understand the unique needs of the older adults that they are driving.

Acceptability: volunteers are trained to be sensitive to the challenges of people with dementia and to communicate with them as effectively as possible.

Adaptability: volunteers are trained to accommodate the challenging behaviors that often arise in older adults with dementia.

Affordability: while there is a suggested donation of \$10 per round trip, no one is ever turned away due to inability to pay.

Day Break works hard to maximize its resources to provide escorted transportation service to the most vulnerable older adult residents to enable them to maintain optimal self-sufficiency and healthy functioning. <https://CatholicCharitiesSCC.org>

UNIVERSITY BASED NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Med-Rides – San Marcos, Texas. Med-Rides began at Texas State in 2016. It is the first non-emergency medical transportation program based at an institution of higher education. It is an expansion of an intergenerational service-learning program established in 1998, Mutual Adoption Pact (MAP). Often referred to as MAP Med-Rides, it addresses the unmet healthcare need for transportation to and from medical appointments. Ninety percent or more of the volunteers are university students. Each academic year 40 or more volunteers are trained. Currently, services are available to approximately 2,500 people through a Memorandum of Understanding with healthcare and nonprofit community organizations.

Examples of community-campus partners include hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, older adult living facilities, and the housing authority. Services are for elders and those with disabilities. Volunteers are trained and are provided with supplemental insurance and payment for car expenses. The program is largely sustained through the university, but external grant funding has been received. Studies of volunteers, clients, and partnering organizations indicate high satisfaction. Volunteers become more committed to civic engagement and clients express improved quality of life. Renick@txstate.edu

SHOP AND ESCORT VOLUNTEERS PLUS CEMETERY VISITS

DOROT - New York, New York. DOROT (the Hebrew word for generations) was founded in 1976. Today, it includes seven centers and offers a variety of services for older adults. DOROT exemplifies: “volunteer escorts for providing mobility services for older adults.” The volunteers are the driving force behind its programs, which include friendly visiting, holiday package deliveries, emergency meals, homelessness prevention programs, wellness programs, shop and escort, hand-to-hand escort, and cemetery visits.

Its “Hand-in-Hand” program brings older adults and volunteer escorts together to appreciate and explore the arts from museum visits to onsite chamber music concerts. The volunteers also escort older adults with their transportation services. Its “Shop & Escort” program provides escorts who shop for older adults when frailty or adverse weather conditions make it difficult for clients to venture out, even if they are accompanied. Program elders participating in surveys state that the Shop & Escort program helps them age in place and remain more independent. Twice a summer, the “Cemetery Visits” program provides volunteer escorts and transportation (car service) to older adults so that they may visit the graves of loved ones. The compassionate volunteers who assist the older adults say they find the experience meaningful and that they gain insight into the lives of older adults as well as a deeper understanding of their spiritual traditions. <https://dorotusa.org>

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS RECRUITMENT BY PROGRAM PASSENGERS

TRIP - Riverside, California. The TRIP program was organized as a collaborative partnership between the sponsor of Transportation Reimbursement and Information Program, the local Area Agency on Aging, and the Riverside County Transportation Commission. It began providing transportation to older adults and people with disabilities in 1993. TRIP provides low-cost, rider-focused volunteer transportation services with a purpose of empowering older adults and other underserved population groups to be self-reliant. The Trip model exemplifies “friends helping older adult friends.” TRIP was planned to include the following five features: 1) riders recruit their own volunteer drivers from friends and neighbors they know and trust, 2) travel is arranged at the mutual convenience of the passenger and driver, 3) transportation is provided in the volunteer driver’s personal automobile, 4) rides are free to passengers and volunteer drivers receive mileage reimbursement payments that are given to the passenger and then to the driver, and 5) travel can be provided to cities other than Riverside and even outside the county if needed. The TRIP model has been adopted by several communities that have adapted it to their interests and culture. <https://www.ilpconnect.org/trip-riverside>

