

**Guidelines for Approving
Requests for Social Transportation
of Persons Enrolled in the
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver
Program**

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**NYS Office of Health Insurance Programs
Medicaid Transportation Policy Unit**

Waiver transportation supplements transportation provided by the Medicaid State Plan. It includes transportation for non-medical activities which support the participant's integration into the community.

All other options for transportation, such as informal supports, community services and public transportation must be explored and utilized prior to requesting waiver transportation.

- Section VI, Page 39, Traumatic Brain Injury Manual, October 2009¹

Social transportation is available to all persons enrolled in the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) waiver program. Generally, the same rules used to determine reimbursement of trips to medical appointments should be followed when considering reimbursement of social trips for TBI participants.

The prior authorization official (i.e., county staff or the county's authorized agent) should use the following specific guidelines when social transportation is requested.

1. Use transportation available free of charge.

When a friend or family member is available to transport a waiver participant, this friend or family member should be used for social transportation.

Reimbursement can be considered when the number of trips or the distance to be travelled is considered financially excessive.

It is expected that local travel to family events can be performed by one's family.

2. Use the medically appropriate mode of transportation.

Within reason, the same mode of transportation used by the waiver participant for standard medical trips should be used for social trips, and vice versa.

Use of public transportation is encouraged, where appropriate and available. Help in understanding the transit system can be provided by the service coordinator and/or staff of the transit operator.

3. Travel within the common medical marketing area.

Trips to grocery or department stores, pharmacies, restaurants, etc., should be within the same area frequented by others in the same community as the waiver participant.

¹ Traumatic Brain Injury Program manual is available at http://www.nyhealth.gov/health_care/medicaid/reference/tbi/docs/tbiprovidermanual2009.pdf

4. Justify need for travel outside the common medical marketing area.

Travel outside the common medical marketing area can be allowed when acceptable justification is presented.

5. Travel to similar destinations in a short time period can be questioned.

Travel to multiple similar type stores on the same day and/or during the same week can be questioned. It is reasonable to expect a waiver participant to travel to a grocery, department, office supply, electronics or other type of store and expect that all of his or her weekly shopping needs can be completed at the same store.

6. Wherever possible, trips should be combined.

For example, travel to return empty bottles for the deposit should be made at the same time the participant travels to a grocery store for shopping. Where a grocery store operates a pharmacy within, one can pick up his/her prescriptions while grocery shopping.

7. Vouchers submitted for personal vehicle mileage reimbursement should be submitted within ninety days of the date of service.

Requests for personal vehicle mileage should be submitted on a timely, periodic basis concurrent with Department reimbursement policy guidelines.

With sufficient justification, requests submitted outside the ninety day timeframe can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8. Vouchers for personal vehicle mileage reimbursement should be first reviewed and approved by the service coordination agency that employs the driver.

The service coordination agency is ultimately responsible to ensure that the travel contained in a waiver participant's individualized service plan is an appropriate and judicious use of public funds.

9. Reimbursement for travel can be denied when the prior authorization official determines that the destination does not support the participant's integration into the community.

Absent adequate justification, travel to destinations such as casinos, cigarette shops, off-track betting parlors, adult entertainment business, or bars should not be reimbursed. The waiver participant can travel to these destinations. However, no Medicaid-funded transportation should be approved.

10. The prior authorization official can review a copy of a participant's service plan when such a review will be helpful in determination of a travel request.

A waiver participant's service plan outlines the general parameters of his or her social transportation needs. These needs can change or be amended based upon the participant's stated goals and/or successful ongoing integration into the community. The prior authorization official should approve travel when the travel meets the guidelines for approval.

While a service plan may include a defined number of miles for a participant to travel during a specific timeframe, it is the role of the service coordinator, not the prior authorization official, to maintain a running tally of miles or to cap the trips when the plan's mileage threshold has been reached.

The prior authorization official is **not** required to review a participant's service plan or maintain a copy of the plan. Decisions on a destination and amount of Medicaid-funded social travel are the primary responsibility of the service coordinator.

The prior authorization official can always request additional information from the service coordinator to aid in the decision-making process when social transportation reimbursement is requested.

11. One of the services covered for TBI participants is supportive employment. While transportation to a covered Medicaid service can be reimbursed, the prior authorization official can determine if the wages received are adequate to cover transportation costs.

Generally, members of the community who are employed use funds from their wages to cover the costs of transportation to and from their employment. The prior authorization official should determine if the number of hours and hourly wages is adequate to transition the costs of transportation from the Medicaid Program to the waiver participant.