

Interim Guidance for Facilities Providing Non-Emergency Transportation Services during COVID-19

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Human Services (DHS) are jointly providing guidance to Home and Community-Based Service (HCBS) providers, including day services and residential providers, that offer transportation services to high-risk participants. 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 instituted for individuals who are at high risk¹ 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, individuals who live in congregate settings, are older adults², or those who would be unable to maintain social distancing and other safety measures may utilize 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.**

¹ [CDC: People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html)

² [CDC: Older Adults \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html)

General Considerations

We recommend that providers take the following safety precautions 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 in compliance with statewide mandates. More information on current statewide requirements can be found at [Minnesota COVID-19 Response \(https://mn.gov/covid19/\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/).
- Providers should communicate in advance to staff, participants using transportation services, and their caregivers to provide and reinforce recommendations on how they can best protect themselves during transport, including:
 - Encourage daily monitoring for fever and other symptoms consistent with COVID-19.³ Individuals should stay home when sick or when they have had prolonged close contact⁴ with a person with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days, regardless if they seek testing and receive negative test results.
 - Follow these general COVID-19 prevention measures:
 - Drivers and passengers should wear a cloth face covering for source control, if able.
 - 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.
 - Individuals 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.
 - Avoid touching surfaces that are frequently touched by drivers or other passengers (e.g., door frames, door handles, windows).
 - Learn more from [CDC: Protect Yourself When Using Transportation \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html).

³ [CDC: Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)

⁴ Prolonged close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a person with confirmed COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period or having unprotected direct contact with infectious secretions or excretions of the person with confirmed COVID-19.

NON-EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DURING COVID-19

- Address the following in protocols for drivers:
 - Drivers should monitor for symptoms daily, screened for temperature and other symptoms prior to starting their shift, and advised not to come to work if 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),⁵ as resources allow.
 - When transporting ill participants, drivers should wear a surgical face mask or N95 respirator and eye protection (e.g., face shield, goggles, or safety glasses with side shields). Gloves and gown should also be considered if close contact is required.
 - Ensure that the 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 six feet of the driver's seat and only wear eye protection while occupants are getting on or off the vehicle or otherwise moving around, thus increasing the risk of exposure to the driver.
 - When transporting apparently healthy participants, drivers should wear a surgical face mask and consider wearing eye protection, due to potential risks associated with disease spread from asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic people.
 - Closely maintain logs in order 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 (e.g., signs, tape, or floor decals) to assign staggered seating for all passengers.
 - Use larger vehicles to maximize distance between the driver and each occupant.
 - Consider making more trips with fewer passengers on each trip to increase distance between vehicle occupants.
 - Avoid offering transportation services to participants 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 ill individuals.

⁵ Training resources for donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) PPE are available at [CDC: Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html) and [MDH: Donning and Doffing Video Vignettes \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hcid/videos.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hcid/videos.html)

- Review [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html\)](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. Participants 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 individuals 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 individuals within the same household. If a facility or program is needing to use personal vehicles to transport individuals from different households, a single passenger with the 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.

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 necessary and when able, try to choose a driver who is not considered to be high risk.
- 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 minimize the number of individuals 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 ill individuals.
- Consider stocking vehicles with extra 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 participants who are receiving HCBS services. High-risk

NON-EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DURING COVID-19

individuals could consider using public transportation as long as they are not ill and have not had close contact 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 individuals include:

- Wear a cloth face covering.
- 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 will likely be using public transportation.
- Stay up-to-date with local transit authorities for the latest information on changes to services and procedures.
- Consider packing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, sanitizing wipes, facial tissue, and an extra cloth face covering 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

- [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html)
- [CDC: Protect Yourself When Using Transportation \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html)
- [Minnesota Department of Transportation: Transit in Minnesota COVID-19 Information \(https://dot.state.mn.us/transit/covid.html\)](https://dot.state.mn.us/transit/covid.html)



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