

Guidance for Facilities Providing Transportation Services during COVID-19

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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 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 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, older adults, or people who are unable to maintain social distancing and other safety measures may use various forms of transportation for nonemergency 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.

- Providers should communicate in advance to staff, and to people and their caregivers using transportation services, how they can best protect themselves during transport:
 - People should monitor daily 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). They should stay home when sick.
 - People not fully vaccinated should quarantine, stay home, and not use transportation services when they have had close contact exposure (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more over the

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course of a day) with a person with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. They should get tested immediately after an exposure; and, if the test is negative, get tested again three to five days after the exposure.

- Fully vaccinated staff or people using transportation services do not need to quarantine after having a close contact exposure to a person with COVID-19. However, due to their work with a high-risk population, they should get tested immediately, and if the test is negative, they should get tested again three to five days after exposure, even if they do not have symptoms. This is similar to recommendations for health care workers. They should also wear a mask indoors in public until they get a negative test result or for 14 days following exposure.
- Follow [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) for more information on who does and does not need to quarantine.
- Follow general COVID-19 prevention measures:
 - Wear a mask, per federal, state, or local laws.
 - Providers of transportation services may choose to require masks as they see fit, for example, based on county positivity rates (the number of people who test positive among all the people tested) or the percent of people vaccinated.
 - 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.
 - Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow.
- Address the following protocols specifically for drivers:
 - Drivers should monitor for symptoms daily and be screened for temperature and other symptoms prior to starting their shift, and they 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.
 - Due to the risk of transmission in vehicles, those who transport ill patients should follow the standard precautions and personal protective equipment recommendations that apply to health care workers who provide direct care to COVID-19 patients. In general, appropriate personal protective equipment for such care and transportation should include respirators (N95 or equivalent), eye protection (face shield, goggles, or safety glasses with side shields), and, if direct contact is required, gloves. For more information refer to [COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Grid for Congregate Care Settings](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf).

- Closely maintain logs to document daily routes and interactions between all drivers and passengers, including the driver's shift times and each participant's pickup and drop-off times.
- Provide visual cues (signs, tape, or floor decals) to assign staggered seating for all passengers.
- As available, 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.

Personal vehicles

If it is necessary to transport people, social distancing is encouraged. People who live in private residences may benefit from being transported in a personal vehicle by a household member, 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, personal vehicles should be used to transport only people from the same household. If a facility or program needs 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 for 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 well-fitted masks.
- If possible, increase 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 at high risk for seriously ill from COVID-19 disease.
- Use hand sanitizer after using items like parking meters or pay stations.

Multipassenger 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 trips 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 with easy access 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 people who are at high-risk for complications from COVID-19. High-risk people may 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. CDC requires masks on buses, trains, trolleys, subway trains, ride-shares, maritime transportation, commercial aircraft, and other public transportation. Visit [CDC: Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html).
- Do not touch your 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 nonpeak 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 and when arriving at the destination.

Resources

- [CDC: Different Groups of People \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html)
- [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)
- [Minnesota Department of Transportation: Transit in Minnesota COVID-19 Information \(dot.state.mn.us/transit/covid.html\)](https://dot.state.mn.us/transit/covid.html)



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