



# **February 2019 King County Snow Event After Action Report**

Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation  
(RARET) Workgroup

*Published: March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	ii
Executive Summary.....	1
Event Overview .....	2
Scope.....	2
King County Winter Weather Medical Transportation .....	3
Participating Organizations.....	3
Event Timeline .....	3
Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce .....	5
Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage.....	6
King County Metro Access Transportation (Access) .....	6
King County Search and Rescue .....	7
Hopelink Mobility Triage Team.....	7
Staffing Considerations .....	9
Winter Weather Triage Algorithm .....	9
Summary of Winter Weather Triage Requests.....	10
What Worked Well .....	10
Areas for Improvement.....	11
Conclusion.....	12
Attachments.....	12
Appendix .....	
Attachement 1: Initial Notice to King County Medical Providers .....	
Attachment 2: Triage Team Launch Notice to King County Medical Providers .....	
Attachment 3: Online Intake Form .....	
Attachment 4: Winter Weather Triage Algorithm .....	
Attachment 5: Winter Weather Trip Request: Medicaid.....	
Attachment 6: Winter Weather Trip Request: Non-Medicaid.....	
Attachment 7: Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures.....	



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) workgroup aims to increase the critical transportation services available to older adults, people with disabilities, low income, and other vulnerable populations in the event of an emergency in the Puget Sound region. The RARET workgroup features representation from emergency managers, transportation providers, human services, and government partners across King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

In anticipation of the February 2019 snow storm, RARET staff support was asked by Public Health – Seattle & King County to participate in the King County Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce to coordinate life-sustaining medical transportation.

“Life-sustaining medical transportation” was defined by medical need, including kidney dialysis, cancer treatment, wound care, opioid substitution treatment (OST)/methadone, urgent care needs, or any condition in which medical providers would otherwise be calling EMS to transport the client.

For the purposes of this report, “life sustaining medical transportation” will be referred to as “critical medical transportation” to further delineate RARET’s transportation coordination activities from the advanced level of life support services provided by 911 and emergency medical services (EMS).

The Taskforce activated the King County Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures with adaptations to mobilize the RARET workgroup staff support and Hopelink Mobility Management staff. This formed the Hopelink Mobility Triage Team, which served as a centralized access point to process and triage transportation requests from medical facilities in King County. Medical facilities requested transportation on behalf of patients, using a temporary adverse weather phone line, shared email inbox, and online intake form.

The Taskforce chose not to publicize the phone line to the public, because medical clinics and providers were expected to provide the initial screening of a client’s medical needs and determine whether their request qualified as critical or life-sustaining. It was determined that members of the Hopelink Mobility Triage Team were not equipped to judge whether a client’s request was critical or non-critical.

To communicate this temporary service, the Northwest Healthcare Response Network (NWHRN) distributed information about the activation to 438 King County-based healthcare providers across approximately 146 facilities. RARET partners across Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties were also informed of the centralized access point via consistent



communications before and during the snow event from RARET staff support, which led to a transportation request for a client in Snohomish County.

The Hopelink Mobility Triage Team remained operational between February 11<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, from 7:00am-7:00pm daily. Six critical medical transportation requests were received for five individuals.

## **EVENT OVERVIEW**



A major snow storm hit the Puget Sound region on February 8<sup>th</sup>, with a second wave of snowfall on February 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>. Sea-Tac airport reported 14.1” of snow in February, making it the snowiest February on record. East King County was the hardest hit, with communities such as North Bend receiving over 32” of snow in one week.

In anticipation of the advancing snow event, state and local officials undertook emergency measures to prepare for the advancing storm. Governor Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency on February 8<sup>th</sup>. The King County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

Following the activation, the Winter Weather Medical Transportation Taskforce convened on February 9<sup>th</sup> to implement the King County Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures.

The snow event had an adverse impact on the region’s transportation system. Transit agencies, including King County Metro and Sound Transit reduced their services. King County Metro activated its Emergency Snow Network (ESN) for the first time and operated just 60 core bus routes and six Demand Area Response Transit (DART) routes, prioritizing key arterials, transit centers, and routes with high ridership.

Paratransit providers including Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage program and King County Metro Access Transportation transitioned into providing critical medical transportation only. Many community transportation providers and volunteer driver programs stopped operating due to unsafe road conditions and staff availability.

## **SCOPE**

The goal of this After-Action Report (AAR) is to document the efforts of the Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) Workgroup, Hopelink Mobility Management staff, and partner agencies when implementing the King County Winter Weather Medical



Transportation Procedures during the February 2019 snow event. This report will supplement the AAR to be published by King County that will include additional information about county-wide emergency coordination efforts.

## **KING COUNTY WINTER WEATHER MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES**

The Winter Weather Medical Transport Procedures were developed by the King County Office of Emergency Management, Public Health – Seattle & King County, EMS, and NWHRN, in partnership with several jurisdictions in King County (see *Participating Organizations* below). The purpose of the procedures is to facilitate the transportation of medically vulnerable members of the community to critical medical appointments during snowstorms and other emergencies when traditional transportation services are unavailable.

While the scope of the procedures include assistance for transportation to healthcare, pharmacy, or additional services throughout King County, these procedures were adapted to focus on transportation to critical medical appointments, and include participation from RARET, King County Metro Access Transportation, and Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage.

### **PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS**

- Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage
- Hopelink Mobility Management
- King County Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- King County Metro
- King County Metro Access Transportation (Access)
- King County Mobility Coalition (KCMC)
- King County Office of Emergency Management
- King County Search and Rescue (SAR)
- North Sound 211
- Northwest Healthcare Response Network (NWHRN)
- Public Health – Seattle & King County
- Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET)
- Snohomish County Office of Emergency Management

### **EVENT TIMELINE**

#### **2/6/19 (Wednesday)**

- RARET staff support forwards emergency notifications to RARET Workgroup partners and transportation providers that serve King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties



## **2/7/19 (Thursday)**

- RARET staff support disseminates emergency preparedness resources to prepare for advancing winter storm
- RARET staff support continues to disseminate emergency notifications to RARET Workgroup partners and transportation providers that serve King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties

## **2/8/19 (Friday)**

- Governor Jay Inslee proclaims State of Emergency
- Public Health – Seattle & King County contacts RARET/Hopelink Mobility staff to update contact information for RARET staff support, KCMC staff support, and Hopelink's Medicaid Brokerage contacts
- RARET staff support disseminates emergency preparedness resources, transportation updates from King County Metro, and additional updates from RARET partners, such as information on severe weather shelters

## **2/9/2019 (Saturday)**

- Public Health – Seattle & King County contacts RARET staff support to participate in Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce
- Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce convenes first meeting and activates plan
- RARET staff support, KCMC staff support, and Vice President of Transportation at Hopelink meet to determine viability of leading a Mobility Triage Team and determine required resources

