# Guidelines for Approving Social Transportation services for Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Medicaid Waiver Participants

 **Updated April 18, 2023**

**Medicaid Transportation Unit**

**Bureau of Community Integration and Alzheimer’s Disease**

***Waiver transportation is offered as a direct service to waiver participants to enable individuals to gain access to identified community resources, community services and specific activities identified in their service plan. Waiver Transportation supplements transportation provided by the Medicaid State Plan. It includes transportation for non-medical activities which support the waiver participant’s integration into the community. Waiver transportation is not a CFCO service.***

***All other options for transportation, such as informal supports, community services and public transportation must be explored and utilized prior to seeking this service. The least costly and most medically appropriate mode of transportation must be utilized.***

Waiver (social) transportation is available to all persons enrolled in the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) 1915(c) Medicaid waiver programs as long as the need for the service is supported by the participant’s plan of care (service plan/initial or revised)

1. **The prior authorization official (Regional Resource Development Center/RRDC) approves the waiver participant’s service plan which identifies the need for social transportation services.**

A waiver participant’s service plan outlines the general parameters of his or her social transportation needs. There must be specific goals in the waiver participant’s service plan that identify the need for social transportation. The needs can change or be amended based on the waiver participant’s stated goals. The goals must demonstrate and support the waiver participant’s need for integration into the community. The RRDC should only approve a travel request when the travel meets the guidelines for approval and are consistent with the participant’s goals contained in the service plan.

The RRDC can always request additional information from the Service Coordinator to assist with the decision to approve or disapprove social transportation reimbursement.

The Service Coordinator will complete the Transportation Grid based on the participant’s service plan and provide it to the RRDC with the service plan. The Grid includes the following information:

* Participant information;
* Service Coordinator information;
* Medical Justification form submission
* Waiver Transportation services requested;
* Trip destination/location (start and end points)
* Start date/end date; and
* Frequency;
* Projected Trip cost.

The RRDC will use the Grid coupled with Medicaid transportation policies to approve travel as appropriate. The eMedNY Transportation Manual is available at:

<https://www.emedny.org/ProviderManuals/Transportation/index.aspx>.

The grid will be submitted to the Transportation Contractor/Manager who may request additional information from the RRDC or Service Coordinator in order to effectuate the request. A copy of the service plan cover sheet, and signature page should be submitted with the grid when requesting services. This is done to confirm that the person is an active waiver participant with an approved service plan. The Transportation Contractor may request additional information prior to approving the request.

The cost projection for waiver transportation services will also be reflected in the service plan grid as a waiver service.

While a service plan may include a defined number of miles for a participant to travel during a given period of time, it is not the role of the RRDC to maintain a running tally of miles and cap the trips when the mileage has been reached. This is the role of the Service Coordinator.

The RRDS approves the service and the service limits (including waiver transportation) upon the approval of the plan. The RRDS needs to maintain an open line of communication with the Transportation Contractor and Service Coordinator to discuss on-going usage and appropriateness of the request.

The Transportation Contractor is responsible for authorizing transportation services as approved by the RRDC in accordance with Medicaid policy and the approved plan of care/service plan. This information is indicated on the Transportation *Grid*. A Verification Form is required to be on file with Transportation Manager for each waiver participant that requires Ambulette or a higher level of service. The Transportation Manager will notify the RRDC upon receipt and approval of the request. All questions regarding the request will be directed to the RRDC.

1. **Use of personal transportation**

 Transportation must be tied to the goals in the Plan of Care/Service Plan.

Use of transportation to non-medical locations not typically covered for the Medicaid population may only be requested when such transportation is necessary to meet a goal identified in the participant’s Plan of Care/Service Plan.

The first consideration prior to seeking Waiver transportation must be all informal supports, community services and public transit. When friends or family members are available to transport a participant, the friends or family members should be used to provide transportation. The individual friend or family member’s name must be listed in the Plan of Care/Service Plan, and he or she must maintain a current New York State driver’s license in good standing and drive an insured vehicle registered and licensed by New York State. It is expected that local travel to family events can be performed by one’s family.

Transportation should be provided in the most cost-effective way, and using the appropriate mode of transport. This service is not intended to replace/duplicate other services provided by ACCES-VR or any other existing vendor/waiver service providers.

