



Transportation, Wheelchair Safety

Many people living with developmental disabilities are dependent on third-party transportation as part of their services. Unfortunately, whether the person is being transported by a loved one or a service provider, they can be hurt when proper safety precautions are not followed. Transportation incidents happen as a result of improper training, lack of communication, drug or alcohol use, or support staff being overly tired. These incidents can result in injury or death for the staff person and the person receiving transportation services.



[Watch Mary Posey](#) from Arc Industries of Franklin County demonstrate how to safely secure a wheelchair in a vehicle and discuss safety tips. Visit DODD's YouTube to watch "Transportation Safety."

Impaired Driving

Impaired driving is not just dangerous for all parties involved, including anyone sharing the road -- it's illegal. Impaired driving includes driving under the influence of

- alcohol,
- a sedative,
- illicit drugs,
- and while abusing prescription or over-the-counter medication.

Transportation incidents can also happen because of distracted driving, reckless driving, or failure to properly secure a person who uses a wheelchair in the vehicle.

Communication Issues

A person with disabilities may also be inadvertently left unattended if there is no clear communication about who is taking care of them once the previous caregiver has dropped them off at their destination. Always make sure a person with disabilities is safe and supervised before leaving.

Real World Example

An independent provider was seen swerving in a parking lot. She drops off the person she was transporting and leaves, driving erratically.

She is stopped by police.

She was observed to be unsteady, staggering around with her eyes barely opened. She kept repeating questions and almost fell over.

As in this case, sometimes the cause of impaired driving is not illicit drug or alcohol use, but rather the person improperly using over-the-counter medication or from lack of sleep.

Safety Checks

Accidents can happen, which is why it's important to double check that equipment is secured and safety measures are taken. These are examples of what can happen if safety checks are not followed.

- A person was left on the bus after the driver believed all riders were off. The bus is taken to the depot until the next route.
- A wheelchair was not properly secured before transporting, causing the person to fall; they received 15 stitches in their forehead.
- A person was let out on the wrong side of the van and was hit by a car.
- Police were called to the scene when



a direct support professional was seen texting and driving while transporting people, swerving in and out of lanes on a busy highway.

- A person was left in a hot car while the service provider gets lunch with their family and suffers a seizure.

Prevention

Keep these things in mind before operating or exiting a vehicle. Just a few minutes could save someone's life.

1. Check that people and wheelchairs are secure before moving.
2. Never text and drive.
3. Never drive impaired.
4. If you are tired and are struggling to stay awake, don't drive.
5. Make sure supervision is available prior to leaving a person unattended.
6. Check vehicles to ensure they are empty before exiting.

Hot Car Safety

Never leave someone alone in a vehicle during hot weather.

It only takes a few minutes for interior temperatures to become life threatening, causing heat stroke or death.

Fast Facts

98 people were involved in transportation-related major unusual incidents (MUI) between Jan. 1 and June 1, 2019.

11 transportation-related MUIs resulted in injury during that time

– DODD, 2019 data