

Transportation Voucher Replication Handbook

**Part A. Implementation Guide from the
Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council
Pilot Projects.**

**Part B: The APRIL Toolkit
for Operating a Rural Transportation Voucher Program.**

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- Implementation Guide from the Michigan DD Council projects.
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1. Introduction – Ways to Use this Voucher Handbook.

This Handbook includes two major components.

The APRIL Toolkit

for Operating a Rural Transportation Voucher Program.

This outstanding toolkit was developed by the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL). It was one of the basic documents that served as the basis for the design of the DD Council projects. Individual projects used the APRIL toolkit and supporting materials extensively in the planning phase of their projects. It describes the essential components of a voucher program.

Instead of writing our description of those components, we received permission from APRIL to insert their handbook to guide you in the design of your voucher program.

We recommend that you buy your own copy of the APRIL Toolkit directly from APRIL. The layout, diagrams, and illustrations are very helpful. You can order it from their website at <http://www.april-rural.org/>.

Implementation Guide and Resources

Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council Projects.

The remainder of the handbook is essentially a supplement to the APRIL Toolkit. We provide you with a number of resources that can help you in designing your voucher program.

We begin with a brief description of each of the DD Council's pilot projects. Then we summarize a few significant elements in the Council's projects that were different from the APRIL design.

The rest of the Resources give you examples of way you may choose to set up your project, with sample policies and forms from each of the DD Council's sites. Because every community is different, it's useful to look at some of the options you have in designing your project. Some of the projects were formal, and others were informal in their policies and procedures. Some wrote their own policies, others generally used their organizations policies. They divided the roles described in the APRIL Toolkit in different ways, and took differing approaches to enrolling and orienting riders and drivers. You are free to pick, choose, and adapt whatever works for you in your community.

2. Brief Description of the DD Council Projects

The DD Council funded 6 organizations to develop pilot voucher transportation projects. Three of the projects were rural. One was in Detroit and Wayne County, which is the largest city in the state. Two others were centered in cities, Jackson and Muskegon, and served nearby rural areas as well as the city. A Michigan map showing the location of the sites follows the descriptions of the projects.

Access Baraga County (ABC)

Lead agency – Copper Country Community Mental Health (CCCMH)
Baraga is a remote rural area in the western end of the Upper Peninsula. The county has less than 9000 people, with two towns of about 2000 people. They initially brought the concept of a voucher project to the DD Council. The isolation of the area led to having an average trip distance of 78 miles. One person used miles to visit her family in Wisconsin. She hadn't seen them in 16 years. One CMH staff person led the project, in addition to continuing all of his other job duties.

Antrim-Kalkaska Counties – Miles with Meaning

Lead agency – Resource One
Resource One provided vouchers for people in 2 rural counties in Northwest Michigan, near Traverse City. They have a combined population of about 39,000. Administration of the project was relatively informal. The office was staffed 20 hours per week, by part-time staff and volunteers. Most of the miles were used for recreation, shopping and medical needs.

Shiawassee County – Supporting Inclusive Transportation (SIT)

Lead agency – The Arc of Shiawassee
Shiawassee County is a rural area in central Michigan, between Lansing and Flint, with about 70,000 people. The largest city, Owosso, has 15,000 people, and 3 other towns have a little over 2,000 people. The project coordinator worked half-time, and handled all aspects of the project except payments to drivers. The most notable aspect of their project was the development of a very effective transportation advocacy coalition.

Detroit/Wayne County

Lead agency – Community Living Services (CLS)

Detroit is a city of nearly 1 million people, and the metropolitan area has about 4 million. A half-time staff person coordinated the project, with significant support from CLS administrative staff. Two other agencies also enrolled riders for the project. Procedures and relationships were clearly spelled out. Some riders used vouchers for employment, and even to attend college.

