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Making Transportation Work for People with Disabilities in Rural America: The Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation Voucher Program

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The University of Montana Rural Institute

RTC
RURAL

Research and Training Center on
Disability in Rural Communities

**Making Transportation Work for People with
Disabilities in Rural America:
The Supported Volunteer Rural
Transportation Voucher Program**

Brad Bernier
Tom Seekins
Kitty Herron

June 1996

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact RTC:Rural, The University of Montana Rural Institute, 52 Corbin Hall, Missoula, MT 59812-7056, call toll-free 888-268-2743 or 406-243-4200 TTY.

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What is the Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation Voucher Program?

Where did it begin?

For many years transportation has been recognized as a need for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, unlike their urban neighbors, rural residents have even less access to transportation, which in turn further limits their lives.

The Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation Program (SVRT) is a means of providing rides to people with disabilities who cannot drive and who live in communities with limited public transportation. The SVRT program is similar to self-directed personal assistance service models (PAS) in that consumers control who their ride providers are, when they can get rides, and where they can go.

Transportation programs similar to SVRT have been operating off and on since the late 1970s, but were discontinued in many cases because of liability issues and the lack of public transit services in rural areas. In other words, consumers couldn't use their transportation vouchers.

However, liability issues can be resolved, and coordinating a system of volunteer drivers in rural areas is feasible. This handbook will show you how to set up a transportation program in your community, how to handle liability issues, where to look for financial assistance, and what to expect from the program. It also provides guidelines for recruiting and training volunteer drivers.

How does the SVRT Program work?

In general the program advocates one of two methods for providing rides. One method is to distribute vouchers to consumers in areas where public transportation or private specialized transportation services are available. Consumers pay for rides with vouchers. The other method is to recruit, train, coordinate, and reimburse volunteer drivers where no or limited transit services are available. Vouchers are given to consumers who then give them to ride providers, volunteers, and public or private transit drivers.

The SVRT program reimburses drivers for each voucher. When using licensed public or private transit services, you can be assured that they have liability coverage and the proper driver training certifications. When using volunteers, you will need to clarify what their responsibilities are and what kind of training they will need to be safe, responsible drivers.

Why is the service important and who is eligible?

Because regular or reliable transportation is often unavailable in rural areas, people with disabilities have additional limits to work opportunities, advanced education or vocational training, proper health care, or recreation. In short, they aren't able to participate in their communities if they can't get to where they need to be.

Service agencies in every state know that transportation is a problem for people with disabilities, yet planning for those needs is difficult. In addition, many states have wonderful services, but what use are they if the people they serve can't access them?

Eligibility to receive rides may depend on your community's needs, participating agencies' goals, and how you want to administer the program. In general, you will want to target those with the greatest need for transportation. This includes, but is not limited to, people whose disabilities prevent them from getting where they need to go, those who don't have access to a taxi service or who live outside bus routes, or those who have no reliable transportation.

The Independent Living Philosophy

Some advantages of a voucher system are:

- It allows consumers more choices in where they work and live.
- It puts resources in the hands of consumers rather than agencies.
- It emphasizes consumer needs rather than agency considerations.
- It promotes the rural tradition of volunteerism.
- It promotes cost-sharing among service agencies, consumers, and transit providers.

Where Does the Funding Come From

Who can fund an SVRT Program?

- State, county, and city governments
- Health and human services agencies
- Hospitals, Medicaid and Medicare programs
- Taxi service providers
- Public and private transit authorities
- Community volunteers
- Independent living centers
- Consumers who use the service

How do we apply for financial assistance?

The first person you should call is your state's 5310/5311 coordinators with the department of transportation. They manage federal and state funds that support rural and small city transportation programs. The 5310/5311 mandate provides funding to finance both the purchase of vehicles and the hiring of staff to operate transportation programs. It pays for vouchers and operating costs for nonprofits and public transit districts. Less often it has funds for private for-profit providers, such as taxis.

Tell your 5310/5311 coordinators that you would like to start a voucher program or augment existing transportation services for people with disabilities. They will tell you how to apply for funding and let you know who else in your area, if anyone, is already providing a rider service.

Don't overlook your county or city governments. Some SVRT programs in rural Montana have operated moderately well on budgets under \$2,000 per year directly supported by local government funds.

