

DDS SELF DETERMINATION NEWSLETTER

December, 2008

Transportation



We frequently hear people with disabilities talk about the need for improved transportation supports. The quality of the transportation supports that people with developmental disabilities receive affects their healthcare, employment, social relationships, ability to contribute to their community – almost every aspect of their lives! Greater control and authority of this important support service can be key to having a better life.

How Do I Gain Greater Control and Authority Over My Transportation Supports?

Knowledge is Power: DDS is pleased to announce a new transportation page on our DDS website. This website page provides access to easy-to-read and understand transportation information. It's important to know what is available. It's also important to know what is possible. We encourage you to visit and explore this new resource.

Increased Expectations: People with developmental disabilities are doing things they previously never thought they would ever do. Many people with developmental disabilities are using a variety of transportation services with

greater independence. Gone is a total reliance on family or on agency providers. Instead, more and more people with developmental disabilities are learning to use public transportation services (bus, train, taxi, etc.); are using their individual budgets to arrange supports from community members; and are participating in a variety of Ride Share programs. They know that expanded choices means greater opportunities. The article, "How Do You Talk About Transportation in Your IP?" provides ideas on how Planning and Support Teams can help individuals improve their transportation supports.

Follow-Up Action: Knowledge and increased expectations aren't worth much without concrete follow-up action. The article, "Advocating for Transportation" provides information about ways you can advocate for enhanced transportation supports. We hope this newsletter helps give you ideas on ways that you can take charge and improve the quality of your life!

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Editors

Sheryl Kemp
Beth McArthur
Gregory McMahon
Beth Aura Miller
Mickey Verno
Robin Wood

Guest Writers

Glendine Henry
at
CONNECT-ABILITY

DDS

**New DDS
Transportation
Website!**



We tried to make the transportation website friendly and easy to use. Just click on the pictures on the DDS transportation website to get the information you need:

Transportation

DDS has unveiled an addition to its website for transportation resources. You can find the transportation link in the right hand column of the DDS Homepage or you can go directly to the site at <http://www.ct.gov/dds/cwp/view.asp?a=2653&q=429550>.

You will find information on buses, para transit, ridesharing, trains, and travel training. You can check out how to get reduced fares and what transportation may be available in your town. You'll also find resources on how to assess your transportation services, how to buy or modify a vehicle, how to get a driver evaluation, information on getting a Non-driver Photo ID, and more....!

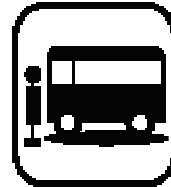
Contacts

The following regional contact people can also provide you with additional information about available transportation resources:

South Region-Lisa Rogers & Kathryn Baker

North Region-Lisa Marcoux

West Region-Lorraine Gendron



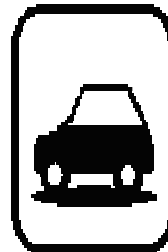
Bus Trip Planner

Bus Reduced Fares



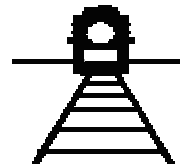
Para Transit Options

ParaTransit by Town



Ridesharing Options

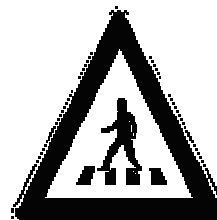
Ridesharing Links



Exploring Your Options

Train Reduced Fares

Tips for First Time
Train Users



Travel Training
Resources

Genna Lewis Travels to Work by Train!



Genna Lewis, a self advocate coordinator working for the department, has come a long way since she started her job. When she started her job at DDS, Genna had to find a way to get to her job in New Haven from her home in Westbrook. In the beginning she relied on her private agency provider to give her rides to work, but this was very expensive and didn't fit in her budget. She tried using "My Ride" paratransit services, but they were not very reliable.

**"It was scary at first,
but trying new things
helped me to grow!"
Genna Lewis**

With a lot of support from her parents, co-workers and from her support staff Genna created a new transportation plan for herself. She now walks to the Shoreline train near where she lives and commutes to the New Haven train sta-

tion; then she either walks to her DDS office, takes a bus to the office, or gets picked up by her job coach. She budgets for a monthly train pass, which she buys at the train station. Genna received training from the Kennedy Center travel program on how to take the train from Westbrook to New Haven and from New Haven to Waterbury so that she can travel to see her family. They also taught her to take the bus from the train station to her DDS office. Genna feels like she has accomplished a lot in the last two years. At times, trying to resolve her transportation problems seemed overwhelming, but she worked through the challenges and learned to become more independent. Now Genna says, "If I can do it, anybody can!"

Using Your Budget More Effectively

DDS has more flexible ways you can use your budgeted funds to purchase transportation services.



You can use funds in your budget to pay a friend, neighbor, or someone else you know a stipend to drive you to where you need to go. This can cost a lot less than using a taxi or paying a transportation service to take you someplace.

To receive a payment the person providing the ride must be qualified. Your Fiscal Intermediary can help with qualifications, which include a Criminal Background check, DDS Abuse & Neglect Registry

Check, and a driver's license check. All drivers must have a valid CT drivers license. Your broker or case manager can help you to arrange your existing allocation to pay for these transportation costs.

You can also use free ride-share services such as NU-Ride (www.nu-ride.com) to help you find a ride. This ride share service can be used by people who don't drive and has the added benefit of earning both parties points they can use to purchase discounts at a variety of retail establishments.

Ask your case manager to help you find and purchase more cost-effective ways of getting where you need to go!

Transportation and the IP Process

How Do You Talk About Transportation in Your IP Meeting?

People with disabilities often say that getting a ride can be difficult. Yet, it is the rare planning team that uses the Individual Planning (IP) process to help uncover and use new transportation opportunities.