1. **Use the medically appropriate mode of transportation.**

Within reason, the same mode of transportation used by the waiver participant for standard medical trips should be used for social trips, and vice versa.

The most cost-effective means of transportation needs to be considered. The mode of transportation should support the needs of the participant identified in the service plan. The Department requires a medical justification form for any mode of transport above taxi upstate and public transit in NYC.

1. **Travel within the common marketing area.**

Trips to grocery or department stores, church, restaurants, etc. should be within the same area that is frequented by others in the same community as the waiver participant. Travel outside the common marketing area can be allowed when acceptable justification is presented.

Prior approval by the Medicaid transportation contractor is necessary and justification should be sufficient to support the request. Each service plan should identify the common market area commutation. There must be goals in the service plan to support the trip outside of the area. The frequency ot the trips must be reasonable and subject to RRDC and Medicaid transportation contractor approval.

1. **Travel to similar destinations in a short time period can be questioned.**

It is reasonable to expect a waiver participant to travel to a grocery, department, office supply, electronics or other type of store and expect that all of his or her weekly shopping needs can be completed at the same store. Travel to multiple similar type stores on the same day and/or during the same week can be questioned. Waiver transportation is to be used to support skill development. There must be an identified and measurable outcome to the waiver service.

It is not reasonable to expect that all shopping can be accomplished in the same location. However, trips must be planned in advance with expected outcomes of time, location and appropriateness.

1. **Where possible, trips should be combined.**

For example, travel to return empty bottles for the deposit should be made at the same time the participant travels to a grocery store for shopping; and/or where a grocery store operates a pharmacy within, one can pick up his/her prescriptions while grocery shopping.

If the RRDS does not agree with the travel usage, the travel request should be denied.

The service coordination agency is ultimately responsible to ensure that the travel contained in a waiver participant’s individualized service plan is an appropriate and judicious use of public funds.

The duration of the service should be specified in the participant's service plan. Social Transportation may be used to help initiate a new activity or skill for a participant. An individual may also use social transportation for a reoccurring activity if it is detailed in his/her service plan; however, the time frame and frequency for using transportation in this capacity must be outlined. There must be an articulated frequency and start and endpoint for using social transportation to achieve a specific goal. Once the specific goal is met, the service for that activity should be discontinued. If the participant has more than one goal in his/her service plan that includes the use of waiver transportation, it is reasonable to expect a participant to complete his/her needs tied to each goal in the same location if possible on the same day during the week.

Before a transport is provided to a waiver participant, the transportation provider verifies the person’s eligibility for Medicaid on the date of service. Reimbursement is not made for services rendered to ineligible persons. The Service Coordinator and/or RRDC must consult the Transportation Management Contractor prior to requesting a trip. Trip cost is derived from using the NYS Fee schedule at: <http://www.emedny.org/ProviderManuals/Transportation/index.html>.

The Service Coordinator is responsible for maintaining complete and current records of the waiver transportation requested and provided.

The RRDS ultimately approves the travel as part of the Service Plan approval. As a result, the RRDS is providing prior authorization of the service in conjunction with the Transportation Contractor.

1. **Reimbursement for travel can be denied when the RRDC official determines that the destination does not support the participant’s integration into the community and service plan goals or when the Transportation Contractor establishes that the request is not supported by Medicaid guidance.**

Absent adequate justification, travel to destinations such as casinos, “smoke shops” on a Native American reservation, off-track betting parlors, adult entertainment businesses, hunting clubs, or bars **will not be approved and cannot be reimbursed. Travel to marijuana dispensing centers will not be approved.**

It is the choice of the waiver participant to travel to these destinations; however, other transportation supports in the community should be used. Medicaid funds cannot be used for these activities.

The participant, SC and the RRDS must exercise good judgment when requesting and approving transportation services. Examples of approved trips need to be included in the Service Plan and consideration must be given to the fact that the trip is funded with Medicaid dollars.

**Any utilization of waiver transportation must be supported by the individual’s goals in their service plan.**

Waiver transportation is an individualized service and should not be used for group trips, outings and social events. Activities must be socially integrated and HCBS compliant.