



# **Guide to Medical Transportation** *for Healthcare Professionals*

*Brought to you by Angel Flight West, a charitable organization of volunteers dedicated to eliminating transportation as a barrier to healthcare.*

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# GUIDE TO MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

## Identifying the problem

Sometimes, a patient needs care your facility can't offer. So you refer them to a specialist. Their insurance -- private or public -- will cover the treatment but they have no way to get there.

Health care access is a complex issue, and inadequate transportation is one of the primary reasons that low-income families miss, or forego scheduling, medical appointments. It is a daunting barrier, second only to cost.

For some patients, the care they need may only be a few miles away, but without a car or convenient bus, they have no way to get there. For others, the ones who need to travel great distances, it's even more complicated.

Telemedicine is gaining ground. Blood pressure, heart rate, and weight can be monitored through wearable technology. Patients are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own health. But too often, technology and lifestyle changes aren't enough.

A person's health shouldn't be jeopardized because of geography or economics. Yet this is the case for far too many people.

We can help.



The Journal of American Health reports that 51 % of parents identified transportation barriers as the primary reason for their children missing clinic appointments.

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## Transportation options

Every community is different.



In some cities, nonprofit agencies and faith-based groups operate door-to-door van service for qualified individuals.



Some hospitals arrange transportation for their patients.



A nonprofit transportation service may focus on a particular illness, like cancer, or on a specific demographic, such as military veterans.

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Seniors, people with disabilities, and Medicaid recipients are eligible for free or reduced fares on public transportation.



Many of these types of agencies also serve adjacent rural areas.

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## URBAN & SUBURBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Most major metropolitan areas have multiple options available for those needing assistance with local transportation. Some are available to the general public, others to specific populations.

### EXAMPLES:

Washington State	<p><i>People to People</i> arranges ground transportation to and from medical appointments.</p> <p><a href="http://www.pfp.org/pfp/PFP/AboutUs.aspx">http://www.pfp.org/pfp/PFP/AboutUs.aspx</a></p>
Greater Washington, DC	<p><i>MedStar Health</i> has partnered with <i>Uber</i> to drive patients to and from medical appointments.</p> <p><a href="http://www.medstarhealth.org/mhs/ride-with-uber/">http://www.medstarhealth.org/mhs/ride-with-uber/</a></p>
Phoenix, Arizona	<p><i>Valley Metro's Dial-A-Ride</i> program serves Phoenix and surrounding communities, with deeply discounted fares ranging from \$1 to \$4.</p> <p><a href="http://www.valleymetro.org/paying_your_fare/dial_a_ride_fares/">http://www.valleymetro.org/paying_your_fare/dial_a_ride_fares/</a></p>
Cleveland, Ohio	<p><i>University Hospitals Parma Medical Center</i> operates a free door-to-door van for patients who are scheduled for a test, procedure, or same-day surgery and have no means of transportation.</p> <p><a href="http://www.uhhospitals.org/parma/patients-and-visitors/your-visit/patient-courtesy-transportation">http://www.uhhospitals.org/parma/patients-and-visitors/your-visit/patient-courtesy-transportation</a></p>
Maryland	<p><i>Call-A-Ride Service</i> offers taxi vouchers to qualified patients.</p> <p><a href="http://www.taxiaccess.org">http://www.taxiaccess.org</a></p>
San Diego, California	<p><i>DAV Transportation Services</i> provides medical transportation services to military veterans</p> <p><a href="http://sandiego.networkofcare.org/veterans/index.aspx">http://sandiego.networkofcare.org/veterans/index.aspx</a></p>
Des Moines, Iowa	<p><i>DART Para</i> transit service offers door-to-door service for seniors and persons with permanent or temporary disabilities.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ridedart.com/services/paratransit">https://www.ridedart.com/services/paratransit</a></p>
San Francisco, California	<p><i>San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's "Lifeline"</i> program offers a 50% discount to all low-income residents. However, the passes are only valid on Muni buses (not BART) and must be purchased monthly. Applications are required.</p>
Most metropolitan cities	<p><i>Bus &amp; Rail Travel</i> - Seniors, disabled individuals, and most Medicaid patients are eligible for free or reduced fare/</p> <p>Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Kansas City, and Seattle all operate a two-tiered fare system, with low-income passengers eligible for free or greatly reduced fares.</p>
Nationwide	<p>AARP publishes a state-by-state guide to transportation resources for seniors.</p> <p><a href="http://docplayer.net/1645314-State-by-state-guide-to-transportation-assistance.html">http://docplayer.net/1645314-State-by-state-guide-to-transportation-assistance.html</a></p>

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## RURAL COMMUNITIES

People who live in rural communities face even greater challenges. Bus and rail service are seldom available, and without a reliable car, many patients give up and simply forego critical appointments.