Call the state to find out about Title 19 reimbursements for non-emergency medical trips. Hospitals and Medicare and Medicaid programs regularly use Title 19 reimbursements for services such as standard doctor visits and therapy treatments. This system works exceptionally well for ride voucher programs because you can actually profit from collecting Title 19 funds.

Using Title 19 Reimbursements

Title 19 is a federal Medicaid reimbursement program for non-emergency medical trips. This includes doctor visits, therapy sessions, and counseling, to name a few. Title 19 provides a certain dollar amount to a registered driver per person per trip. Whether or not a trip costs you as much as the reimbursement rate, you still get the full dollar amount. For example, you drive a consumer to a doctor's appointment, and that two-way trip costs you \$5 to provide. Title 19 may have a \$10 reimbursement rate for that trip. You've just made \$5. You can put that money into your coffers and use it for other expenses.

If you encourage five consumers to schedule their doctor's appointments concurrently, you can take them all in one trip, now perhaps costing you \$7. Title 19 still reimburses you for \$10 per person. In this example, that's \$50 total for a trip that cost you \$7. You've now made \$43. With this kind of cash return, you can use the extra money to augment your services to consumers.

It's important to note that any transportation provider can register themselves as a vendor to receive Title 19 reimbursements. So if your local taxi service is hesitant to provide services to people with disabilities, tell them to call the state's Medicaid Services Division in the capital city to find out how they can profit from Title 19.

Call the Community Transportation Association of America's (CTAA) hotline at 1-800-527-8279 with questions and to request a fact sheet on Title 19 programs and reimbursements.

In addition, there are many other funding sources both public and private. Most funding sources have their own grant applications. They are usually clear about what type of information they need from you. But if you have questions you should call the source to get them answered.

Some funding sources might provide money for certain types of transportation, such as for trips related only to work or job training. Call your state's vocational rehabilitation services for information on funding for work-related ride reimbursements. Also, your state's developmental disability planning and advisory councils can refer you to funding sources and provide you with grant applications. Remember, every state has enough resources to fund transportation costs for people with disabilities, no matter what their needs are.

The key to getting funding is persistence.

What does an SVRT program cost to operate?

You can spend anywhere from \$1,500 per year to several million on an SVRT program. How much it will cost to operate depends on:

- how many consumers the program serves and their needs;
- what expenses you decide to reimburse;
- how you organize the program;
- a donation of office space or staff time from a local services agency; and
- the availability of transit services already operating in the area.

Operating expenses might include employee wages, ride reimbursements, insurance and driver training, and basic office and supply costs. For an average budget projection, refer to Appendix A.

How Is the SVRT Voucher Program Managed?

Who are the players and what do they do?

Below is a list of some of the primary duties and suggestions for who might carry them out. Often, tasks will be shared, so it's up to you to decide who will be responsible for specific duties. Just as important as cost-sharing is to a well managed program, job sharing among agencies prevents any one person or agency from becoming overwhelmed. For example, if a taxi service is your primary transit provider, they could handle ride scheduling, taking the burden off a service agency.

Consumers given control over their own resources, can become active in finding volunteers, coordinating their own rides, and managing the system; offer suggestions for improving the program so that it meets their needs; role is similar to PAS models.

Program Coordinator acts as liaison between the SVRT program and all contractors, including private and public agencies; if necessary, can arrange rides by coordinating with consumers and drivers; determines eligibility of consumers; sets number of vouchers available for consumers each quarter; maintains trip log; verifies volunteer drivers' insurance; handles complaints.

Bookkeeper/Assistant makes reimbursements to drivers; writes quarterly summary; compiles annual report of all trips; writes advisory agenda; keeps advisory board meeting minutes; maintains insurance forms for drivers; fills in for Coordinator.

Advisory Board consists of Program Coordinator, Bookkeeper/Assistant, Agency Director, and at least two consumers; monitors financial status of program; reviews complaints, initiates contracts with service providers; makes program recommendations.

Where do We Start?

How is an SVRT program set up?

Again, the first call you should make is to your state's department of transportation 5310/5311 coordinators. They can send you a list of transit providers in your area, including a list of service agencies that have their own vehicles. If service agencies do operate in your area, call them and

find out if they have a transportation program that meets consumers' needs. Some agencies offer transportation services, but they may be limited. Also, if transit systems (taxis and buses) operate in your community, find out if they are equipped to meet the needs of people with disabilities. They may be interested in expanding or improving their services.