## **2/10/19 (Sunday)**

- Taskforce determines viability of Hopelink Mobility serving as centralized contact point
- RARET staff support coordinates and co-facilitates AWX mini-workgroup with Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage, ACCESS Transportation staff support from First Transit, and King County EMS
- Taskforce determines communication channels with NWHRN
- Taskforce drafts communication to healthcare partners
- Taskforce establishes Hopelink Mobility Triage Team launch plan
- RARET staff support shares King County Adverse Weather Transport Plan announcement with RARET partners in King, Pierce, and Snohomish County

## **2/11/19 (Monday)**

- Hopelink Mobility Management staff trained on Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures
- Hopelink Mobility Triage Team launched



## **Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) Workgroup** February 2019 King County Snow Event – After Action Report

- NWHRN Healthcare Emergency Coordination Center (HECC) sends notice to King County medical providers
- Triage team booked a return trip for a client

### **2/12/19 (Tuesday)**

- Triage team accepts Snohomish County referral from RARET partner
- Triage team booked three additional rides for two clients
- At Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce Check In, it was reported that King County Search and Rescue may have limited capacity due to avalanche dangers

### **2/13/19 (Wednesday)**

- Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce Check In
- Triage team re-booked three rides with King County Metro Access due to unexpected trip cancellations

### **2/14/19 (Thursday)**

- RARET Workgroup Partner check-in
- Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce Check In

### **2/15/19 (Friday)**

- Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce debriefing meeting
- Demobilization notice sent to medical providers that the triage team resources would demobilize on 2/18/2019

### **2/18/19 (Monday)**

- Triage team demobilizes

## **WINTER WEATHER MOBILITY TASKFORCE**

The Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce convened remotely on Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures, in anticipation of the Winter Storm forecasted in the King County region. The purpose of this meeting was to review objectives, responsibilities, and available resources to coordinate critical medical transportation in King County.

Resources identified by the Taskforce included:

- Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage
- Hopelink Mobility Staff
- King County Metro Access Transportation
- King County Search and Rescue



- Community Medical Technicians
- Evergreen Nurse Line
- King County Taxi Scrip

Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage and King County Metro Access Transportation both transitioned to prioritizing critical medical transportation during the snow event.

### **Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage**

Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage operated in code red (only performing critical medical trips and cancelling pre-scheduled non-life sustaining trips) from Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup> until midday Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, wherein it operated in code yellow (limiting same-day requests to life sustaining trips and performing all prescheduled trips).

The Medicaid Brokerage returned to Code Red on the afternoon of Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, and remained there until Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, performing a staggered return to normal operations through Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Throughout the weather event, Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage only fulfilled requests for Medicaid-eligible patients. It was reported that Hopelink’s Medicaid Program experienced challenges when scheduling critical medical trips and processing trip cancellations. During the event, most ambulatory trips from the Medicaid Brokerage were provided by taxi/for-hire partners, including Far West Taxi and Yellow Cab.

Despite experiencing challenges of fulfilling all ride requests for critical medical transportation, Hopelink’s Medicaid Brokerage provided more than 20,000 trips, including: more than 450 cancer-related appointments, nearly 5,600 dialysis appointments, approximately 2,600 mental health appointments, and more than 7,000 general urgent appointments. The call center also answered more than 18,000 phone calls, 300 web chats and 945 MyRide inquiries from February 4<sup>th</sup> through February 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **King County Metro Access Transportation (Access)**

King County Metro Access Transportation activated its adverse weather plan on February 4<sup>th</sup>, when snow was anticipated in the forecast. Access transitioned into providing critical medical transportation and cancelling all non-essential trips. In addition to serving existing ADA-eligible clients, Access was available to fulfill limited requests from non-ADA eligible individuals for critical medical transportation, and First Transit management team provided additional support for Access ride requests if issues occurred.





During this time, Access provided an average of 1,200 hours of critical transportation services in King County. There were 162 same-day trips for emergency service provided, and Access was able to accommodate for 125 non-ADA eligible trips to critical destinations.

If Access was unable to fulfill a request and alternative transportation options were unavailable, callers would be referred to EMS. Access returned to normal operations on Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. Rides for non-ADA riders with critical medical appointments continued until Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **King County Search and Rescue**

King County Search and Rescue was available to assist with 4x4 vehicle capabilities when Medicaid and Access vehicles were unable to access an individual, however it was reported that staff and vehicles were at limited capacity to assist with transportation requests due to ongoing rescue requests.

In addition to Medicaid, Access, and Search and Rescue resources, RARET staff support collected information from transportation providers who previously participated in RARET emergency preparedness and business continuity trainings in 2016 and 2018. Information was collected on operating status and service limitations, fleet inventory, service area, winter weather preparedness, estimated cost, contact information, and interest in assisting.

## **HOPELINK MOBILITY TRIAGE TEAM**

The Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce chose to mobilize a Winter Weather Transportation Triage Team, led by the Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) and staffed by members of Hopelink's Mobility Management team. The Triage Team would process intake requests from medical facilities and engage in resource matching to facilitate ride fulfillment. A communication plan was drafted on Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, wherein the NWHRN would disseminate information about the Triage Team to health care facilities in King County.

The Triage Team was staffed by five Hopelink Mobility Management staff who were trained on the Winter Weather Medical Transport Procedures on the morning of Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>.

- David Lynch, Program Manager, RARET Staff Support
- Staci Haber, Senior Manager, KCMC Staff Support
- Ben Tibbetts, Program Specialist
- Melissa Brown Rotholtz, Mobility Coordinator, RARET Staff Support
- Sara Sisco, Program Manager



## **Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) Workgroup** February 2019 King County Snow Event – After Action Report

The Triage Team operated between 7:00am-7:00pm daily until Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup>. The Taskforce engaged in daily check-ins between February 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>.

The Triage Team launched on February 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm. Prior to the launch, the NWHRN Healthcare Emergency Coordination Center (HECC) emailed a notice to select King County Healthcare providers (Attachment 1). After the launch, the NWHRN followed up with a notice that included the contact information and hours of operation for the Triage Team (Attachment 2).

A temporary adverse weather phone line, online intake form and centralized email inbox were leveraged to serve as a triage point for requests from medical providers needing transportation for patients with critical medical appointments.

The adverse weather phone line was a temporary phone number intended specifically for the Triage Team and was deactivated following the demobilization of the Triage Team. The Taskforce chose not to publicize the adverse weather phone line to the public, because medical clinics were expected to provide the initial screening of a client's medical needs and determine whether their request was critical.

In addition to the temporary adverse weather phone line, staff monitored an existing Remote Options Counseling (ROC) phone line, which is used when fielding incoming requests from clients calling with specialized transportation needs. This ROC line is an ongoing service within Hopelink's Mobility Management program but was not intended to serve as an intake point for medical transportation during the adverse weather event; however, one referral was taken after a request was made during a ROC call by a skilled nursing facility for a patient to receive scheduled cancer treatment.

The online Winter Weather Transport Intake Form (Attachment 3) was created on Microsoft Forms, an online survey tool that allows for shared use among the Triage Team staff.

