

GRAB AND GO PRACTICES

Promoting Independence through Travel Training: A Guide to Using Shared Ride Alternatives with Students

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REIMAGINING TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Traditional transition planning for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often emphasizes a “hand-off” to adult services and identifying day programs that align with family schedules or support needs. While common, this approach misses opportunities to embrace more engaging models of postsecondary life.

Thanks to initiatives like *Employment First* and the *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008*, students with IDD now have access to transformative options. These include competitive, integrated, paid employment opportunities and inclusive [KA1] postsecondary education programs, enabling young people with intensive support needs to engage in the same activities as their peers.

TRANSPORTATION: A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition planning must also prioritize transportation and related training. Without reliable and accessible transportation, students with disabilities face limited opportunities for work, education, and community engagement—especially in areas without robust public transit.

In Massachusetts, these types of college-based transition services incorporate training to help students move from school-sponsored transportation to public transit systems. This training often includes navigating city subways, fixed bus routes, or paratransit

services for eligible students. These skills significantly expand students’ independence and access to experiences.

For students in rural areas lacking public transit, alternative solutions like shared ride services are gaining traction. School districts collaborating with educational coaches are using these options to teach students how to travel to work, school, and community activities. With targeted travel training, supported by educational coaches, students with IDD are successfully learning new ways to get to work and access their communities.

Best Practices at Salem State University’s Community of Scholars

Salem State University’s *Community of Inclusive Scholars* demonstrates a strong model of collaboration with school districts. Educational coaches are trained to prioritize travel training as a fundamental component of transition preparation, especially for students participating in college programs. The program reimburses coaches for mileage or public transportation tickets.

This holistic approach to transition planning—incorporating education, employment, and transportation—sets the stage for students with IDD to achieve greater independence and meaningful participation in their communities.

Steps for Using Uber with Students

1. Explore the App Together

- » The student and coach should explore the Uber app together. The student must have a credit card on file before scheduling any rides.



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This card must belong to the student or their family.

- » We recommend watching step-by-step instructions on YouTube to help the student understand how to:
 - set up the app
 - choose ride options, such as rideshare, independent, or XL
 - tip appropriately

2. Practice Calling an Uber

- » Once both the student and coach feel comfortable with the app, the student will call an Uber.
- » The coach will review the vehicle's details (make, model, color, and license plate) to ensure they match the app's description.
 - Before the student enters the vehicle, they should confirm the license plate with the coach and ask the driver to verify who they are picking up.
 - After they confirm all the information, the student and coach will get into the vehicle and ride together.

3. Review Tipping Etiquette

- » Upon arriving at their destination, the coach will discuss tipping with the student. While the student decides whether to add a tip, the coach's guidance is vital for determining an appropriate amount.

4. Transition to Independent Rides

- » After several successful practice rides with the coach, the student progresses to riding alone. The coach follows in a separate vehicle to ensure the student's safety and independence during this transition.

Exploring Additional Transportation Options

The Ride and Lyft via MBTA:

- » Districts and students are encouraged to explore The Ride, a service offering discounted rates through Lyft after completing a certain number of rides. Although the application process can be challenging, many students have successfully used The Ride and transitioned to Lyft for their transportation needs. Establishing a consistent schedule enhances The Ride's reliability; however,

availability may be limited in certain areas of Massachusetts. Additionally, The Ride now collaborates with the MBTA to offer access to Uber rides as well. For more details, visit this blog post: [Uber and MBTA Partnership](#).

MBTA Transportation Access Pass (TAP):

- » Individuals with disabilities are eligible for reduced MBTA fares through the Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard. This pass provides significant savings and improved accessibility. To learn more about eligibility and the application process, visit: [MBTA Transportation Access Pass](#).

Local Ride-Sharing Services:

- » Since Uber and Lyft can be costly, students are encouraged to explore local ride-sharing options. For example, the [Salem Skipper](#) offers affordable transportation within Salem and extends to neighboring areas, including Beverly, Peabody, and Danvers.

Fading Support for Public Transportation

For rideshares, trains, or buses, coaches should use the same gradual fading of support. Travel training introduces students to new transportation options, which promotes independence and prepares them for public transit.

Removing transportation barriers significantly eases the transition into employment and supports long-term success.

Some individuals with disabilities and their parents or guardians may have serious concerns about using shared ride services. These concerns often relate to personal safety, vehicle accessibility, and communication between the driver and rider. SafeHome.org acknowledges these issues and offers resources to help prevent unsafe experiences. Their website features a **“Guide to Rideshares and Public Transport Safety,”** which provides practical strategies for a secure rideshare experience. The guide covers safety tips, protecting personal items and identification, navigation and communication strategies, leveraging technology, and pre-planning for rides.

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The Center for Inclusive Higher Education and Transition is dedicated to advancing higher education and transition initiatives across Massachusetts. Our mission is to promote positive post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities. We achieve this by offering professional development, training, and support to families, practitioners, advocates, and community partners.

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