

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ONE CALL–ONE CLICK Transportation Services

1. What are some of the reasons why a community would want to develop a one call–one click service for transportation eligibility and rides?

- As a tool to more effectively coordinate transportation services
- To create a structured, potentially semi-automated way to handle a large volume of callers requesting rides from city or county agencies
- To help a transit agency transition to the expanded call volume that resulted from adding Medicaid brokerage services to a call center that previously took calls for just ADA complementary paratransit services

2. What is the sequence of steps a community takes in developing a one call–one click transportation service – either as a stand-alone center or incorporated with another type of one call–one click service?

- 1) Develop partnerships for the project; 2) build incrementally toward a one call–one click center (e.g., one client type at a time); 3) develop a detailed database of providers, ride sources and funders; 4) establish protocols and business processes, being sure to incorporate intuitive as well as explicit procedures done by staff before the call center was implemented; 5) determine the appropriate technology to employ based on a successful non-automated process; and 6) develop a cost-allocation model for rides and administrative expenses.

- Develop business protocols that address issues such as 1) how to collect and maintain accurate information; 2) how to provide good customer service; 3) establishing a taxonomy of services; 4) eligibility categories and procedures (e.g., functional assessment of rider, accessibility of built environment of rider’s origin/destination); 5) skill levels and training of customer service representatives; 6) operating standards (e.g., for drivers, vehicles) and a means for updating those standards.

3. How does a community develop the partnerships necessary to establish an effective, sustainable one call–one click service?

- The partnerships often grow out existing groups focused on improving transportation services through coordination and other means.
- It is easier to develop support for a one call–one click service by leveraging existing relationships on related issues (e.g., assessments, referrals) with agencies whose clients/customers also contend with transportation issues.
- Shared participation among the partners in local committees or task forces in which transportation issues are discussed provides an effective forum for developing cross-agency relationships on these issues. “Lots of meetings and lots of talking lead to a lot of trust and shared vision.”
- Having a well integrated transportation community is helpful.
- As for any group, it is important to have a champion who

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ONE CALL–ONE CLICK Transportation Services

keeps the partnership active and focused.

- In Dane County, the call center staff, based at the Department of Human Services, had an intimate knowledge of human services transportation before beginning the call center, which helped in integrating the transportation call center into the staff's other functions.
- The crucial factor to drawing in widespread support is allowing community members to hear about the needs. Once they do, they are more likely to be supportive. For example, in one county, the highway commissioner began attending the one-call center's meetings and based on what he heard, he gave the call center \$18,000 from his budget.

4. How does a community determine what functions will be encompassed in a one call–one click service?

- Those functions will be determined in large part by the project partners. For example, in the Steuben County project, the 211 service was a lead partner, so its information-and-referral services were integrated into the one-call center.
- Where the program is sited is also a factor in what functions it will fulfill. For example, in Dane County, the call center program is run out of the Department of Human Services, where staff already provided referrals for services. Coordination of services beyond transportation remains a function of the center and links callers to other needed services.

5. What has been the role of the state in local community efforts to

create one call–one click services?

- State department of transportation (DOT) funding, particularly through the Federal Transit Administration's New Freedom and Job Access/Reverse Commute programs, has been helpful.
- State DOTs are also promoting mobility management and transportation coordination efforts; one call–one click services bolster both of these efforts.
- Because of the transportation needs of their clients, State Departments of Human Services have been active in some states in one call–one click service projects.

6. What strategies are effective in responding to the needs of multiple jurisdictions (e.g., city and county)?

- Some of the projects are largely staff driven at local level, and it is at this level that many details (e.g., how the one call–one click service will work, how to share and allocate costs) are worked out. Department-level staff provide the final approval for implementation of these arrangements.
- Having a neutral party convene meetings and be the most visible lead agency can create a nonthreatening forum for discussing details that might otherwise become stumbling blocks for the project.
- Lead agencies that are already seen as being strong community partners can help to navigate the many decisions a project partnership needs to make.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ONE CALL-ONE CLICK Transportation Services

7. How does a community predict and prepare for the volume of calls coming into a one call-one click service?

- Reviewing previous human service and other needs assessments and noting the extent to which transportation has been highlighted as a potential barrier is one way to sketch a picture of what kind of call volume a new center can expect.
- Steuben County set up five call stations; customer service representatives take calls part-time and spend other parts of their day doing administrative work for the other programs.
- Lane Transit District, which entered into a new phase in which it handled Medicaid transportation calls in addition to the agency's ADA complementary paratransit calls, assumed that its call volume was going to double over night. One of the keys to making that successful transition was the education it provided to staff about what to expect.
- Again, in Lane Transit District, after the one-call center was begun, the agency's scheduling volume rose from 10,000 to 25,000 rides. That increase was due not only to the added number of Medicaid rides, but also due to the marketing about the one-call center, which increased the visibility of Lane Transit District's services.

8. What are some ways in which a community can inform its members about a new one-call/one click service?

- Before it began taking Medicaid transportation calls, Lane

Transit District sent out mailings using its database of ADA complementary paratransit riders and the local Medicaid office's database of riders.

- Steuben County has done most of its marketing through its 211 line and through the agencies the call center supports.
- In some projects, one-call activities have evolved from just scheduling/dispatching rides to becoming an advocacy center as well, where callers who need additional services are connected to those.

9. How can the Internet be integrated into one-call center activities – to create a one call-one click service?

- A call center's database can be used to populate its website of services. Those web pages can be log-in protected and used by information-and-referral staff in connecting riders with services, or can be available to the general public for self-referral of rides.
- Lane District Transit uses its website to 1) provide information to the general public about the one-call center, 2) communicate with Medicaid providers for billing purposes, 3) help deploy applications to multiple providers, and 4) allow agencies to submit trip information.
- The intake and scheduling software used by the U.S. DOT's Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) projects will allow riders to make a ride reservation on the website once the

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ONE CALL-ONE CLICK Transportation Services

rider has been certified as eligible. Call center staff still maintain control over booking trips, but can use the web-based service to generate e-mail or phone messages confirming trips to the riders.

- Some systems use IVR (interactive voice response) software to send automated ride reminders to users, such as the day before the scheduled ride or once the vehicle is on its way.

10. What are some cost-sharing considerations among one call-one click service partnership members?

- As a mobility management activity, some call centers are funded through two different FTA grant programs: the New Freedom and Job Access/Reverse Commute programs.
- Effective cost-sharing requires communities to maintain detailed accounts of all aspects of call-center operation.
- Agencies that benefit from a one call-one click service, but may not be involved to the level of being a partner, can still contribute to the project. For example, a one call-one click

service that 1) provides travel instruction services that allow former paratransit riders to use the less-costly fixed-route services and 2) authorizes Medicaid trips on paratransit, which saves the city money, receives 10% of the administrative costs for the call center from the city. That same center also receives funding from a county highway commission.

- Another project receives support from all five partner organizations, which is allocated to FTE (full-time equivalent) increments for the customer service representatives. Their support is supplemented with Job Access/Reverse Commute and New Freedom grants.
- In seeking additional partners and funding streams, one call-one click service staff seek to prove the cost efficiencies of the center's services, in terms of the number of trips provided and cost per trip. It can be difficult to show cost savings because revenue is usually re-dedicated to providing more service, as demand almost always outstrips available services. An effective argument is to show the value of the call center as a community asset.

The "One Call-One Click Transportation Services Toolkit" was created with United We Ride funding from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, through a cooperative agreement between the Community Transportation Association of America and the Federal Transit Administration. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the federal government. Dec 2010.