Information was collected on the following:

- Requesting medical facility (phone, email, address)
- Client appointment information (date, time, address)
- Medicaid eligibility
- Client mobility needs (medical equipment, assistance requirements)

For HIPAA compliance, the intake form did not request sensitive information (i.e. name, birthdate, or address) for any individual. If a medical facility submitted a request using the intake form, a representative from the Triage Team would follow up to collect more information about the client.



The centralized email inbox was a shared email account used by members of Hopelink’s Mobility Management team. This inbox is normally used for general King County Mobility inquiries from clients and stakeholders. All team members were provided with access to the shared account which allowed for continuity of services when the team Triage transitioned shifts.

Each shift consisted of a lead and a backup. Using PureCloud, a cloud-based phone system, phone calls would be programmed to forward to the lead’s desk or cell phone. All these tools allowed for any member of the Triage team to work remotely and view all incoming requests and communications from medical facilities.

### **Staffing considerations:**

- All staff were able to work remotely using laptops, cell phones, and a cloud-based phone system (PureCloud).
- Staff have flexible schedules which allowed for consistent daily operation of the Triage Team between 7:00am-7:00pm.
- Staff regularly monitor a shared phone line for remote options counselling to refer individuals with specialized transportation needs to regional transportation resources.
- Staff are familiar with transportation resources in King County and mobility challenges faced by individuals with access and functional needs.

### **WINTER WEATHER TRIAGE ALGORITHM**

See Attachment 4 for flow chart diagram.

- **If client is Medicaid Eligible**, Complete Winter Weather Medicaid Trip Request Form (Attachment 5), fax to Hopelink Medicaid Brokerage management.
  - **If client requested Medicaid trip but denied or cancelled**, initiate investigation by contacting Medicaid Brokerage supervisors.
  - **If client was dropped off by Medicaid Transportation but wasn’t picked up**, initiate investigation by contacting Medicaid Brokerage supervisors.
- **If client is not Medicaid eligible**, complete Winter Weather Non-Medicaid Trip Request Form (Attachment 6) and fax to Access operations management at First Transit.
- **If Access cannot fulfill ride request due to impassable road conditions**, escalate request to Search and Rescue (SAR) by contacting SAR staff.

\*If facility reports that patient is presenting medical symptoms, ask provider to escalate to EMS via 911. Having the patient call 911 would efficiently route calls to local jurisdictions.



## **SUMMARY OF WINTER WEATHER TRIAGE REQUESTS**

The Hopelink Mobility Triage Team received five requests for critical medical transportation during the activation. Requests came via the adverse weather phone line, Remote Options Counseling (ROC) call, and referrals from Public Health – Seattle & King County and Snohomish County Emergency Management.

1. A hospital staff member called the adverse weather phone line to report that a patient's Medicaid return ride did not arrive, and the clinic was about to close. Mobility staff forwarded the request to the Hopelink's Medicaid Brokerage management team, who scheduled and fulfilled the return ride.
2. Snohomish County Emergency Management staff contacted the triage team to report a Medicaid-eligible patient needing transportation to a kidney dialysis appointment. Triage Team staff referred the request to Hopelink's Medicaid Brokerage, but the ride was cancelled due to impassable road conditions. The request was escalated to Snohomish County Search and Rescue, who fulfilled the ride.
3. A skilled nursing facility in King County called the ROC line needing transportation for a client to get to two separate cancer treatment appointments. The patient was not Medicaid-eligible. An initial trip was booked using the Access call center, but the facility was informed that the trip was cancelled because rider did not have a valid ID (non-ADA eligible) and the triage team contacted First Transit Management. The rides were re-booked, and one ride was fulfilled by Access. Since road conditions began to improve, the facility cancelled the second trip.
4. Public Health – Seattle & King County staff notified the triage team that a patient's Medicaid trip was denied. The triage team initiated an investigation by contacting Hopelink's Medicaid Brokerage Management team, and the ride was re-scheduled and fulfilled.
5. A dialysis clinic staff member called the adverse weather phone line to report a patient who had not received dialysis treatment in over seven days, due to transportation challenges. The patient was able to walk to main road for pickup due to impassable roads. Triage staff contacted both Access and Snoqualmie Valley Transit Demand-Response. The trip was booked and fulfilled by Access.

## **WHAT WORKED WELL**

- **Hopelink Mobility Management staff flexibility and expertise:** Hopelink Mobility staff were trained quickly, had the ability to work remotely with flexible schedules, and were familiar with remote options counselling, King County transportation resources, and mobility challenges for access and functional needs populations.



## Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) Workgroup February 2019 King County Snow Event – After Action Report

- **Streamlined Communication Channels with Medicaid Brokerage:** The triage was given direct access to Medicaid Brokerage management staff via backend email, bypassing the call center queue.
- **Standardized intake form:** Used Medicaid trip booking form to ensure all required data was collected, which was then modified to use for Access requests.
- **Opportunity for Process Improvement:** This event served as an opportunity to test the King County Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures during a relatively low-risk emergency with a small pool of clients. This allowed for troubleshooting when coordinating with transportation providers and reducing redundancies in tracking information.

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Coordination channels:** Need a more streamlined coordination channel for all transportation resources. When coordinating with King County Metro Access, Triage Team staff initially used Access call center. It took several days to establish an expedited communications pathway. RARET staff should be trained on WebEOC and seek read-only access.
- **Dissemination of information:** Unsure where phone number, email, and form were distributed [to healthcare providers]. Most channels (forms, adverse weather phone number) were minimally used. Most coordination was done outside of system in place. Requests came from ROC calls, offline conversations and emergency management partners. In follow up conversations, additional stakeholders wished they had known about this opportunity, including human service agency staff at 211.
- **Explore how 211 can support screening and referral process**
- **Coordinate with community transportation providers about messaging:** Many providers who ceased operations during the snowstorm referred clients to call 911 if they needed critical medical transportation. There is potential to align communications so that clients can be referred to alternative resources before escalating to 911.
- **Identifying adequate resources:** Identifying providers who have appropriate resources to assist in emergency. Many providers contacted had taxis, but RARET staff did not inquire about availability of 4x4 vehicles.
- **Efficient escalation process:** Conduct initial investigation about ride cancellations due to road conditions prior to escalating request to ensure next provider is made aware of situation and can adequately identify if ride can be fulfilled.



## Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) Workgroup February 2019 King County Snow Event – After Action Report

- **Situational awareness gaps:** Need for precise, real time information about road conditions in localized areas so providers can make informed decisions before fulfilling a ride.
- **Insufficient Staff for Scalability:** Staff took shifts, but still had to work on own work when clients were not calling. Were this to scale upwards, there would need to be far more staff on-call to handle sheer volume, and to work overtime to resolve cases where partnership communication, ride completion, or other measures of success break down/are not met.

### CONCLUSION

This event provided the Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce and the RARET Workgroup a valuable opportunity to support the implementation of the King County Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures (Attachment 7). This was the first time that RARET was involved in an activation, and the event generated several insights into the potential role of RARET in future regional adverse weather emergencies.

While many procedures for triaging requests were created or adapted during the event due to available resources, the activation highlighted the adaptability of partnering organizations to mobilize in an uncertain situation.