### Rural Primary Care Physicians Report That Their Patients Have Greater Difficulties Accessing Local Specialty Care

*"How difficult is it for your patients to obtain specialty services in your area?"*

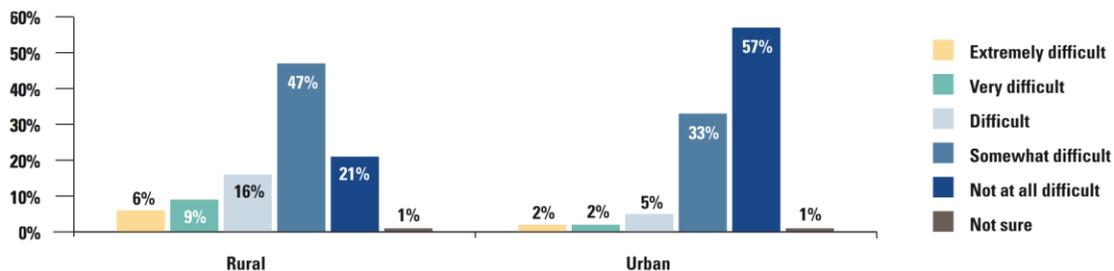


Figure 2.4; Source: UnitedHealth Group/Harris Interactive Survey of Primary Care Physicians, May 2011

With so many rural clinics closing their doors, other agencies are stepping in to bridge the transportation gap.

#### EXAMPLES:

Arkansas	The <i>NET (Non-Emergency Transportation) Program</i> offers unlimited rides to and from appointments for patients on Medicaid, or Medicare, nursing home residents, and other qualified individuals. <a href="http://www.arkidsfirst.com/net.htm">http://www.arkidsfirst.com/net.htm</a>
Central Washington	<i>People to People</i> arranges ground transportation to and from medical appointments. <a href="http://www.pfp.org/pfp/PFP/AboutUs.aspx">http://www.pfp.org/pfp/PFP/AboutUs.aspx</a>
Greenville, SC	<i>Above and Beyond Care Services</i> staff will transport clients to a doctor's office, health clinic, rehabilitation facility, dialysis center, etc., for non-emergency, medical services. <a href="https://scaccess.communityos.org/zf/taxonomy/detail/id/468199">https://scaccess.communityos.org/zf/taxonomy/detail/id/468199</a>
Oklahoma	<i>MyRide</i> is a clearinghouse for transportation resources, operated by the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. <a href="https://apps.ok.gov/okdrs/myride/app/">https://apps.ok.gov/okdrs/myride/app/</a>
Senior Transport	<i>Rides in Sight</i> finds rides for seniors in communities across the country. <a href="http://www.ridesinsight.org">http://www.ridesinsight.org</a>

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## LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL - PAID SERVICES

For patients with financial resources, or insurance that covers medical transportation, there are a number of options.

### EXAMPLES:

Airlift insurance	Oregon's <i>Life Flight Network</i> offers a family plan in a program that provides free emergency airlift services to its members. Cost is \$60 per year. <a href="https://www.lifeflight.org/membership/lfn-membership">https://www.lifeflight.org/membership/lfn-membership</a>
Air ambulance	A one-way domestic flight in an air ambulance services can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$50,000. Some insurance policies cover this type of transportation, with co-pays generally between \$50 and \$500. <i>Grace on Wings</i> is a charitable air service that operates a plane customized for ambulance transport. The organization pays for the pilot, medical staff, and aircraft but the patient must cover the costs of fuel, maintenance, and insurance. <a href="http://www.graceonwings.org">http://www.graceonwings.org</a>
Commercial travel	Bus, rail, air

## LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL - FREE SERVICES

All states are required to make non-emergent medical transportation (NEMT) available to Medicaid beneficiaries to assure their access to medically necessary services.