Set up a meeting with local service agencies and transit providers to discuss consumers' needs and the costs, determine who is able to provide transportation, and who will pay for it. There might already be a transportation advisory council or similar group in your community that meets regularly. If so, meet with them. They might have funds to augment existing programs or estimates of the transportation needs in your area. If there isn't a committee, consider organizing one.

You can contract with local transit providers, or in the absence of such services, you can recruit volunteer drivers from the community. Service agencies may already have a list of volunteers from which you can recruit. See Section 5 for organizing volunteer drivers. Here are examples of how SVRT programs have been started.

How An SVRT Program Could Work

A service agency spends \$20,000 per year giving rides to consumers. Rather than schedule the rides themselves, the agency pays \$20,000 per year to a taxi service to schedule and provide rides. The agency distributes vouchers to consumers to use for taxis and saves administrative costs by letting the taxi service handle ride scheduling. The agency uses the money it saves to provide more vouchers to consumers. Thus, it still spends \$20,000 annually on its transportation program, but the agency has eliminated some costs and increased its services to consumers. In turn, the taxi company gets more business, and consumers have greater access and freedom in getting transportation.

An independent living center (ILC) has determined that 30 people in its community would benefit from an SVRT program. The ILC knows approximately how many trips per week each person needs and about how much each trip will cost. Costs were calculated by multiplying the number of trips by the number of miles, using a standard mileage rate. The cost is estimated at \$1,026 per month. The ILC approaches their county commissioners with the figures and a needs assessment. The county agrees to pay for up to two-thirds of the cost of reimbursing trips. The ILC recruits volunteers from the community, many of whom have already been giving rides to their friends and family members with disabilities. Through word of mouth and local press releases, the volunteers recruit more volunteers. The county continues to help with ride reimbursements, while the ILC manages volunteers and prints and distributes vouchers. The ILC also agrees to apply for Title 19 reimbursements to pay for non-emergency medical trips. Consumers are responsible for scheduling their own rides with volunteers.

How do we keep records and monitor the program?

Recordkeeping and monitoring are essential to running an effective program. By keeping track of money spent, consumers' changing needs, and where and how vouchers are used, you can streamline the program for efficiency and see where you need to make changes, if necessary.

Keep lists of names, phone numbers, and addresses handy and make separate lists for each. For example, keep your list of volunteer drivers separate from your list of government contacts or funding sources. Take notes of phone conversations and meetings to easily recall all parties' obligations. Keep a calendar to record when tasks should be completed.

In addition you may want to have standard forms for recordkeeping, such as quarterly and annual voucher reports, expenses, and reimbursements. See Appendix B for examples. It's a good idea to keep records of

- Volunteer drivers' insurance
- Every ride provided (trip log)
- All vouchers
- All correspondence
- Any complaints about the program
- Consumer needs
- Quarterly summaries
- Annual reports
- Board meeting minutes and agendas
- All expenses

Your top priority is serving your consumers. Informally keeping track of consumer needs or conducting on-going surveys of their needs will ensure that the program is meeting its goals.

Monitoring may help ensure continued funding for the program year after year. Your supporters will want to know how effective the program is. Also, you'll want to show other communities how to set up their own ridership plan. Accurate and faithful recordkeeping will prove helpful to your transportation program's success.

What can we expect when setting up the program?

There may be some resistance to organizing rider services in your community. Transit providers or service agencies might think the program too costly or be concerned about liability issues. Assure participants that liability issues can be resolved and money is available to fund an SVRT program.

Keep in mind that one person's perception of a need may be different than another's. Consumers may not use vouchers as much as you would expect them to. Or people who need rides might not take advantage of the service at all. Don't be surprised if this happens. It's difficult for some people to change their habits, and if they're not accustomed to getting out, they likely have a routine they're comfortable with at home. Over time those routines could change, so keep in mind people's lives are often structured around their access to transportation.

Suggestions for using the voucher system:

How you decide to use the voucher system will depend on what works best. Whatever decisions you make, it's important to have a set of guidelines so the plan runs smoothly. Here are some suggestions:

Involve consumers in as many ways as possible. Encourage them to participate in planning and managing the system or to perform administrative tasks. Ask for their involvement in recruiting and training volunteers.