The RARET Workgroup forged new partnerships and strengthened existing connections with participating stakeholders. RARET will continue its involvement with the Winter Weather Mobility Taskforce and will identify opportunities to strengthen transportation coordination efforts in the Puget Sound region.

For information regarding this report or any activities, please contact RARET Program Manager David Lynch at [dlynch@hopelink.org](mailto:dlynch@hopelink.org).

### ATTACHMENTS

1. Initial Notice to King County Medical Providers
2. Triage Team Launch Notice to King County Medical Providers
3. Online Intake Form
4. Winter Weather Triage Algorithm
5. Winter Weather Trip Request Forms: Medicaid
6. Winter Weather Trip Request Forms: Non-Medicaid
7. Winter Weather Medical Transportation Procedures



King County, in partnership with Hopelink's Mobility Management Team, is coordinating the movement of **patients** to critical medical appointments within King County during the February 2019 severe winter weather events. This plan does **not** support the movement of staff to medical facilities or patients to healthcare facilities outside of King County.

Patients eligible to be supported through this response effort include:

- Patients needing to be transferred to time-sensitive critical medical appointments that can not be delayed (e.g. dialysis, chemotherapy, etc.)
- Patients that have exhausted all other means of identifying transport to their appointments (e.g. public transit, neighbors/family/friends, etc.)
- Patients that can safely move from their front door to the vehicle with minimal assistance from a driver and do not require medical assistance in transport.

King County, via the Northwest Healthcare Response Network, will send healthcare facilities contact information on how schedule transport on February 11.

The response requires that all requests for transport to come directly through the healthcare facilities and assumes patients have met the criteria. We are not able to take calls directly from patients or the public.

When making the request for transport, ensure that healthcare facilities can provide the following information:

- Name of patient
- Address (including city)
- Phone number
- Time and length of appointment
- If they need to be transported home

If you have any questions on this process, please reach to please call Public Health – Seattle & King County 206.263.8722 directly for more information.



King County, in partnership with Hopelink's Mobility Management Team, is coordinating the movement of **patients** to critical medical appointments within King County during these severe winter weather events. This plan **does not** support the movement of staff to healthcare facilities and **does not** support the movement of patients to healthcare facilities outside of King County.

Patients eligible to be supported through this response effort include:

- Patients needing to be transferred to time-sensitive critical medical appointments that cannot be delayed (e.g. dialysis, chemotherapy, etc.)
- Patients that have exhausted all other means of identifying transport to their appointments (e.g. public transit, neighbors/family/friends, etc.)
- Patients that can safely move from their front door to the vehicle with minimal assistance from a driver and do not require medical assistance in transport. This includes patients who might have mobility devices but do not need medical assistance during transport.

All requests for patient transport **must** come directly from healthcare facilities. Healthcare facilities should ensure patients meet the above criteria and other options such as taxi vouchers are not available.

When making a request for patient transport, healthcare facilities will be asked to provide the following information:

- Name of patient
- Address (including city)
- Phone number
- Time and length of appointment
- If they need to be transported home

Healthcare facilities that have verified patients meet the criteria and are ready to provide the above information may submit a request to Hopelink through any of the following methods during hours of operation 7 AM – 7 PM:

- [Initial Screening Form Survey](#) (*preferred*)
  - **Note:** Hopelink will follow up with the healthcare facility upon receipt of the survey submission
- Email: [mobility@hopelink.org](mailto:mobility@hopelink.org)
- Phone: +1 425-375-0144
- Fax: +1 425-644-9956

Hopelink will help triage requests and coordinate the most timely and least costly transportation options for patients. Transportation resources are limited, and there may not be immediate transportation options available. EMS response may still be needed for patients with critical medical appointments if all transportation options have been exhausted.

If you have any questions on this process, please call Public Health – Seattle & King County at 206-263-8722 for more information.





Questions

Responses 3

Saved

# Winter Weather Transport Form

Please complete this initial intake form for urgent medical transportation requests. A representative from the Hopelink Mobility Management Team will be follow up via phone to collect more information.

## 1. Requester Origin (Facility)

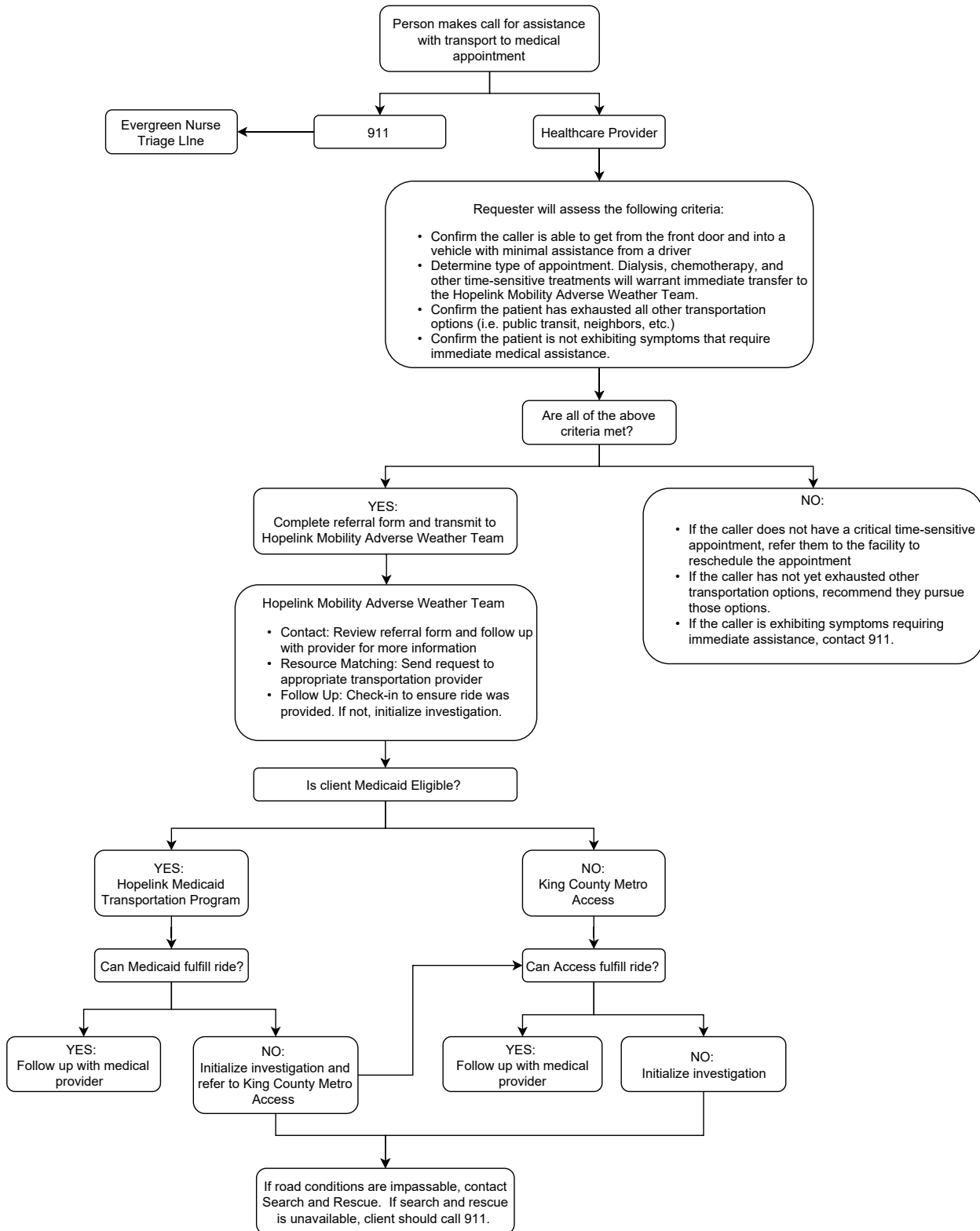
## 2. Requester Name (Facility Staff: Point of Contact for Request)