But each state has the option to provide it as a State Plan service or as an administrative expense, with either option eligible for federal Medicaid matching funds. Some states provide NEMT as a service through their contracts with managed care organizations.

You can find how NEMT works in your state by visiting:

<http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/non-emergency-medical-transportation-services/> and click on your state from the menu on the left side of the page.

Additionally, some health care plans cover non-emergency medical transportation, like Molina Healthcare in New Mexico. Check with your patient's provider.

### On The Ground

Mileage reimbursement	<i>The Department of Health &amp; Human Services</i> will reimburse drivers who transport themselves or others to medical and dental appointments that are covered by Medicaid. Rates vary by state, and trips over 25 miles must be pre-approved. <a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/ombp/medicaid/transportation/documents/transportationsummary.pdf">http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/ombp/medicaid/transportation/documents/transportationsummary.pdf</a>
Fuel subsidies	State programs, faith-based groups and non-profit agencies can sometimes help with gasoline purchases.

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## Bus Vouchers & Train Tickets

*Free Gas USA* accepts grant applications from individuals who need gasoline to drive to medical appointments and other essential destinations.

<http://www.freegasusa.org>

*The Salvation Army* will provide fuel vouchers in emergency situations, but their funding is limited.

[http://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/free\\_gas\\_vouchers.html](http://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/free_gas_vouchers.html)

*Angel Wheels to Healing* provides bus vouchers, train tickets and gas cards for trips under 300 miles (one-way). Occasionally they will assist with longer trips and with local trips as well, particularly for cancer patients traveling daily for treatment.

<http://angelwheels.org>

## In The Air

A network of charitable aviation organizations uses volunteer pilots, donated commercial tickets, and corporate aircraft to provide **free** air transportation for people who need to travel long distances to get the medical care they need.

### EXAMPLES:

#### Corporate aircraft

*Corporate Angel Network* fills empty seats on corporate aircraft for cancer patients who need to travel more than 1,000 miles.

<http://www.corpangelnetwork.org>

#### Financial assistance

*Alex's Lemonade Stand* pays up front for a family's lodging and travel expenses when their child has to travel for treatment.

<http://www.alexslimonade.org>

#### Volunteer pilots

*Angel Flight West* and seven other charitable aviation organizations link patients in need with volunteer pilots who donate their time, their aircraft and their flying skills to provide free air transportation. These organizations serve patients of all ages, all across the country.

## Connecting with charitable aviation

There are charitable aviation organizations across the country that can provide regional transportation. The table below lists the most active organizations. Please consult [www.aircarealliance.org](http://www.aircarealliance.org) for a complete list.



Nearly one-third of children in the U.S. live further than 40 miles from a certified pediatric specialist.

American Academy of Pediatrics

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ORGANIZATION	GEOGRAPHY	CONTACT
Angel Flight Central	Central US	<a href="http://www.angelflightcentral.org">www.angelflightcentral.org</a>
Angel Flight East	Northeast US	<a href="http://www.angelflighteast.org">www.angelflighteast.org</a>
Angel Flight Northeast	Northeast US	<a href="http://www.angelflightne.org">www.angelflightne.org</a>
Angel Flight Oklahoma	Oklahoma	<a href="http://www.angelflight.com">www.angelflight.com</a>
Angel Flight Soars	Southeast US	<a href="http://www.angelflightsoars.org">www.angelflightsoars.org</a>
Angel Flight South Central	Texas and the south central states	<a href="http://www.angelflightsc.org">www.angelflightsc.org</a>
Angel Flight West	Western States (incl Alaska & Hawaii)	<a href="http://www.angelflightwest.org">www.angelflightwest.org</a>
Mercy Flight Southeast	Southeast US	<a href="http://www.mercyflight.org">www.mercyflight.org</a>
Patient Airlift Services	Northeast US	<a href="http://www.palservices.org">www.palservices.org</a>
Vital Flight	Southeast US	<a href="http://www.vitalflight.org">www.vitalflight.org</a>

Some accept online requests, others require a phone call. The next section describes the process used by Angel Flight West, which is typical of many of the charitable aviation groups.