Consider having consumers schedule rides as far in advance as possible with the Program Coordinator, if a service agency staffer coordinates rides. Contracting with a local taxi service will

eliminate ride scheduling and give consumers more freedom. So will using a “pure” voucher system where consumers can use any available driver and schedule rides themselves.

Consider limiting transportation to a specific service area to reduce expenses. You will have to define what that service area is. The Program Coordinator may deny service if a consumer’s request isn’t within the scope of the program.

Make sure both consumers and ride providers understand their needs and abilities for accessible transportation. For example, does the taxi service have accessible vehicles? Are volunteer drivers able to assist in transferring consumers in wheelchairs?

Consider limiting the number of vouchers per consumer per quarter. This means vouchers may be limited toward the end of each quarter.

You might also want to **establish a system for dealing with complaints or issues that arise.** Will the Program Coordinator deal with conflicts first or will an Advisory Board handle such matters? In addition, how will ride cancellations and “no-shows” be handled?

Consider establishing a policy for rides needed outside the service area to other cities, counties, or states. Cooperative agreements between agencies, transit services, or similar transportation programs will benefit everyone. For example, consumers who need to see doctors in a neighboring county can be taken to a halfway point where volunteers from that county’s transportation services can pick them up and bring them to their destinations. Or a volunteer can take riders beyond county borders and coordinate with out-of-county service agencies to transport their consumers while the volunteer waits for her rider to finish business.

Driver Recording Form	No.	
Date: _____	Driver ID# _____	Auto Insurance _____
Driver Signature _____		
Ride Times: Pickup _____	Arrival _____	
Odometer: Begin _____	End _____	
Official Use Only []E []M []R		

Vouchers can be used for rides for any purpose and any destination, as you see fit. Carbon copies can be distributed to people who need them for recordkeeping.

How Do We Organize Volunteers?

Where do we look for volunteers?

As long as they have safe, clean driving records, the proper insurance coverage and make good faith efforts to be available for rides, anyone can be a volunteer driver. You can recruit friends, family,

neighbors and church-affiliated groups. Contact community service organizations in your area to see if they are willing to share their lists of volunteers.

Sample Press Release For Recruiting Volunteers

“Did you know that there are (number) people with disabilities in (your community, county, etc.)? Furthermore, (number) can’t drive, putting additional limits on work opportunities, advanced education, vocational training, proper health care, and recreation. In short, they aren’t able to participate in (your community, county, etc.) because lack of transportation keeps many people with disabilities at home.

(Your group) has recognized the need for transportation services and is looking for volunteer drivers to assist people with disabilities in getting to and from shopping, school, work, job training, and social activities, or wherever consumers need to go. We will train drivers in (list, such as CPR, first aid, and consumer assistance techniques, etc.). Volunteers will be reimbursed for some expenses.

We prefer volunteers with clean, safe driving records and a willingness and enthusiasm to participate in this unique program. We invite you to our orientation program on (date, time, place). There is no obligation to volunteer, so if you’re simply interested in finding out more about the program, please come to the orientation.

Consider inserting quotes from those who might benefit from the program and from the person(s) who will manage it. Distribute the press release to all local media, and make yourself available for an interview. You can also post this at local businesses. Point out to business owners that an SVRT Program could benefit them through increased patronage.

What are the qualifications and responsibilities for volunteer drivers?

It is prudent to establish a policy that outlines volunteer duties and responsibilities. Consider developing clearly defined job descriptions to ensure that each volunteer receives proper training to carry out those duties and is qualified to do the work. For example, should volunteers be responsible for assisting with wheelchair transfers? Should they be responsible for assisting in shopping, or do they simply drop off their consumers and pick them up later?

At a minimum, you may want to have your volunteer drivers meet the same requirements as service agency drivers. This may include a physical checkup with drug testing, if applicable; valid driver’s

license for the vehicle type they will drive; a license check for violations and accidents; a road test in the vehicle they will drive; and a safety inspection of their own vehicle, if they intend to use them.

You will also need to decide what expenses will be reimbursed. Will your volunteers be paid on an hourly basis or for mileage or both? Do you want to include the costs of vehicle maintenance, meals, or other on-the-road expenses? By clearly establishing a policy beforehand, you can avoid any potential misunderstandings or conflicts and maintain a satisfied volunteer corps.