## 3. Requester Phone (Point of Contact for Request)

## 4. Requester Email (Point of Contact for Request)

## 5. Client Appointment Date & Time

RARET Winter Weather Mobility Team Triage Algorithm



Attachment 5

**Hopelink Winter Weather Medical Transportation Form**



Last Name:		Middle Initial:	First Name:	
Provider One Number:		Date of Birth:	Phone Number:	
Client uses a: <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Walker/Cane <input type="checkbox"/> Scooter <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Electric <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing				

**Trip Information**

Request is  Gas Card  Public Transit  Door-to-Door (Highermode Service)

Date of Appointment:	Appointment Time:	Return Time:
----------------------	-------------------	--------------

Medical Reason for Appointment (*Be specific, "check-up or "follow-up" is too vague*):

Will Anyone be Traveling with the Client to this  No.  Yes. How Many People?

Does the Driver Need to Bring a Car Seat?  No.  Yes, please bring  Booster  Toddler Seat  Infant Seat

**Pick Up Information**

Street Address:	Suite Number:
City:	Zip:

**Drop Off Information**

Facility Name:	Doctor Name:	Phone Number:
Street Address:	Suite Number:	
City:	Zip:	

**Additional Comments:**

--

**Requester Information**

Name:	Phone Number:	Fax Number:
-------	---------------	-------------

**Hopelink Use Only**

Was Trip Booked?  Yes, Trip IDs:  No, Denial Letter Sent Initials:

**Fax Forms To:** 425-644-9447

**Mail Forms To:**  
Hopelink Transportation  
14812 Main St  
Bellevue, WA 98007

Attachment 6

**Hopelink Winter Weather Medical Transportation Form: Access Referral**



Last Name:		Middle Initial:	First Name:	
Provider One Number:		Date of Birth:	Phone Number:	
Client uses a: <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair <input type="checkbox"/> Walker/Cane <input type="checkbox"/> Scooter <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Electric <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing				

**Trip Information**

Request is  Door-to-Door

Date of Appointment:	Appointment Time:	Return Time:
Pick Up & :		
Medical Reason for Appointment ( <i>Be specific, "check-up or "follow-up" is too vague</i> ):		

Will Anyone be Traveling with the Client to this  No.  Yes. How Many People?

Does the Driver Need to Bring a Car Seat?  No.  Yes, please bring  Booster  Toddler Seat  Infant Seat

**Pick Up Information**

Street Address:	Suite Number:
City:	Zip:

**Drop Off Information**

Facility Name:	Doctor Name:	Phone Number:
Street Address:	Suite Number:	
City:	Zip:	

**Additional Comments:**

--

**Requester Information**

Name:	Phone Number:	Fax Number:
Was Trip Booked? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Trip IDs:	<input type="checkbox"/> No, Denial Letter Sent	Initials:

Fax Forms To: 206-749-4213

## **King County Winter Weather Medical Transport Procedures**

### **PURPOSE**

The Medical Appointment Transport Procedures describes how emergency management may facilitate the transportation of medically vulnerable members of the community to critical medical appointments during snowstorms and other emergencies when traditional transportation services are not available.

911 centers, 211, social service providers, home healthcare providers, public and private transport providers, and other organizations receive, process, and act on requests for transport to healthcare appointments daily. These procedures and the accompanying attachments support, and if necessary, temporarily augment this existing capability when needed.

### **SCOPE**

These Medical Appointment Transport procedures explain how jurisdictions within King County will jointly support a regional transportation group to assist medically vulnerable individuals in accessing urgently needed healthcare, pharmacy, or other services within the county. They describe the process for activating, organizing, staffing, and operating the Medical Appointment Transport Group.

During a winter storm, organizations that regularly provide transport for the medically vulnerable will continue to do so to the best of their ability. When all other transportation providers are unavailable, or when it appears that transport providers are about to suspend operations, the Medical Appointment Transport Group can be mobilized to provide routine transport to those most in need.

Although the plan is intended to be executed during a winter storm, it can be used in any scenario that causes a cancellation or interruption of transportation services.

This plan is not intended to address emergency or routine field medical care and transport which is the responsibility of emergency medical service providers and private ambulance providers throughout the region. Nor does this plan provide transport to medical professionals who are unable to report to work.

Services outlined in this plan are available to all King County residents, not only to those residing within a participating jurisdiction's boundaries. Participation under this plan is strictly voluntary. Any jurisdiction or organization may operate similar transportation services as needed.

### **EXPECTATIONS OR CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT**

- Individuals and healthcare agencies will exhaust all possible transport resources and mitigation options before requesting transportation assistance under this plan
- The capability of the organization and unit providing transport must be matched with needs of the individual transported; for example, individuals in wheelchairs may need specialized vehicles with lifts and drivers trained in how to safely load and unload
- If being transported by a volunteer, the individual transported does not require medical care during transport

- All parties involved understand that the transportation service is strictly voluntary and there is no guarantee the service can be provided if conditions deteriorate or staffing is unavailable
- King County staff and volunteers will not request reimbursement for transportation services from those receiving transport, and will not accept it if offered
- There is a limited number of drivers and vehicles available to support this plan
- Individuals / volunteers providing transportation are registered to conduct transportation missions
- Those receiving transportation will be questioned about the possibility of taking them to a shelter that is more accessible should they require transport to multiple urgent medical appointments
- If necessary and space is available, transportation staff might be able to accommodate one family member to accompany the transported client

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Overview**

King County Office of Emergency Management has a multi-agency Winter Weather Mobility Task Force that provides direct support to regional operational priorities and can support the activation of the units under the Medical Appointment Transportation Group to identify and deploy resources and track medical transportation assistance missions. These units include:

- Contact Unit
- Resource Matching Unit
- Dispatch Unit

### **Pre-Event Tasks – When a Significant Storm is Forecast**

- The Northwest Healthcare Response Network will encourage healthcare providers to reschedule as many healthcare appointments as possible.
- The National Weather Service, King County Department of Transportation – Roads Division, Metro Transit Division, Public Health - Seattle & King County, King County Medic One, fire departments, emergency management agencies, and many other organizations will conduct public messaging which urge the community to prepare for the storm.
- Seattle Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) will provide online training to its volunteer members who are willing to provide transport under this plan; this training can be shared with other jurisdictions.
- Each transport agency will identify a lead who will be responsible for connecting resources with the Resource Matching Unit and Dispatch Unit.
- King County OEM will identify a location at the ECC where the Medical Transport Group will sit.