VILLAGE VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Village of Takoma Park, Maryland This Village exemplifies “neighbors helping neighbors.” It is a nonprofit, grassroots all-volunteer organization of neighbors helping neighbors. Its volunteer services include friendly visits, monthly information sessions, special support groups, the “Snow Angels” (a snow shoveling assistance program), and transportation. Some of its services are free to all residents in the area, and some require membership in the village. Its Village Rides program pairs volunteer drivers with neighbors who need help getting to destinations, such as medical appointments, grocery shopping, and social events. Volunteer drivers accept ride requests based on their

availability to drive. When they accept a ride request, the drivers call the passenger again before the assignment. The Village of Takoma Park is a member of the Village Network (VtVN) that has the mission of enabling communities to establish and effectively manage aging. According to the VtVN, transportation is the most frequently requested volunteer service. Many communities have initiated or are developing villages that include volunteer driver initiatives. <https://villageoftakomapark.com>

NORC VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

NORC Transportation Program - Atlanta, Georgia A NORC (a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) is located in a neighborhood that, over time, has evolved into a community with a significant portion of households headed by older adults, many of whom have lived in their homes for 20, 30, or 40 years. By focusing on a high-density community of older adults and striving to meet their common needs, a NORCs supportive service program provides a cost-effective way to meet their needs and develop new service delivery strategies.

The Georgia NORC initiative began in late 2003 under the leadership of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and a coalition of public and private agencies. Since its inception, three NORCs have been developed, each with a mobility manager, a coordinator, and program oversight by the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta. The NORCs of Atlanta transportation program provides vouchers to older adults and those with disabilities for unrestricted, discounted rides. They recruit, train, and undertake background checks on volunteer drivers who use their own cars to provide door-through-door rides. Other services available within the NORC include information and referral, health and wellness, nutrition education, group social outings, game days, book clubs, assistance with glasses, hearing aids, medical bills, and home repairs. This NORC program has been sustained through FTA (Federal Transit Administration) grants, foundation grants, donations, and gifts.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM OWNED VEHICLE FLEET

Foothills Caring Corps - Carefree, Arizona. Foothills Caring Corps, located on Easy Street, began operations in 1999. The Foothills Caring Corps service area is geographically large, rural, encompasses two small towns, and the very northern edge of two large municipalities. There is no public transportation in the area, and very few services are available for the older adult population. The program mobilizes hundreds of volunteers to serve their neighbors who are elderly, frail, and homebound.

The Foothills Caring Corps transportation program provides trips for medical appointments, grocery shopping, special appointments, social/recreational/fitness, and health outings. Its transportation service, like its other services (mobile meals, friendly visiting and phoning, respite care, pet visiting, business help, medical loan closet, phone alert, and handy person services) is provided by volunteers who both drive and provide a ride-along person to assist its passengers. Its passengers, all of whom are older adults with disabling conditions, are referred to as “neighbors.” In addition to volunteer vehicles (the vehicles of volunteer drivers), its volunteers also provide rides in a fleet of program-owned vans, some of which include lifts. Funding for its services is provided by generous

private donations, state and federal grants, private foundations, and many fundraising events. <https://foothillscaringcorps.com>

RURAL TRANSIT SERVICE WITH VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

The Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority – Dubuque, Iowa. This RTA was formed in 1978 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its purpose is to connect the elderly, individuals with disabilities, youth, and low-income citizens in Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties to critical services like healthcare, counseling, nutrition, childcare, education, employment, and social venues. It is open to the public.

The program transports a variety of passengers and offers special services to veterans, people who are Medicaid eligible, and older adults age 60+. It provides transportation to a variety of destinations and most routes are door-to-door unless specified. Reservations for service are required 24 hours in advance, and its dispatch hours are 5am-5pm. The RTA contracts with the Area Agency on Aging to provide low-cost services to older adults in its three-county service area, and its volunteer driver program serves all three counties. <https://www.rta8.org>

VETERAN TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Vets Go Volunteer Driver Program – Boulder, Colorado. Vets Go (formerly CareConnect) connects members of the community with older adult veterans age 60 and over (and the veterans' older adult family members) who experience challenges in obtaining reliable transportation to and from non-Medicaid appointments for medical services.