What kind of training should volunteers receive?

Establishing a training program for your volunteers before they hit the road will ensure that their responsibilities are clearly defined, they are prepared to handle emergencies if they arise, and that they are qualified to provide safe, reliable transportation to consumers. Training programs might also alert administering agencies of the more risky duties, thereby forcing agencies to give the proper training to the most qualified volunteers. Most importantly, training will help define liability issues and promote confidence in volunteer drivers.

Service agencies and non-profits who are considering using volunteer drivers should contact their insurance agencies first. Insurance companies may have training materials or be able to refer you to driver training and safety programs.

Consider including CPR, first aid, and consumer assistance techniques as part of the training. Adopt an emergency procedure plan for drivers in the event their consumers experience medical problems. Who should your drivers call? Make sure drivers know where the nearest medical facilities are located and the quickest route to them. Be sure to thoroughly discuss all emergency and personal issues as part of a training program and clearly define drivers' responsibilities in handling them.

Contact your insurance company and the state department of transportation to see if they have training programs for specialized transport or if they can refer your drivers to existing training programs for certification.

Volunteer Support

Volunteers work hard and often receive little appreciation for what they do. Consider a means of showing appreciation and saying "thanks" to your volunteer drivers by honoring them at banquets or other events. Let them know they're important, and they will continue to support worthwhile services in the community.

What about liability and insurance issues?

In the past, insurance and liability issues have shut down volunteer driver programs and prevented others from starting. Some states treat this type of reimbursed volunteerism as driving for hire. Under these circumstances, where the service must be regulated by the state, tariffs, licensing, and insurance, an SVRT program would be prohibitive. This issue was addressed in Montana's legislature by exempting the transport of people with disabilities by a nonprofit agency from state regulation. See Appendix E for a copy of Montana's statute. You can use it as a guideline for developing one in your state.

To find out your state's position on this issue, ask the 5310/5311 coordinator at the department of transportation or contact your state's public service commission.

Today, insurance and liability issues are more easily resolved, and they should not be an obstacle in developing a safe, effective transportation program. Proof of insurance should be supplied and kept on file for every volunteer driver. It is most important to clearly define the duties of volunteer drivers

and what they are liable for. For example, if a driver gets in an accident on her way to picking up a consumer, who is liable?

Another aspect to consider is a consumer's use of family, friends, and neighbors as volunteer drivers. Because these volunteers allow consumers more flexibility in scheduling rides, they are sometimes the best source of transportation. Will your program require them to take driver training, and if not, will they be eligible for reimbursement under your program? Will they be covered by a service agency's insurance who administers a transportation program? If not, what will these volunteers be liable for?

Clearly defining and periodically examining these issues will help your SVRT program run smoothly and effectively. Therefore, it is essential that you establish driver responsibilities and liabilities, as well as the type and amount of training volunteers will need and what they will be reimbursed for.

A nonprofit agency receiving public funds will, in most cases, be held ultimately liable for accidents involving volunteer drivers they reimburse for services. For this reason the following questions should be answered when considering an SVRT program using volunteers:

- How does the administering agency insurance treat volunteer drivers?
- Can the agency's insurance be expanded to cover volunteers?
- What are the insurance coverage amounts for volunteers in the agency's plan, and are they excess or primary coverages?
- Is the coverage automatic for each volunteer, or does each volunteer need to enroll separately?
- When and where are volunteers covered?
- Do volunteers have to make a financial contribution for any coverages?
- Whom do volunteers contact about claims?

These questions were developed by Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Commission. You can contact them at 605 Suwannee Street, MS-49, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450; (904) 488-6036.

Before proceeding with an SVRT program, make sure all issues of liability are clear and that you understand all state regulations.

You Are on Your Way

Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation Program can be an effective way of providing rides to people with disabilities who cannot drive and who live in communities with limited public transportation. In addition, public and private transit operators can benefit directly by improved services, and local businesses benefit from increased patronage.

Although, the SVRT program is a proven method for organizing and managing rider services using vouchers, keep in mind that this handbook offers only guidelines. You may find that some things work better for you than others. However, if you follow the suggestions in this handbook, you should have a successful program with continued funding to meet the needs of consumers in your community.