### **Planning**

When a significant storm is forecast, the King County Office of Emergency Management (KCOEM) will convene the Winter Weather Mobility Task Force for a planning meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to determine whether to activate the Medical Appointment Transport

Group<sup>1</sup>. Any jurisdiction within King County can request that KCOEM convene a planning meeting; there is no specific trigger for this.

#### Task Force Planning Meeting Representatives

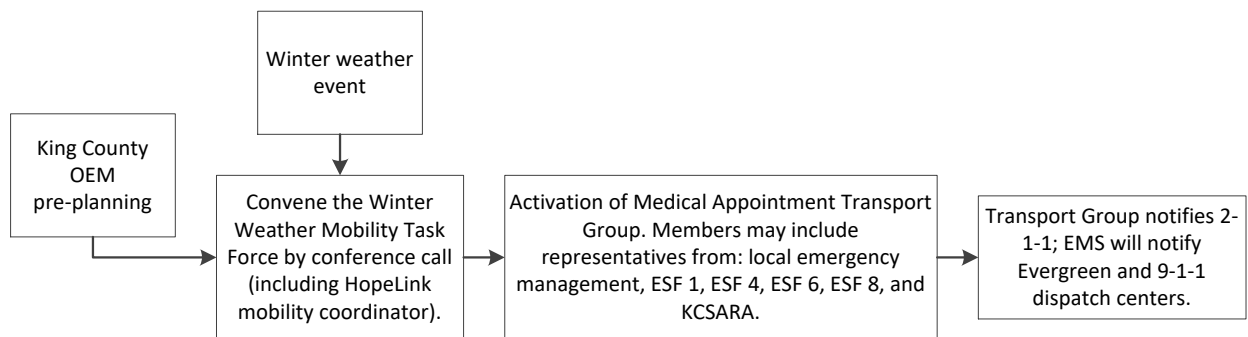
- King County Office of Emergency Management
- Northwest Healthcare Response Network
- Zone Coordinators and the appropriate Emergency Manager
- Transportation department representatives from Zones 1, 3, and 5 (as needed)
- King County ESF-1, ESF-4, ESF 5, ESF-6, ESF 8, ESF-9 and ESF-15 (and other jurisdictions as needed)
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- King County Mobility Coalition
- Other representatives as needed

#### Meeting agenda – Mobility Taskforce

1. Introductions
2. Review the forecast and identify potential impacts to the transportation system and the vulnerable populations they serve
3. Determine if the Medical Appointment Transport Group should be activated
4. Determine if a proclamation of emergency by the King County Executive is needed to facilitate emergency contracting of transportation resources

#### **Activation**

Figure 1: Activation Flow



Once the decision is made to activate the Medical Appointment Transport Group, the Winter Weather Mobility Task Force will:

- Designate a Medical Appointment Transport Group Supervisor
  - If the majority of the transportation assets are King County Search & Rescue Association (KCSARA) volunteers, the King County Sheriff's Office may be the best candidate to lead the Group with support from the Emergency Management agencies and Emergency Management Zone representatives, as they can direct the

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the King County Office of Emergency Management, Transportation for Vulnerable Populations Task Force Concept of Operations for additional detail including Task Force members, operations plan, and communications plan.

activities of the Medical Appointment Transport Group and provide transport through the mobilization of KCSARA volunteers as well as other identified volunteers.

- If KCSO is not available, the Task Force will select a representative from ESF 1, ESF 4, ESF 5, ESF 6, ESF 8, or ESF 9
- Only the SAR Volunteer Coordinator or designee has the authority to dispatch KCSARA volunteers, and volunteers must be registered to conduct transportation missions
- Work with KCOEM to identify a designated phone number and fax number for this operation
- Designate additional representatives to participate in the Group as needed
- Agree on the public messaging strategy and key messages that will support the implementation of the Medical Appointment Transport Group and task the King County Joint Information Center with coordinating dissemination through the Joint Information System.
- Notify all involved city representatives, law enforcement and emergency management as well as Washington Emergency Management Division of activation of the Medical Appointment Transport Group.
- Confirm with Evergreen Hospital (Nurse Line) that they have identified a special phone number for this operation.
- Coordinate with Evergreen Hospital (Nurse Line) if hours for accepting calls are expected to extend beyond 0800-1900.