A survey conducted by the Physicians Foundation cautions that while community health centers provide primary health services to the medically underserved and poor, access to off-site specialty services is severely limited. Treatments such as chemotherapy and kidney dialysis can't be conducted online, and in many cases a patient will need multiple sessions.

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## Angel Flight West – How It Works

### ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

**Medical Status.** All patients must be medically stable and able to fly in a non-pressurized plane. We may not be able to fly some patients with seizure disorders. Please call to discuss your particular patient. We cannot fly high-risk pregnancies or any pregnancy over 20 weeks.

**Mobility.** All patients must be ambulatory and able to board an aircraft with limited assistance. Some exceptions can be made for children in wheelchairs who can be readily transferred in and out of the aircraft. Acceptance is at the discretion of the Mission Operations staff and the mission pilot.

**Medical Release.** Prior to a patient's first mission, a medical release must be sent/faxed from the doctor or hospital to Angel Flight West stating that the patient is "medically stable and able to fly in a non-pressurized aircraft." (see page 6) There are NO exceptions.

**Financial Need.** Patients must have some financial need as verified by a social worker, discharge planner, doctor, clergyman, etc.; or live in a remote area without easy access to commercial airports; or be immunocompromised to an extent that disallows their being around large numbers of people.

**Origin of Requests.** The initial request for a mission must be received from a social worker, doctor, other medical personnel, or other individuals qualified to verify the health condition and economic need of the prospective patient/passenger. After a patient's first mission, he/she may request a flight directly. For patients needing ongoing treatment and flights, the office may request an updated status on the patient from the original requester or consult with the requester should problems arise.

**Transplant Patients.** Angel Flight West may be able to accommodate some patients needing transportation for transplant surgery. Patients awaiting notification of organ availability must pre-register with the Angel Flight West office and be aware that we are not a guaranteed service.

**Combative Patients.** Patients who are known to be combative will not be transported.

**Undocumented Individuals.** Angel Flight West will not knowingly provide transportation for undocumented individuals.

**Luggage.** Luggage must be kept to a maximum of 25lbs. of soft sided luggage per person.

**Distance.** The normal distance for a single-leg flight is approximately 300 miles. Longer distance requests may be possible by linking flights that could require a full day to complete.

**Advance Notice.** Angel Flight West asks that flight requests be submitted a minimum of one week prior to the desired date of flight. We may be able to accommodate requests submitted with shorter notice.

Preparing to make your request

***To help us help you and your patients as effectively as possible, have the following information available when calling our office with a request. Use worksheet following this for your convenience***

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**Appointment Dates and Times:** It is important to be specific. If a patient's appointment is scheduled for very early in the day, he/she may need to travel the day before, or if late in the day, travel home the following day, particularly during the winter months and on longer trips. Trips of longer length may require a full day for travel.

**Pickup and Destination Airports:** We can assist you in identifying airports if you provide the pickup and destination cities. We fly into many airports which may be unfamiliar to you or your patient because they do not have commercial flights.

**Requester's Name and Agency and Phone Numbers and addresses for both. (Fax Requester/Agency Intake Sheet included in this packet to: 310 397-9636) See pg. 1**

**Patient's Name, Address, Phone Numbers & E-mail Address (Include cell phone number, work or pager number & e-mail address if available, as contact information can be very valuable)**

**Patient's Illness, any other medical conditions (including pregnancy or seizure condition), reason for appointment, date of birth and weight.**

**Companion's Name, relationship, date of birth and weight and any additional phone numbers. Please state any known medical condition of companions.**

**Medical equipment or excess baggage:** Please have dimensions and weights.

**Facility Contact Information:** Medical Facility Name and Phone Number, Lodging Location and Phone Numbers. This information is essential for a pilot trying to locate a passenger while they are at their treatment facility.

**Physician's Name and Phone Numbers.**

**Physician's Medical Release:** This is mandatory. A form is included for the MD to sign if you haven't already received one. Please fax this to us at (310) 397-9636 .

**Financial need:** What is the reason your passenger needs our services?

## **FYI Page**

*Please read carefully and review this information with the patient/passenger.*

**Service Area:** Missions flown by Angel Flight West will be confined to originating states of California, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Montana and Wyoming, Alaska and Hawaii. Requesters will be referred to other organizations if the transportation would involve travel outside this service area. Some requests outside of this area will be flown by Angel Flight West and an additional Volunteer Pilot Organization.