The program provides free round-trip rides to and from the older adult veteran passengers' homes to medical appointments in Boulder County, Broomfield County, and beyond. Volunteer drivers use their personal cars to pick up riders at homes and escort them to and from their homes for their medical appointments. The volunteer remains with the veteran during the appointment and then drives the participant home. The volunteer drivers also stop to pick up prescriptions. Vets Go is supported, in part, through funding from Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, Broomfield Community Foundation, the Broncos Community Foundation, E470 Transportation Safety Foundation, and the Next Fifty Initiative. <https://cultivate.ngo/programs/vetsgo>

MULTI-SERVICE AND MULTI-VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

Jewish Family Service Multi Transportation Service - San Diego, California. This JFS was founded in 1918 and includes: bereavement, friendly visitor, social programs for residents of naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), employment and career services, a food mobile, geriatric care management, a social and wellness center, services to Holocaust survivors, and transportation.

The JFS "On-the-Go Transportation Solutions for Older Adults" offers volunteer transportation tailored to the needs of older adults. Its On-the-Go Excursions provide rides to outings at locations throughout San Diego County and surrounding areas. Its On-the-Go Shuttle offers group transportation to JFS Social and Wellness centers, religious events, shopping centers, lunch destinations, cultural outings and events, and

other client-determined destinations. The JFS On-the-Go Silver accommodates individual riders for personal errands and large groups for customized outings. <https://www.jfssd.org>

VOLUNTEER MEDICAL ESCORT PROGRAM

Friendship Works - Boston, Massachusetts. Originally called Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers, Friendship Works was founded as a model program in 1984 with a three-year grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its Faith in Action initiative. The purpose of the grant (and the mission of the Faith in Action network) is to: decrease the isolation of elders and disabled adults, prevent unnecessary institutionalization, and enhance their quality of life.

Friendship Works' programs include friendly visits, friendly helpers, pet pals, music works, assistance to Spanish-speaking elders, and a transportation medical escorts program. In serving as medical escorts, the escort helps patients navigate confusing hospitals, helps them understand doctors' instructions, picks up prescriptions, and lends a hand or arm when mobility is an issue. The medical escort program coordinates volunteers who accompany elders to and from their medical appointments and provide companionship and assistance along the way. The program's trained volunteers offer physical assistance and emotional support, all the way from the passenger's living room to the doctor's waiting room, and safely home again, at no cost to passengers. Bilingual escorts, offered through the neighborhood chapter, helps ensure equal access to health care for Spanish-speaking elders. <https://fw4elders.org>

SENIOR SERVICE ORGANIZATION WITH VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION

The Seniors' Resource Center - Denver, Colorado Seniors Resource Center began operations in 1978. It serves the Denver metro area, Evergreen, and mountain communities and offers seven programs that enhance quality of life during the aging process. These programs include the following: adult day care; case management; mental health and well-being; developmental disabilities; chore services; and volunteer services such as minor home maintenance and repair; assistance with finances; and companionship. Transportation is its greatest service demand. According to staff, when older adults can no longer drive, all bets are off as to how they can continue to live independently.

Its transportation services are flexible and affordable. Rides can be requested for any purpose and 3- to 7-day reservations are required. Passengers are eligible for three trips per week and trips for shopping and dialysis can be arranged. Its service area covers over 1,550 square miles. Rides are provided by paid drivers who use agency vehicles and by volunteer drivers who provide rides in rural areas. <https://srcaging.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the numerous fact sheets and exercises in addition to the planning, implementation, and evaluation sections of the TurnKey Kit.