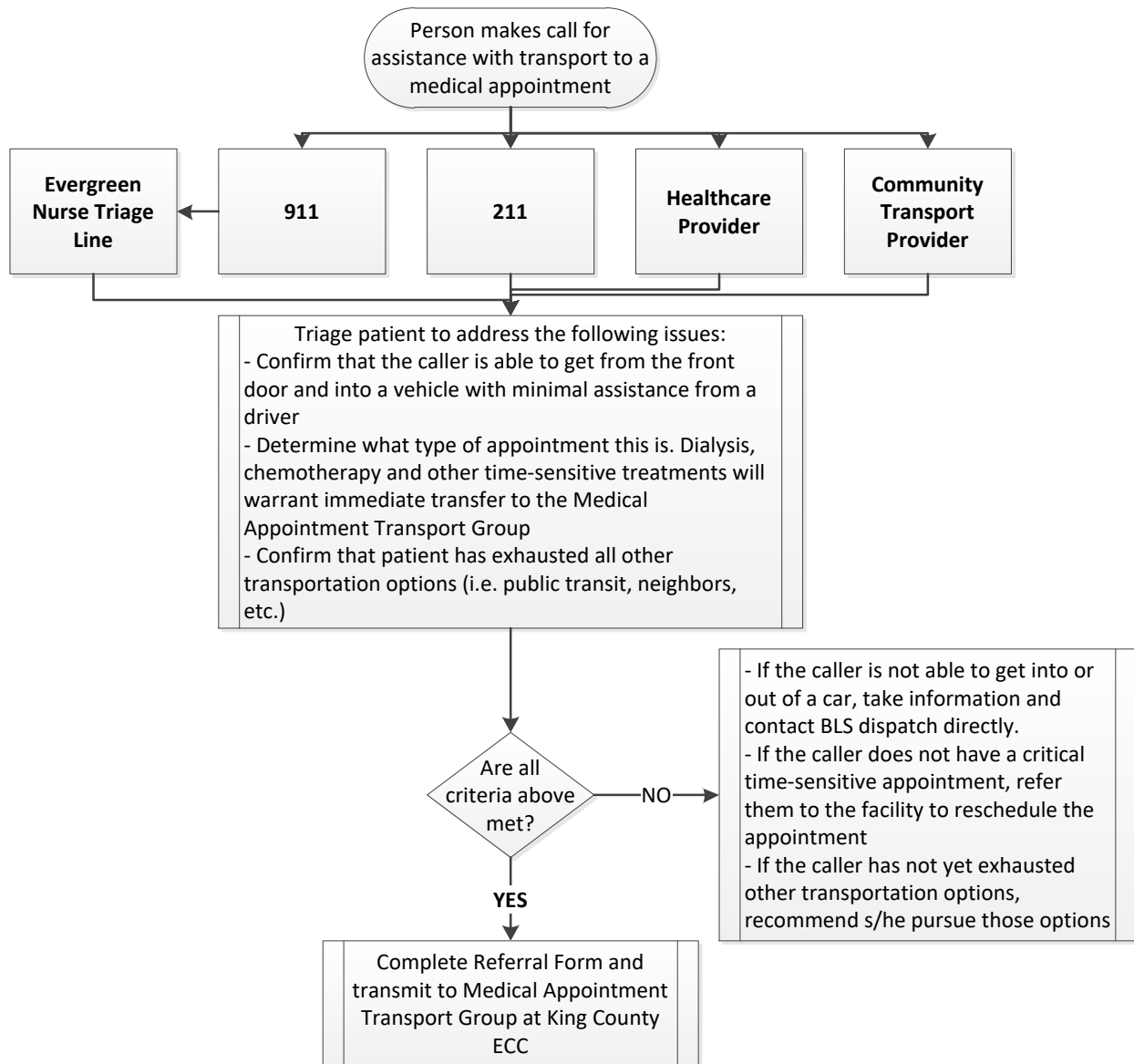
## **Operations**

### Medical Appointment Transport Group Duties

- Task King County ECC ESF 1 with mobilizing available transportation resources for assignment under the Medical Appointment Transport Group.
- Task ESF 8 with briefing the Evergreen Nurse Line and providing contact information for the Medical Appointment Transport Group Supervisor
- Notify 2-1-1, Evergreen Nurse Line, KC EMS Division / Medic 1, dispatch centers, KC ECC, EOC, ESF 8 Health and Medical Area Command (HMAC), Emergency Management agencies within King County
- Notify the Northwest Healthcare Response Network that the Medical Appointment Transport Plan has been activated, share the process for making referrals, and task them with notifying healthcare organizations that may refer transport requests
- Provide regular updates (via the Group Supervisor) to the region through the King County ECC that describes the overall status of the transport operation, problems encountered, number of person transported, and any estimates on when the Medical Appointment Transport Group will demobilize.

The Transport Group Supervisor will report directly to the Operations Section chief.





### Agency Referral

Many different organizations may receive calls for assistance. The above algorithm provides an overview of how the referral process will work. Further details are below.

- 911 dispatch centers can refer individuals who request transport to a nurse based at Evergreen Hospital (Nurse Line) who will evaluate the request and transfer the individual to the Contact Unit to complete a referral form.
- Healthcare facilities such as hospitals and dialysis centers will use criteria listed in this plan to determine eligibility for transport by the Medical Appointment Transport Group. If deemed eligible, these can organizations contact the Medical Appointment Transport Group directly with a completed appointment referral form and request transport.
- Other organizations such as 211, transportation providers, and others will evaluate the request and determine eligibility using the criteria listed in this plan. If deemed eligible, these organizations contact the Medical Appointment Transport Group directly with a completed appointment referral form and request transport.

### Referral Criteria

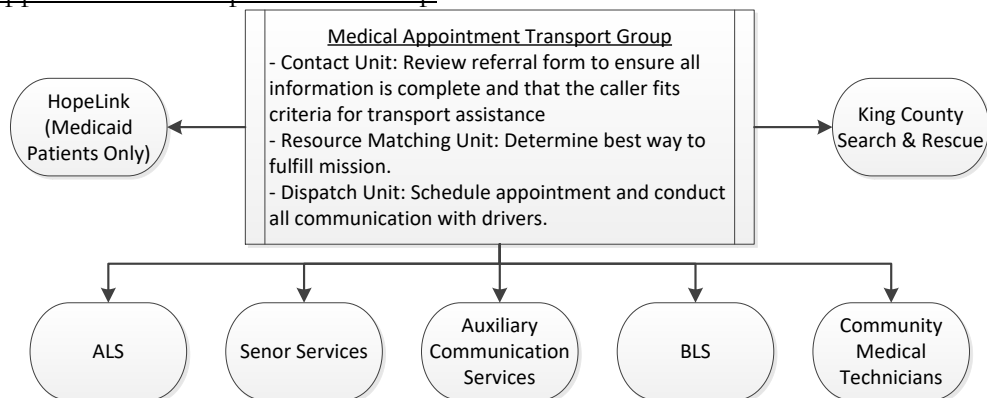
Hospitals, dialysis centers, home health providers, and other healthcare providers will make a medical determination for transport eligibility and referral under this plan based on the following criteria:

- The medical service can't be delayed or rescheduled without putting the individual at acute risk of medical complications and;
- All other routine transportation options are unavailable and;
- Medical care is not needed during transport and;
- The person is capable of caring for themselves during transport.

If the request is deemed eligible, the providers will complete the attached appointment referral form with:

- Name and contact information of the person in need of transportation
- Alternate point of contact (if different than the person requesting transport)
- Reason for transport
- Address of pick up and drop off locations
- Location and time of the medical appointment
- Estimated duration of the medical appointment

### Medical Appointment Transportation Group



### Contact Unit

This unit is responsible for serving as a conduit between the client and other units. Tasks include:

- Reviewing all referral requests and ensuring that the forms are complete or, in the case of direct referrals from Evergreen, complete an Appointment Referral Form
- Contacting the NWHRN for clarity if there is an appointment the unit is not familiar with to confirm it meets the referral criteria.
- Checking request against other requests to ensure no duplication (e.g. two children independently calling on behalf of their mother)
- Making follow-up calls to obtain more information as requested by the Resource Matching Unit or Dispatch Unit

- Contacting callers to either tell them their request cannot be accommodated or confirm pick-up for transport to the appointment, confirming again that they understand transportation will be provided by a volunteer.
- Providing the Unit's contact information and instructing callers to call in order to ensure that the person requiring transport can notify the ECC if conditions change
- Taking calls requesting pick-up from the appointment

Qualifications: Attention to detail, comfort with taking and placing calls (including with the assistance of a telephone interpreter), strong interpersonal skills

### Resource Matching Unit

At the start of operations the Resource Matching Unit will work with ESF 1 to secure the list of available transportation options (vehicles and drivers), and input them into the Appointment Scheduler.

Using the information provided by a hospital, dialysis center, healthcare provider or the Nurse Line, the Resource Matching Unit will develop a plan to provide the transportation requested based on the following considerations:

- The needs of the individual requesting transport (such as wheelchair)
- Current weather conditions
- The weather forecast
- Roadway conditions
- Availability and capability of transport resources and drivers

If the caller requires no assistance getting from the door to the vehicle, or getting into the vehicle, any agency can take them. If the caller requires some assistance getting to the vehicle (an arm to grip while going down stairs) or getting into the vehicle, King Count Search & Rescue should be dispatched for transport. If there is physical lifting required, or medical equipment such as a wheelchair or oxygen, the caller should be directed to dispatch for BLS transport.

