

Customer Service and Sensitivity

Rural Transit Assistance Program

April 1, 2014

Presented By:

***The Kennedy
Center, Inc.***



Agenda

- I. Welcome & Introductions**
- II. Facts about People With Disabilities**
- III. What the ADA Requires of Public Transportation Providers**
- IV. Tips for Improving Communication**
- V. Overview of Disabilities**
- VI. Assisting People With Disabilities**

Facts About People With Disabilities

1 out of 5 Americans or 43 million have a disability.

That number is on the

improvements in

increases in auto

accidents.



rise due to longevity,

medical care and

and other disabling

Did You Know?

»Almost three times as many adults with disabilities live in a household with an annual income of less than \$15,000 compared to adults without disabilities

»10% of people with disabilities own their own homes, as compared to 71% of those without disabilities

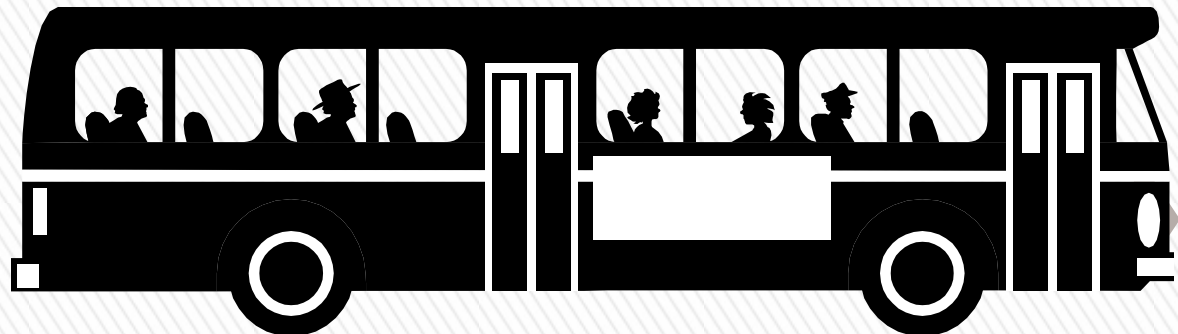


The ADA: What is it?

- » **A civil rights law**
- » **It grants equal access to programs and services**
- » **Its goal is to enable people with disabilities to be independent and self sufficient**

What Does The ADA Require of Public Transportation?

- » It sets standards for accessibility for the regular bus service
- » It requires ADA paratransit service be provided when a person with a disability cannot access the regular bus service



You Are Required To:

- Report ramp/lift failures
- Secure mobility devices
- Allow service animals
- Allow riders to travel with life saving equipment
- Deploy the ramp/lift upon request
- Make stop/route announcements



You May Not:

- » Deny someone service because of their service animal
- » Require passengers to use designated seating
- » Require travel with a PCA



A Note On Wheelchairs

- » You may recommend but not require a customer to move from a wheelchair to a seat
- » You may require all mobility devices to be secured
- » You cannot deny service to a customer whose mobility device is difficult to secure
- » *It is the driver's responsibility to secure a mobility device*

Rider's Responsibilities

- » **Care for and control service animals at all times**
- » **Ask the driver for assistance, if needed**
- » **Know their destination**
- » **Pay the fare**
- » **Be prepared to assist the driver in securing their mobility device by telling them how**

The ADA *Does Not*

- » **Allow passengers with disabilities any exemptions from laws and rules pertaining to all other riders**

You Are *Not* Expected to:

» **Put yourself or your health at risk**

» **Examples:**

> **Walk someone up an ice covered driveway**

> **Push someone up a makeshift ramp**

> **Go into someone's home**

> **Tolerate abusive language or behavior**

» **When in doubt, call your supervisor**

Sensitivity Do's and Don'ts

When Is It Appropriate To Use The Word “HANDICAPPED”?

**We are all PEOPLE before
we are anything else**

People First

- » **Refer to a person's disability only when necessary**
- » **Refer to the person before you refer to their disability**
 - > i.e. "A person who is blind"**
- » **Don't describe the person as a wheelchair, they are a person who uses a wheelchair**

Examples

DO Say:

- » **A person who has a developmental disability**
- » **A person with a mobility impairment**
- » **A person with a psychiatric disability**

DON'T Say:

- » **A mentally defective person**
- » **A crippled person or wheelchair bound**
- » **Insane, psycho, lunatic, maniac, crazy**

General Guidelines for Assisting People With Disabilities

- » **Treat all customers as you would like to be treated**
- » **People with similar disabilities often need different types of assistance to travel independently**
- » **Always ask if a person needs assistance before giving it and how best to assist them**
- » **Speak directly to your customer, not their companions**
- » **Speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise**

General Guidelines for Assisting People With Disabilities

- » **Treat adults as adults**
- » **Don't shout or exaggerate**
- » **Don't say, "Never mind. It doesn't matter"**
- » **Be willing to repeat information**

From ESPA Transit operator's Pocket Guide



When Assisting An Individual Who Uses a Wheelchair

- » Ask how you can help before touching a mobility device
- » When using the lift, explain the actions you are taking
- » Watch your personal space. Don't stand too close or lean on a wheelchair
- » Treat the wheelchair as if it had no brakes



You Don't Always Know There is a Disability

- » **Many people that you encounter on a daily basis have hidden disabilities**
- » **Hidden disabilities could involve: vision, hearing, balance/coordination, mental health, memory, the ability to process or communicate information, and a wide range of health conditions**
- » **People with hidden disabilities can have good & bad days**
- » **Don't make a comment suggesting the person does not have a disability**
- » **Do lower the lift/ramp when requested**

Improving Communication

Answer The Following

How much do we communicate by
the words we say? _____%

How much do we communicate by
our tone of voice? _____%

How much do we communicate by
our body language? _____%

■ Tone of Voice ■ Words ■ Body Language



H

Communicate

Since Most Communication is Done Through Body Language

- » Do you smile and greet your passengers?
- » Do you look at the person when they are speaking to you?
- » Do you “know” what your passengers are going to say and “tune them out”?



When Talking with a Passenger

- » Speak directly to the person**
- » Give the person your full attention**
- » Be concrete**
- » Give information in small units**
- » Ask for clarification, if you don't understand**
- » Let the person finish speaking before deciding what to say or do**

Further Resources

For information on training opportunities and free publications go to:

» **Project ACTION**

> *projectaction.org*

» ***New England ADA Center***

> *newenglandada.org*

What Should You Remember

- » **Treat all your passengers with respect**
- » **You can make someone's day with a kind response**
- » **We are all people first**
- » **Ask before you act**
- » **SMILE**

Thank You!

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