

# Beverly Foundation

**Fact Sheet Series**

**Vol. 1 (5)**

## **Transportation Assistance for Seniors**

### **Highlights**

- **Need for Transportation**  
*Introduces reasons why seniors need transportation*
- **Transportation Challenges**  
*Describes the transportation challenges faced by seniors*
- **Who Needs Assistance**  
*Identifies the age group with the greatest assistance needs*
- **How Can Needs Be Met**  
*Suggests those most likely to provide assistance*
- **What Support Should Be Provided**  
*Describes five types of support*
- **Five Service Profiles**  
*Describes five programs that provide assistance*
- **Assistance Calculator**

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**Beverly Foundation  
Pasadena, CA**

### **The Need for Transportation**

Transportation provides older adults with a critical link to their communities. It makes it possible for Mr. Smith to get to the grocery store, and Mrs. Simms to get to her volunteer activity; for Mr. Jones to get to his physical therapy session and Ms. James to visit her husband in the nursing home; for Mr. King to get to the pharmacy and Mrs. Silver to get to her hair appointment. Such trips, to life-sustaining and life-enriching destinations and activities are important to both the quantity and quality of life experienced by older adults.

### **10 Examples of Transportation Challenges**

- getting in and out of chairs
- putting on coats, shoes, and boots
- opening doors
- learning to use transportation services
- getting to and from vehicles
- carrying packages
- climbing stairs
- dealing with assistive devices
- staying alone in the vehicle

### **Transportation Challenges**

Public and community transportation systems work hard to make their services available to older adults. Because they generally were not designed to deal with the transportation challenges faced by many older adults, it can be difficult if not impossible for older adults to use them. Thus, regardless of whether a trip has a life-sustaining or a life-enriching purpose, without personal, hands-on assistance and support, it might not be possible for an older adult to get where he or she needs to go unless they can access services or programs that offer the types of assistance that meet their transportation challenges. Ten examples of transportation challenges that not only affect transportation service delivery but also affect passenger utilization are listed above.

## Who Needs Assistance

Older adults who use community-based transportation services often have outlived their driving expectancy, are no longer able to drive and “have given up their keys”. This means there is often a discrepancy between life expectancy and safe driving expectancy and both men and women are likely to live for a period of years beyond the period when they can drive safely. These are years when they will lose the independence of driving the personal automobile and become transportation dependent. It is the 85+ population that is most likely to have given up their keys; and the same physical or mental limitations that made it difficult or impossible for them to drive, can make it difficult or impossible for public transportation services to meet their transportation needs.

### The 85+ Age Group

- The age group often referred to as “the old old”
- The age group most likely to have “given up their keys”
- The fastest growing segment of the older population
- The age group expected to more than quadruple by 2050 \*

\*(US Census Bureau, 2008).

Providing transportation service to older adults with physical or mental limitations can be challenging for public and community transportation services and even for human service organizations that provide transportation to seniors. Of course, family members often are first in line for providing the necessary “hands-on” transportation assistance and support needed by older adults. Friends, neighbors, and paid escorts are often recruited by the family or the passenger to provide assistance. In many instances, community transportation services and human service agencies recruit volunteers to serve as escorts. And, in many occasions, STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors) organize or sponsor volunteer driver programs in which volunteer drivers not only drive but also provide transportation assistance to older adult passengers.

### Transportation Assistance Providers

- Family members
- Friends and neighbors
- Paid and volunteer escorts
- Paid and volunteer drivers
- Special transportation services

## How Can Needs Be Met

## What Support Should Be Provided

Some experts describe transportation services as: destination transportation and assistive or supportive transportation. Destination transportation generally is provided by public and many paratransit and community transportation services, and quite often by taxi services. Destination transportation emphasizes services that require passengers to **get to** a transit stop or **get to** the curb to meet the transit vehicle. On the other hand, assistive or supportive transportation services generally are provided by human service and senior transportation programs, and in some instances community transportation services. Supportive transportation **goes to** the door, and often **goes through** the door and may provide assistance to passengers while at the destination. Programs that provide these types of “hands-on” assistance often refer to them as: “hand-to-hand”, “arm-to-arm”, “chair-to-chair”, “door-to-door”, and “door-through-door” services. The accompanying chart describes five types of transportation assistance, each of which is more fully described in the Transportation Assistance Calculator on page 4.

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### Five Types Transportation Assistance For Seniors\*

- **Gentle Support:** can include opening doors and providing verbal guidance for passengers
- **Physical Support:** can include providing hands-on physical support to help passengers keep their balance, climb steps, or perform similar functions
- **Activity Support:** can include staying with passengers and helping with activities at the destination
- **Personal Support:** can include help for passengers in putting on coats, shoes, or boots; or putting away purchases in the home
- **Special Support:** can include help for passengers who are faced with challenges related to communication or confusion

\* Several types and examples of transportation assistance in this paper drew on a 2005 study of Door-Through-Door Transportation Services for older adults. The study was undertaken by Westat in conjunction with the Beverly Foundation. Its authors were Jon Burkhardt and Helen Kerschner.

### **Five Exemplary Programs**

Each of the transportation services described below provide transportation to older adults. Although many programs provide more than one type of assistance, the discussion below emphasizes only one type of services for each program.