The Unit will work with the organization contacts identified in the Pre-Event Tasks section of this plan to check on availability of resources during the time and in the location where transport is needed.

The objective is to successfully accomplish missions deemed eligible for transport. This may require referring the request to a fire department for a 911 response if all other options are exhausted. If the Research Matching Unit is unable to accomplish the mission using available resources, the Group Supervisor will confer with the King County Logistics Section to determine private vendor contracting options.

In general, transport units should be prepared to provide service within the entire county area. Given that where an individual lives and where they receive health care could encompass a sizable distance, it is impractical to keep a particular transport unit in one region of the county.

All individuals who have been provided transport to an appointment will be transported back to their pick up point or equivalent location which may include a shelter or, if available, a hotel when a

lodging voucher is procured. Generally, it is expected that transport units will not wait for individuals to complete their appointment. Instead, the individual will be provided with the number to call for pick up when they are ready.

Qualifications: Attention to detail, ability to synthesize and logically organize large amounts of information, understanding of King County geography

#### *Transport Options*

1. In extreme circumstance, and in discussion with the person being transported, the group may limit transportation from home to the nearest, safe, accessible location where a public or private transportation provider can pick the person up.
2. In extreme weather and when a person will need to be transported to medical appointments multiple times throughout the duration of the event, and in consultation with the person being transported, the group may seek to have the person return to an easily accessible shelter.

#### Dispatch Unit

This Dispatch Unit is responsible for ensuring that the appointment scheduler includes all dispatch assets (vehicles and drivers), and for making contact with drivers when appointments are scheduled. Because only KCSARA members can dispatch KCSARA resources, members must be included in this unit.

- If the Resource Matching Unit can accomplish the mission, the Dispatch Unit will coordinate the dispatch of appropriate entities and will handle all contact with drivers
- The Dispatch Unit will use the contact list gathered at the beginning of the response (see “Pre-Event Tasks”) to connect with the organization that will manage the pick-up
- Keep track of the status of all drivers, transportation resources and clients, and keep this information updated in the tracking spreadsheet at all times

Qualifications: Membership in King County Search and Rescue Association (at least one Unit member); comfort speaking with partner organizations to direct the pick-up and transport of individuals.

#### Demobilization

At any time, the Group Supervisor may deactivate a particular transport mode used by the Group or recommend demobilization of the Group if the situation warrants. If this should occur, the Contact Unit staff members will notify the appropriate emergency management agency / jurisdiction(s) responsible for the involved transport mode(s).

As soon as it is practical to do so, and as public and private transportation providers come back into service, any member of the Group may propose demobilization. On a conference call the task force, in consultation with the King County ECC Operations Section Chief, and ECC Manager, will determine whether the event has stabilized to the point where this plan is no longer needed.

#### **DIRECTION AND CONTROL**

The Medical Appointment Transport Group Supervisor will coordinate the operation of the medical transport mission. The Group Supervisor will coordinate access to transport resources available within the region. Since transportation units may be drawn from a number of volunteer groups from

different jurisdictions, the Group Supervisor plays a key role in ensuring the mission is conducted in a safe and efficient manner. The Contact Unit also serves as the point of contact for the Evergreen Hospital Nurse Line.

Participating organizations are expected to provide additional staffing, as needed, to ensure the Medical Appointment Transport Group has sufficient personnel to take incoming calls, dispatch and track units.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Given that more than one entity may provide transportation and each entity may have different communication capabilities, the communication plan will generally favor the simplest process that is easiest to manage. The entities providing transportation will develop the best communication system that works for them under the coordination of the Medical Appointment Transport Group Leader.

## **LOGISTICS**

Potential transport resources include but are not limited to:

1. King County Search and Rescue 4x4 team: The Search and Rescue team includes volunteers who have four-wheel drive vehicles.
2. Seattle Auxiliary Communications Service: ACS volunteers use their personal vehicles to provide transport.
3. Community Medical Technicians
4. Catholic Community Services
5. Senior Services
6. EMS
7. HopeLink: Medicaid patients only

(See Attachment 1 for a list of resources of medical transport agencies)

All volunteer drivers must be affiliated volunteers for transport missions.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### Volunteer Organizations

Each jurisdiction that provides a driver under this plan is responsible for them as emergency volunteers under the State program (unless they are already public sector employees). When the Medical Appointment Transport Group is activated, King County ECC will make a formal request to the jurisdictions for people to staff the Medical Appointment Transport Group.

Jurisdictions that provide drivers and vehicles for the Medical Appointment Transport Group must verify the following information with their drivers:

- Current driver's license
- Current registration
- Proof of insurance
- Emergency Worker status if a volunteer

This information will be captured in the Appointment Scheduler.

Drivers will complete the Driver Transport Form for each trip, which includes the following information:

- Driver's name
- Passenger's name
- Time, mileage, and location at start
- Time, mileage, and location of pick up
- Time, mileage, and location of drop off
- Any additional information regarding the transport (if needed)

## **DEMOBILIZATION**

Demobilization planning begins as soon as the plan is activated. Triggers to consider for demobilization include:

- Demand for resources decreases
- Improved road conditions
- Fully operational transit systems

When the lead of the Medical Transport Group decides to demobilize the plan, he or she will be responsible for ensuring that all jurisdictions and partners are notified so that they can redirect any requests that come in after demobilization

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mobility Coalition

- Convene group to determine activation of plan

King County Office of Emergency Management

- Identify staff to fill all roles within the plan
- Provide space in the ECC for **Medical Transport Group** and provide resource support

Evergreen Nurse Line

- Take calls and evaluate the request and transfer the individual to ECC as appropriate

Northwest Healthcare Response Network

- Alert providers of critical appointment of possible plan implementation
- Seek clarity on appointments that might not be familiar to staff as critical
- Confirm that facilities providing critical appointments are open
- Maintain situational awareness and communicate any changes that might impact the need for this plan to the ESF 8 desk in the ECC

Public Health – Seattle & King County

- Maintain Medical Transport Plan

Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities

- Work with clients to ensure they are able to get themselves to critical appointments

Critical appointment clients

- Create alternate plans for transportation to critical appointments in anticipation of inclement weather

### **PLAN UPDATES**

This is a regional operational plan shared by all supporting jurisdictions. King County OEM will be responsible for facilitating updates to this plan and annual updates to the contact information and resource list and, or after events or exercises that test the plan. The plan will reside within the King County OEM Playbooks for ESF 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9.

### **TRAINING AND EXERCISES**

Those who could be tasked with working in the Medical Transport Group should be trained prior to the start of each winter weather season. This training should include familiarization with the plan and all relevant attachments.

Anyone who could be asked to be a driver should also receive an orientation to this plan.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Medical Transport Agencies in King County
2. Key Contacts
3. Transportation Organizations
4. Patient Transport Flow
5. Driver Transport Form
6. Appointment Referral Form
7. Appointment Scheduler
8. Call script