

BUILDING A TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM AND BARRIERS TO TRANSPORTATION IN RURAL AREAS

CIL for Western Wisconsin (CILWW)

Presenter:

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How do you use volunteer drivers to meet the transportation needs of persons with disabilities living in rural areas?

“The New Freedom (NF) Transportation Program”

Why was NF needed?

- Lack of affordable and accessible transportation options for persons with disabilities in our service area.
- Only Medicaid funded trips for:
 - Medical
 - Dental
 - Counseling

Why did CILWW get in the transportation business?

- Lack of transportation options a major barriers for CILWW consumers living in rural areas
- 3 year strategic plan called for addressing barriers to transportation for persons with disabilities
- Opportunities came our way!

What you need to know before you begin!

- What is the scope of the problem?
 - Survey consumers. Where are they going and where would they like to go?
- Who are the current transportation providers?
 - Whose providing transportation? Specialized medical, Veterans programs, aging programs
 - Where are they going?

Collaboration is the key

- Who are the “players” when it comes to transportation in rural areas?
- Find opportunities to collaborate
 - Regional Transportation Coordination Plan, required by every state.
 - Be at the table to discuss the transportation needs of persons with disabilities

Collaboration Example

- Invited everyone involved in transportation to the table (funders, providers, stakeholders, consumers)
- Created the WWRTCC (Western Wisconsin Regional Transportation Collaborating Council)
- Mission: Develop transportation options for all transit dependent persons!

Collaboration Example Continued

- CILWW invited everyone to a “Transportation Summit” to discuss the gaps in transportation.
- Keep the momentum going!
 - Work with partners to advocate for increased State transportation dollars and program expansion
 - Regional Coordination Plans

Working with other ILC's

- Look for opportunities to work with other Independent Living Centers in your state
- Currently CILWW is working with three of the eight rural ILC's in Wisconsin (another one to join in the near future)
- Strength in numbers with ILC's working together!

How the program began

- Collaboration between three organizations!
 - **St. Croix County Office on Aging:** Provided the initial seed money of \$3000 dollars
 - 85.21 dollars (weren't providing rides to person with disabilities)
 - **St. Croix Valley Disability Coalition:** Sought out funding for a Transportation Coordinator
 - United Way funded disability advocacy group
 - **Center for Independent Living for Western WI:** Became the fiscal agent for the program.
 - Provides payroll for Transportation Coordinator
 - Reimbursement to drivers and vouchers

How the program expanded

- Foundation grant to expand transportation to CILWW's ten county service area
- Received 5310 transportation dollars
 - This program (49 U.S.C. 5310) provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs.

How the program expanded - continued

- Program expanded to 18 counties in western and north western Wisconsin
 - Collaboration with North Country Independent Living voucher program
- Contracting with Counties to provide transportation
 - State 85.21 program counties receive to provide elderly and disabled transportation

How is the program funded

- New Freedom Grant :Federal funding for the Elderly & Disabled. (53.10)
- 85.21 contracts with County ADRC's (5)
- Community Foundations or Grants
 - Hometown Health Grant
 - Otto Bremer Foundation
 - Hugh J Anderson Foundation

How is the program funded - continued

- Managed Care Organizations:
 - Inclusa,
 - Lake Land
 - CWI/MyChoice
- IRIS (Self-Directed Support Program)
- Department of Workforce Development
- Recovery Wellness Consortium (Crisis)

How the program works – driver recruitment

- Traditional “Volunteer Driver” program
 - Recruit drivers from the community, making sure to be aware of all programs providing transportation to insure no services are being duplicated.
 - Drivers reimbursed at the Federal rate currently \$.56 per mile.
 - Tear off sheets with phone numbers to call

How the programs works- driver recruitment (slide 2)

- Digital Headlines in Senior Center Newsletters. (across our service areas)
- When they click on the headline of the ad we placed it will take them to our website, once there, they can fill out the driver application.
- Letters are sent to churches, Veterans clubs, Legions, any place where crowds gather.