Liability issues and funding need not be stumbling blocks. Liability issues are easily resolved with clearly defined policies and by thorough discussion with insurance companies and your state's public service commission. And because transportation is a recognized need for people with disabilities, federal, state and local agencies have funding (and other resources, like vehicles) to provide rides to people who need them. The key to finding that money is persistence, and with it, your SVRT program will travel far.

Appendix A

Sample Budget

This one-year budget is for a five-county area serving up to 150 people in three primary towns. It is considered mid-range, costing each service area about \$12,500 per year. The budget outlines most of the potential costs of an SVRT Program. Many of these, such as salaries, rent, utilities, can be shared among several participating agencies and local governments.

Expense Category	Amount
Executive Director (.01 FTE)	\$410.87
Fiscal Service Director (.02 FTE)	466.90
Payroll and Accounting Assistant (.02 FTE)	280.14
Program Director (.01 FTE)	354.84
Case Manager II (.02 FTE)	485.57
Case Manager II (.02 FTE)	485.57
Fringe	1,122.95
Rides	28,631.00
Equipment purchase/vehicle modification/ adaptive equipment (includes purchase of a wheelchair lift and hand controls)	5,000.00
Building rent	100.00
Building repair	50.00
Utilities	100.00
Insurance	50.00
Total	\$37,537.84

Appendix B:

Sample Recordkeeping Forms

Report of (agency)

Implemented by: (agency) _____

Coordinator: (person responsible) _____

Applicant report as of: (date) _____

Voucher applicants: 51

Applicants accepted into program: 47

Applicants denied into program: 4

Voucher Report January 1, 1996 through March 31, 1996				
	January	February	March	Total
Vouchers Sent	175	176	180	531
Vouchers Used	99	129	110	338

Vendors:

1. Area agency on Aging: \$77.00
2. Local Taxi Service: \$276.25

Amount of funds used for vouchers: \$353.25

Amount of funds used for printing: \$81.21

Alternative Sample Recordkeeping Form

Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation System Outcome Form															
Individual Needs				Location/Distance			Trips Taken				Trips Needed				
Trans- port needed	PCA	Case Mgmt	Other	County	City	Miles One Way	#	Wk.	Day	\$	#	Wk.	Day	\$	

Appendix C

Sample Customer Satisfaction Survey

Please help us serve you better by answering the following questions about our SVRT program and your needs. We appreciate your thoroughness and honesty.

1. Which transportation service do you use?
 - Bus
 - Taxi
 - Volunteer Drivers
 - All three
2. Please state why you would use one service more often than another.
3. How often do you use transportation services per week?
4. Are you able to get a ride when you want?
5. Are you satisfied with scheduling efforts by the transit drivers?
6. When you do ride, are you satisfied with the services?
7. Do you feel discriminated against in any way due to your disability?
8. Do you find the vouchers helpful?
9. How can transportation services be improved to better meet your needs?
10. On a scale of 1- 4, how satisfied are you with the program? (1= not at all; 4= very)

Please feel free to add further suggestion or comments. Please stamp and mail the survey to the (agency) in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you!

Appendix D

Additional Sources of Information

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)
2001 Pershing Circle, Suite 200
North Little Rock, AR 72114
501-753-3400

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)
1440 New York Ave. NW, Suite 440
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-628-1480

Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Commission
605 Suwannee Street, MS-49
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450
904-488-6036

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
1916 Wilson Blvd., Suite 209
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 525-3406, TT/TDD (703) 525-3407, FAX (703) 525-3409;

Research & Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities
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Look online for numbers of your state's department of transportation, Medicare/Medicaid programs, disability services agencies, and public and private transit authorities.

Appendix E

Montana State Statute

In 1991 Montana State amended Montana Code Annotated § 69-12-102 to exempt the transportation of people with disabilities by non-profit organizations from regulation by the Public Service Commission. Previously, just about anyone transporting passengers or goods for hire in Montana was subject to PSC regulation and was required to hold a certificate of authority.

Here is the statute exempting transport of people with disabilities from regulation:

(1) This chapter does not affect: (o) the transportation of handicapped or elderly persons provided by private, nonprofit organizations. As used in this subsection:

(i) “handicapped” means an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;

(ii) “elderly” means a person 60 years of age or older; and

(iii) “private, nonprofit organization” means an organization recognized as nonprofit under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code.