Self determination means not settling for what is and taking responsibility for trying to make things better. Actively seeking and using new and different ways to get around is a great way to demonstrate self-determination in action.

You can use your IP meeting to help you think about all of the different transportation options that are available to you and to create an action plan that helps you to expand your options for getting to where you need to go. Here are some things you can do at future IP meetings:

1. When completing your IP Personal Profile, talk about people you know at work, in your neighborhood, friends, family, and organizations that might be available to assist you in getting around town. Have your IP team members assist you to create a list of everyone you know and people they may know. The longer the list of people, the more options you have. Don't count on just one person to be your only ride. Some people may be able to assist for specific types of rides, -like going to church, others may consider exchanging a ride for something you can do for them. There also may be new ways to use your allocated funds to pay people you know to drive you places.



Think creatively and be open to new ideas.

2. Complete a transportation assessment like the one found on the new DDS transportation website. This assessment may provide you with new ideas to include in your action plan and will help you to identify the skills you need to work on to improve your ability to solve your own transportation barriers.

3. Dream big. Try something new. For example, if you've never taken public transportation, consider using the Kennedy Center's Travel Training Program. You can visit www.thekennedycenterinc.org or contact the Kennedy Center's Mobility Services at 1-800-300-8029. This is a free service if you are eligible. The Bureau of Public Transportation also has a Travel Training Program that teaches people with

disabilities how to use the local bus and rail system properly and safely. Or, how about joining a ride share program?

4. Most importantly, take action yourself and ask others to take action on your behalf. Make sure your IP includes specific steps to address your need for reliable transportation. Don't wait for others to act. Speak up and tell your planning team members that you want to use your IP to help plan for expanding your transportation opportunities!

5. Finally, don't forget to evaluate what transportation ideas and plans worked and what did not. Persevere and make sure that your PST team reviews and updates your transportation action steps as often as needed!

Advocating for Improved Transportation

Transportation is something that people with disabilities have been complaining about and trying to improve for a long time. Some people think transportation is too big a problem and it's not worth trying to change. **People who believe in self determination know that they have to TRY ANOTHER WAY and never give up the fight!**



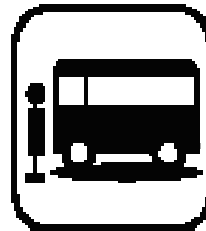
There are many advocacy groups working to improve transportation in CT. You can help these groups to make a difference.

The **Disability Advocacy Coalition (DAC)** is a cross-disability group that was formed to unite the disability community and build a political power base to support broad-based advocacy issues as well as agendas particular to issue-specific advocacy groups. Enhanced transportation is an important agenda for DAC. You can learn more about DAC by visiting <http://www.ct-dac.org/> or by contacting Stan Koslowski at 860-614-8351.

The **Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT)** is your voice and advocate for public transportation in the state of Connecticut. **CACT** provides a statewide forum for the exchange of public transportation information; advocates for public transportation and public transportation

customers at the local, state, and federal levels; provides training and technical assistance to members; serves as a vehicle for the collection and exchange of information of public transportation interest; and encourages the efficient and effective use of all available public transportation vehicles.

CACT membership represents a diverse group of transportation organizations across the state, including transit districts, public transit operators, not-for-profit transportation providers and brokerages, regional planning agencies, rideshare agencies, social service agency transportation providers, vendors, private for-profit providers, individuals involved in transportation issues and users of community transportation services. You can get more information about CACT at <http://www.cact.info/>



Transit for Connecticut is a coalition of business, human service, regional planning and environmental interest groups from around the state who advocate for the implementation of a cost-effective, comprehensive public bus transit system. You can contact Karen Burnaska at (203) 261-9243 to get ideas on how you can help create a better bus system in Connecticut.

Local Advocacy Groups: Most communities also have local groups who are working on improving transportation services in their area. You can contact your mayor's office to find out which groups may be right for you.

Transportation Best Practices

Useful Practices



There are many new “Best Practices” that are being used across the country to enhance the delivery of transportation services.

Customer Service

strategies help ensure that transportation services are consumer driven, and that consumers are included in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of human service transportation. A sample of customer service best practices include: 511 systems for traveler information and local transportation questions; machine readable fare cards that can work across public transportation systems; kiosks that provide self service transportation information; and One Stop reservation/scheduling centers.

New Technology is available to help make the use of existing transportation resources more effective. New technologies include systems that help enhance: automated scheduling, vehicle location, and computer aided dispatching. Smart cards are also available to unify multiple transportation systems under one fare payment system , (e. g. paying for the bus, train and parking at the train station all with one card), and they provide

transportation officials with better data on rider profiles, route ridership and system usage.

Operations Strategies focus on improving customer mobility. Examples of operation strategies include the creation of demand response systems; the creation of brokerages or “mobility managers” who help coordinate the transportation provided by area providers, subscription or voucher programs that help create more individualized transportation providers and transit pass systems which subsidize and expand the use of public transportation systems for targeted populations.

All of these new best practices require **Partnership and Leadership** to become a reality in your state or agency. States and local agencies that are serious about improving transportation have advisory committees, coordinating councils or inter-agency work groups that focus on improving transportation. They are also involved in National Consortia and Regional Coordination groups. *What is your agency or company doing to help support the development of enhanced transportation opportunities? What can you do to help?*

You can find out more about these useful best practices by visiting <http://www.unitedweride.gov/>.

Shrinking budgets means that more than ever we must use our existing resources wisely and well. Millions of dollars are spent on transportation. Advocate now to make sure you get the transportation services you need and to ensure that existing transportation resources are used effectively!