How the program works – driver training (slide 3)

- Regional Driver Training:
 - Once a year a Regional training for drivers from any program is held.
 - An appreciation lunch is served along with raffles and prizes.
 - Drivers are trained on HIPAA, Dementia, Road rage, Mental health, Blood Borne Pathogens and Universal Precautions.

How the programs works driver training

- Individual Driver training
 - Drivers are given the drivers manual and meet for 1 ½ hours with trainer.
 - Drivers are trained on Our Mission statement, Who we are, What we believe, how their role as a volunteer driver is vital, logs, Boundaries, Copays, Incident reporting, Confidentiality, Alcohol and Drugs, Ethics, social media and sexual harassments.

How the program works - coordination

- Collaborating and sharing resources with other Agencies, Committees and Boards
 - WAMM (Wis. Assoc. of Mobility Managers)
 - WILN (Wis. Independent Living Network)
 - Transit Commissions/ St Croix
 - Transportation Coordinating Committees
 - RWC/Dunn
 - Barron County Transportation Committee

What are the barriers to using Volunteer Drivers?

- Recruitment of Drivers
 - Harder during Pandemic!
- No real financial stability
 - Cuts in State or Federal funding
 - Competitive Grants (more applicants)
 - Insurance laws for Volunteer drivers
 - Ask your federal legislators to support legislation to increase the volunteer driver reimbursement rate to match the federal rate!

How effective has the program been?

- “If you build it, they will come”
 - Underestimated the need!
- Difficult to keep up with the increased need as people learned about the program
 - Increase of 25% or more per year
- Finding additional funding has been the biggest hurdle to overcome
 - Operated in the “red” first three years
 - Average increase cost of \$10,000 per year

How effective has the program been (contd)?

- In 2005:
 - Total number of trips: 512
 - Total trip miles: 36,560
 - Total transportation expense: \$29,263
- In 2020:
 - Total number trips: 21520
 - Total trip miles: 1072923
 - Total transportation expense: \$621,851.87

Where are people going?

- 4 Year Average

- Medical increased by 210% since
- Social/Recreational: increased by 88%
- Education/Training: increased by 74%
- Independent Living increased by 55%
- Employment increased by 125%
- Nutrition increased by 36%
- No shows and cancellation dropped by -8%

What have we learned!

- Volunteer Drivers & Vouchers are a great resource to meet the transportation needs of persons with disabilities living in very rural areas.
- When used in coordination with other transportation programs, it can provide a level of transportation where no other options existed!



BARRIERS TO TRANSPORTATION IN RURAL AREAS

Barriers to Transportation (slide1)

- Limited Providers in Rural Areas!
 - In a majority of rural towns, there are no transportation options, not even taxi or Uber
 - Only transportation is Medicaid funded for medical, if there are MA providers!
 - Issue of reimbursement for unloaded miles!
 - County transportation for persons with disabilities and older adults is limited to nutrition (only rides to meal sites).

Barriers to Transportation (slide 2)

- Funding for Transportation
 - No requirement to provide transportation services (paratransit) if no public transportation.
 - In Wisconsin, it's the 85.21 program that funds transportation for persons with disabilities and older adults, received no funding increase in this year's State budget.

Barriers to Transportation (slide 3)

- Funding for Transportation continued
 - A limited number of counties or cities are willing to put up taxpayer dollars to fund transportation!
 - Cost of providing transportation services!
 - A lack of funding for existing transportation programs makes it hard to fund new programs!

Barriers to Transportation (slide 4)

- Politicians don't understand the problems!
 - Everyone has or should have their own vehicle!
 - Need to be self-sufficient
 - Don't see a need in my district!
 - Unwilling to increase rates for Medicaid transportation
 - One of the main reasons there's a lack of providers
 - Public transportation is a waste of taxpayer dollars!

Barriers to Transportation (slide 5)

- Disparity in funding for transportation!
 - Metropolitan and Urban areas get all the funding!
- Changing demographics in rural areas
 - Rural areas of the United States are getting older!
 - Mass exodus to larger cities is creating a lack of providers so people can remain in the community.

Question and Answer

- Any questions at this time?
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