The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Human Services (DHS) are jointly providing guidance to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) providers, including day services and residential providers, that offer transportation services to high-risk people. Our shared goal is protecting drivers and occupants and slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community. These health and safety considerations may be applied to a wide variety of transportation services although they may not suit every unique situation.

As communities offer services amidst the risk of widespread COVID-19 transmission, it is important to consider how participants will safely get to and from facilities and other settings. Enhanced precautions should be taken for people who are at high risk for developing serious disease or complications associated with COVID-19, or those who have higher potential to spread disease to other household members who may be at higher risk. For instance, people who live in congregate settings, are older adults, or those who would be unable to maintain social distancing and other safety measures may use various forms of transportation for non-emergency services and could especially benefit from additional safety precautions. This guidance is intended to advise providers on best practices and does not mandate specific actions.

General considerations

We recommend that providers take the following safety precautions for both drivers and passengers to reduce the risk of COVID-19 during transport to and from homes, facilities, and other settings.

- Follow statewide updates and executive orders in order to stay compliant with statewide mandates. More information on current statewide requirements can be found at Minnesota COVID-19 Response (https://mn.gov/covid19/).
- Providers should communicate in advance to staff, people using transportation services, and their caregivers on how they can best protect themselves during transport, including:
Guidance for Facilities Providing Transportation Services During COVID-19

- Encourage daily monitoring for fever and other symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or new loss of taste or smell). People should stay home when sick.

- Quarantine, stay home, and do not use transportation services when they have had close contact exposure (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more over the course of a day) with a person with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. Follow the MDH Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

Follow general COVID-19 prevention measures:

- Avoid non-essential travel.

- Wear a mask or face covering per Governor's Executive Order 20-81 (www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-81.pdf).

- As supply allows, drivers and passengers should wear a well-fitting face mask, unless they are unable due to a developmental, medical, or behavioral condition. For more information on how to create a well-fitting face mask, see CDC: Improve How Your Mask Protects You (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html).

- Wash hands for 20 seconds immediately before and after transit, and when hands are visibly soiled, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

- People who help passengers get in or out of a vehicle, fasten safety belts, secure wheelchairs in the vehicle, or handle passengers’ belongings should use hand sanitizer after each interaction.

- Do not touch face with unwashed hands.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of one’s elbow.

- Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet from people outside one’s household.

- Avoid touching surfaces that are frequently touched by drivers or other passengers (e.g., door frames, door handles, windows).

- Eat and drink outside of the vehicle when other people are not around.


Address the following protocols specifically for drivers:

- Drivers should monitor for symptoms daily, be screened for temperature and other symptoms prior to starting their shift and must not to come to work ill. Drivers should also notify their supervisor immediately if they experience symptoms during their work shift so they can stop working.

- Drivers should practice social distancing, hand hygiene (washing hands when able and frequently using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol), and respiratory etiquette. They should also be trained to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as resources allow.
▪ When transporting ill participants, drivers should wear respirators (N95 or equivalent) or well-fitting face masks and eye protection (face shield, goggles, or safety glasses with side shields). Gloves should also be considered if close contact is required.

▪ Ensure that eye protection does not impede the driver’s vision, such that it would become unsafe to operate a motor vehicle. If vision concerns exist with the use of eyewear, drivers may avoid placing passengers alongside of or within 6 feet of the driver’s seat and only wear eye protection when at increased risk of exposure, such as when occupants are getting in or out of the vehicle.

▪ Closely maintain logs to document daily routes and interactions between all drivers and passengers, including the driver’s shift times and each participant’s pick-up and drop-off times.

▪ Provide visual cues (signs, tape, or floor decals) to assign staggered seating for all passengers.

▪ Use larger vehicles to maximize distance (up to 6 feet when possible) between the driver and each occupant.

▪ Consider making more trips with fewer passengers on each trip to increase distance between people.

▪ Avoid offering transportation services to people from different households, facilities, or programs whenever possible.

▪ Improve ventilation in the vehicle by opening windows or setting the air ventilation/conditioning on non-recirculation mode.

▪ Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces in and on the vehicle (e.g., steering wheel, door handles, seatbelt buckles, radio and temperature dials) regularly and immediately after transporting an ill person.

Detailed guidelines can be found at [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html).

**Personal vehicles**

If it is necessary to transport people, social distancing is encouraged. People who live in private residences may benefit from being transported by a household member in a personal vehicle since it minimizes interactions and risks from other people outside of their household. However, transportation in a personal vehicle may not always allow for social distancing; therefore, whenever possible, these vehicles should only be used to transport people within the same household. If a facility or program is needing to use personal vehicles to transport people from different households, a single passenger seated in the back row of the vehicle is recommended. If it is necessary to provide transportation to multiple passengers during a single trip, use a large vehicle and staggered seating assignments with visual cues to maximize social distancing.

▪ All riders in the personal vehicles should wear a face covering.
If possible, increase the ventilation in the vehicle.

In addition to the above guidelines, we also recommend the following for personal vehicles:

- Consider limiting the number of passengers in the vehicle to only those who are necessary. When able, try to choose a driver who is not considered to be high risk for serious disease.
- Use hand sanitizer after using items such as parking meters or pay stations.

### Multi-passenger commercial vehicles

If it is necessary to use passenger vans, shuttle buses, or other vehicles to provide transportation services to passengers from multiple households, MDH and DHS recommend providers follow these precautions in addition to those previously listed:

- Prepare for added tasks (e.g., cleaning) and more frequent rides in order to reduce the number of people in the vehicle at the same time.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces in and on the vehicle at the beginning and end of each shift, at a minimum, and immediately after transporting an ill person.
- Consider stocking vehicles with extra medical-grade face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, facial tissue, and lined waste baskets for easy-access use by the driver and passengers.

### Public transportation

Due to the unpredictable nature and risk of COVID-19 exposures, public transportation should be considered the least preferred option for high-risk people who are receiving HCBS services. High-risk people could consider using public transportation as long as they are not ill and have not had an exposure with a person with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. In addition to the precautions above, additional precautions that HCBS providers should emphasize to these people include:

- Stay up to date with local transit authorities for the latest information on changes to services and procedures.
- Wear a well-fitting face mask.
- Do not touch face with unwashed hands.
- Look for social distancing instructions (e.g., floor decals or signs) and consider skipping a row of seats between other riders, if possible.
- Schedule appointments and travel during non-peak hours when fewer people are around.
- Consider packing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, sanitizing wipes, facial tissue, and an extra face mask to ensure adequate supplies are available during travel.
- Avoid touching frequently touched surfaces such as touchscreens, ticket machines, handrails, buttons, and benches as much as possible.
▪ Use touchless payment and doors when available, or exchange credit cards or cash by placing them on a counter rather than by hand, if possible.

▪ Clean hands with hand sanitizer after touching public surfaces.

▪ Use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds if hands are visibly soiled, when arriving at destination.

Resources


▪ Minnesota Department of Transportation: Transit in Minnesota COVID-19 Information (https://dot.state.mn.us/transit/covid.html)