**E-mail:** It is extremely helpful to have e-mail addresses for both yourself and the passenger.

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**Is patient aware you are making this request?** If so, have they ever flown in a small plane? Please be certain that the patient understands that our pilots are all licensed, fly 4- and 6-seat planes and are very good at making patients feel comfortable and happy.

**Angel Flight West does not handle ground transportation or lodging.** Please make sure your patient understand this and has made arrangements.

**Waiver of Liability.** Please inform patients that they and any companions will be required to sign a Waiver of Liability form just prior to departure. This form must be signed by an adult and/or the legal guardian of a minor. Please let us know if there is a foster child involved.

**Please be sure that the patient has backup plans.** Weather or other conditions can cause cancellation of a flight. The patient should be able to change the appointment or have alternate transportation for their inbound or outbound flights. Also, they should not be making arrangements w/ any other organization for the same trip.

**Patients must call the Angel Flight West office toll-free number and the scheduled pilot if they need to cancel their flight or if they will be late for their flight.** Please advise patients never to leave the airport should a pilot be late. Weather, Air Traffic Control, and other factors can cause unforeseen delays. If a patient has questions at any time, he/she should call the Angel Flight West office to find out the status of the flight.

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## RESOURCES

To find services in your community, use search terms like "free medical transportation" or "taxi and bus vouchers medical appointments" and add the name of your city or county.

Angel Flight West	(310) 390-2958
Air Care Alliance	<a href="http://www.aircarealliance.org">http://www.aircarealliance.org</a>
Angel Wheels to Healing (formerly Angel Bus)	(800) 768-0238
Air Compassion America	(866) 270-9198
Air Compassion for Veterans	(888) 662-6794
Air Lifeline	(877) 247-5433
Airlift Hope	(800) 325-8908
Alex's Lemonade Stand	(866) 333-1213
Angel Flight Central	(800) 474-9464
Angel Flight East	(215) 358-1900
Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic	(800) 296-3797
Angel Flight Northeast	(978) 794-6868
Angel Flight Oklahoma	(918) 749-8992
Angel Flight South Central	(972) 458-0700
Angel Flight Southeast	(352) 326-0761
Angel Medflight	(877) 264-3570
Corporate Angel Network	(866) 328-1313
Fisher House Foundation	(888) 294-8560
Footprints in the Sky	(303) 799-0461
Life Line Pilots	(800) 822-7972
Mercy Medical Airlift	(800) 296-1217
Miracle Flights for Kids	(800) 359-1711
National Patient Travel Center	(800) 296-1217
Patient Airlift Services	(888) 818-1231
The Angel Bus	(800) 768-0238
Vital Flight	(800) 276-0300

# Arranging No-Cost Transportation for Your Patients

## QUICK REFERENCE



### START HERE

Is this an emergency where a patient requires immediate transportation?

YES

Air ambulance is the only option for emergency transportation. May be covered by patient's insurance, or try [www.graceonwings.org](http://www.graceonwings.org)

NO

Is the flight international?

YES

Few options for international flights. Check [www.aircarealliance.org](http://www.aircarealliance.org) for options.

NO

Does the patient require medical attention on board, or must lie down during the flight?

YES

Non-emergency air ambulance required in this situation. Try [www.wings-of-hope.org](http://www.wings-of-hope.org)

NO

Is the transportation local, or long distance (more than 100 miles)?

FAR

Transportation 100 to 1,000 miles  
Charitable aviation options across the US. [AngelFlightWest.org](http://AngelFlightWest.org) for the 13 western states including Alaska & Hawaii. Check [www.aircarealliance.org](http://www.aircarealliance.org) for organizations in your area.

LOCAL

Check the ebook "[GUIDE TO MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION](#)" for information on how to find local transportation options in your area. These include volunteer drivers, bus, rail, or other public transportation.

Transportation over 1,000 miles  
**Corporate Angel Network** ([www.corpangelnetwork.org](http://www.corpangelnetwork.org)), or  
**Miracle Flights for Kids** ([www.miracleflights.org](http://www.miracleflights.org))  
Serves both children and adults.