<b>Type of Assistance</b>	<b>Gentle Assistance</b>	<b>Physical Assistance</b>	<b>Activity Assistance</b>	<b>Personal Assistance</b>	<b>Special Assistance</b>
<b>Programs</b>	Seniors' Resource Center	Asian Community Center	Delmarva Community Services	Catholic Charities of Eastern VA	Navajo Area Agency on Aging
<b>Start Date</b>	1975	2003	1977	1996	1978
<b>Budget</b>	\$2,000,000	\$225,000	\$2,000,000	\$88,500	\$650,000
<b>Service Area</b>	urban	urban	rural	suburban	rural
<b># of Rides</b>	160,000	12,490	185,000	2,915	42,096
<b># of Drivers</b>	86	40	65	64	94

**Seniors' Resource Center - Denver, CO** Seniors' Resource Center was organized as a non-profit 501(c)(3), and offers a menu of services including transportation. It provides rides to life-sustaining and life-enriching destinations and involves both paid and volunteer drivers. Drivers provide **gentle assistance** to riders in the form of help to and from the vehicles and companionship during the rides. SRC offers transportation services because they relate to its mission of maximizing seniors' independence and personal dignity. [www.srcaging.org](http://www.srcaging.org)

**Asian Community Center of Sacramento Valley - Sacramento, CA** ACC involves volunteer drivers to offer rides to seniors who cannot access other transportation options in the community. These volunteer drivers use program-owned vehicles and take seniors to a variety of destinations. ACC also involves escorts to ride along in the vehicles. The escorts provide **physical assistance** within and outside the vehicles; they help riders getting in the vehicles; they make sure that all seat belts are secured, and they allow drivers to focus on driving, thus ensuring a safe journey. [www.accsv.org](http://www.accsv.org)

**Delmarva Community Services, Inc. - Cambridge, MD** DCS is a private, non-profit, multi-service agency dedicated to helping people maintain an independent lifestyle within the community. With a fleet of 90 vehicles, DCS offers fixed public routes, an ADA complementary service, a deviated daily route, many service-related trips for senior citizens to and from senior centers, and individual trips to seniors. To fulfill its mission, DCS provides **activity assistance** with the help of travel navigators. They assist seniors and others in accessing the transit system and understanding how to make trip chaining. [www.dcsdct.org](http://www.dcsdct.org)

**Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia, Inc. - Virginia Beach, VA** CCEVA offers a menu of services to seniors, including transportation. Its volunteer drivers provide door-through-door and stay at destination assistance. In 2007 CCEVA launched a new program to improve services to seniors who have memory and physical limitations. The program partners volunteer drivers with riders, and thus enables volunteers and riders to build relationships and increase the **personal assistance** provided to riders. [www.cceva.org](http://www.cceva.org)

**Navajo Area Agency on Aging - Window Rock, Arizona** NAAA offers transit services with **special assistance** to senior citizens of the Navajo Indian Reservation which covers 26,000 sq. mi. Because of the rugged terrain and unpaved roads, NAAA replaced its fleet of automobiles with four-wheeled and military-type vehicles. NAAA can now reach isolated seniors living in the frontier region of the Reservation, and offer them curb-to-curb transportation services. NAAA advocates to improve transit services to its senior residents to enable them to maintain their independence. [www.azdes.gov/aaa/regions/r7.asp](http://www.azdes.gov/aaa/regions/r7.asp)

## Transportation Assistance Calculator

This physical assistance calculator includes twenty-five types of travel assistance that can be provided by drivers, escorts, family members, friends, neighbors, and caregivers. Such assistance may be needed by people who have physical (and mental) limitations in order to get where they need to go.

On the list below, check each type of assistance you want to provide in a new program (or currently provide in an existing program). Then, add up your score (each check equals one point) and use the scale to determine the level of assistance.

**Gentle Assistance ...**

- Helps passengers by opening doors
- Helps passengers by providing verbal guidance
- Listens to passengers' stories
- Encourages passengers' independence
- Provides companionship to passengers

**Physical Assistance...**

- Helps passengers in and out of chairs
- Helps passengers walk to and from vehicle
- Helps passengers climb stairs
- Helps passengers with seat belts and securements
- Helps passengers with assistive devices

**Activity Assistance...**

- Helps passengers at destination
- Helps passengers understand doctor's diagnosis
- Helps passengers learn how to use transportation option
- Helps passengers arrange travel appointments
- Helps passengers plan trips/stops

**Personal Assistance...**

- Helps passengers carry packages
- Helps passengers put away packages in the home
- Helps passengers get ready for rides
- Checks on passengers between rides
- Helps passengers to the loo

**Special Assistance...**

- Helps passengers who are confused
- Serves as advocate for passengers' travel needs
- Helps passengers staying alone in the vehicle
- Helps passengers keep track of belongings
- Helps passengers with communication challenges

**Total**  (Possible Score = 25)

### Calculation of Level of Assistance

0	5	10	15	20	25
No Assistance	Very Limited Assistance	Limited Assistance	Moderate Assistance	Considerable Assistance	Maximum Assistance