Jackson County – Community in Motion

Lead agency – disAbility Connections

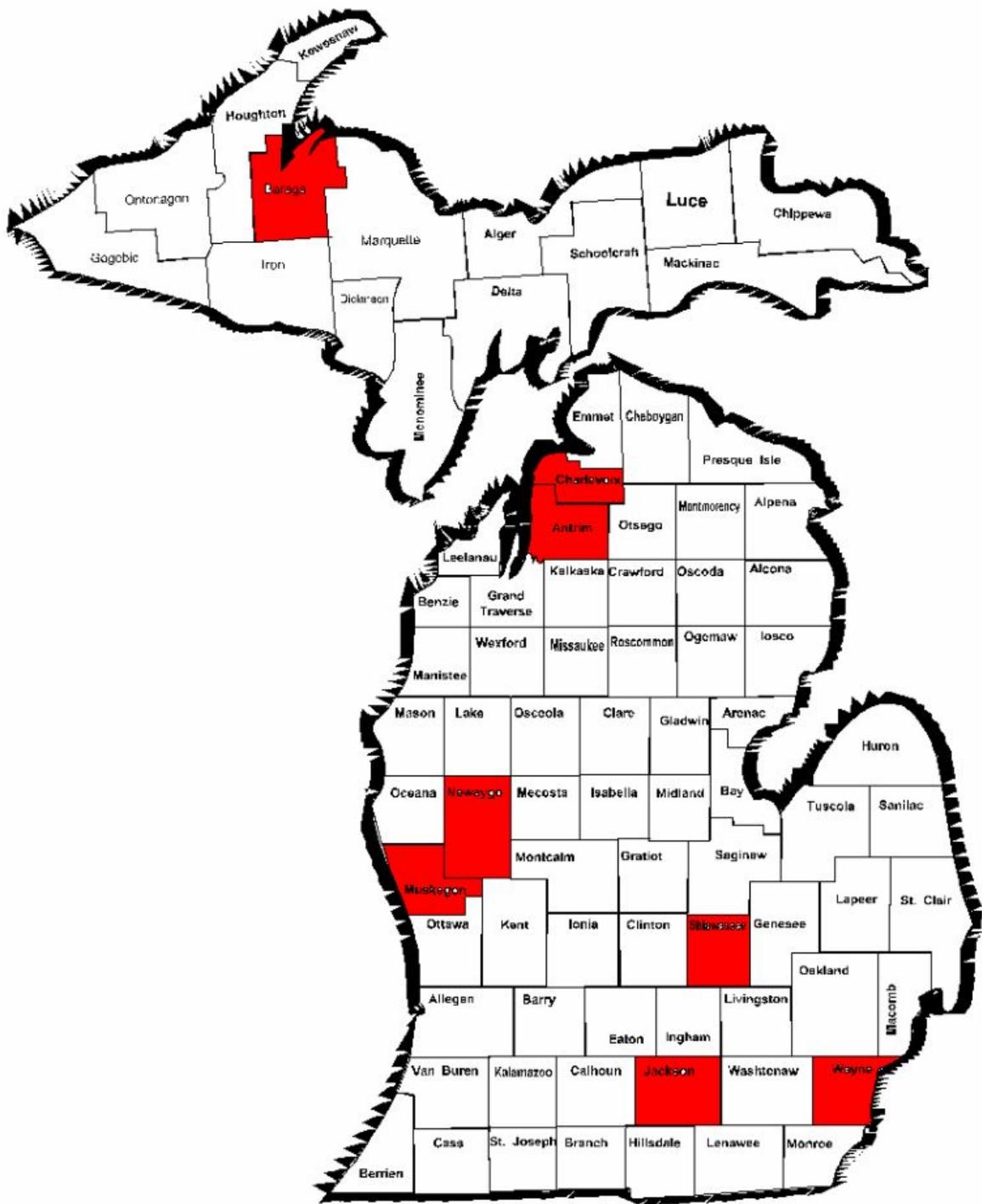
Jackson County has 160,000 people, and the city has 36,000. The Jackson Transportation Authority was a major partner in the project. A priority was finding accessible vehicles. The other projects used volunteer drivers almost exclusively. The Jackson project had an enhanced rate for people and agencies with accessible vehicles, and agreements with those agencies. Policies and procedures were formalized.

Muskegon/Newaygo – Transportation Voucher Program

Lead agency – Disability Connection for Independent Living (DCIL)

The project served people in two very different counties, with a part-time project coordinator in each county. Muskegon County has 170,000 people, with 40,000 in the city of Muskegon. Newaygo County is rural, with 48,000 people and only 2 towns with over 2,000 people.

Although the lead agency was the same, the two counties operated their programs independently. Not all policies were the same in both counties. Newaygo County chose to reimburse miles for people with disabilities to drive their own vehicles for employment and/or employment seeking only.



Map of Voucher project locations

3. Aspects Unique to the DD Council Projects

The DD Council grants voucher programs differed from the model described in the APRIL Toolkit in several small but significant ways. The main differences are described in this section. In summary, those differences were:

- a. Social / recreation. Riders in the APRIL grant projects were not permitted to use vouchers for social and recreational purposes. The DD Council encouraged using vouchers to improve the quality of community life for riders.
- b. Cities and suburbs, not just rural. The APRIL grants and many other voucher programs only serve remote and rural areas. The DD Council wanted to see if vouchers would help people in cities to have better access to their community. So projects were funded in rural areas, medium size cities, and even Detroit.
- c. Advocacy. The projects and their coalitions advocated for improved transportation in their communities. This developed leadership skills in the riders and increased their status in the community.
- d. Coalition based. Most other voucher programs are run by a single organization, although other organizations serve as partners. The DD Council projects had a lead agency, but policies and procedures were developed by a coalition. The coalition provided leadership throughout the project. People with disabilities and other riders were an important part of the coalition.

4a. Social / Recreation.

A rich, fulfilling life is created from opportunities to explore our interests and to cultivate a social network. When transportation barriers prevent us from leaving our homes, the scope of our lives is severely limited by our inability to move freely around the community. For people with disabilities, the lack of transportation options sentences us to a life without choice. We are unable to participate in community activities like art fairs, concerts, religious ceremonies, sporting events, or simply visiting with friends and family because the avenue to freedom is barred by the lack of affordable, accessible transportation.

The Transportation Voucher Project is an option available to relieve the isolation imposed by the lack of viable transportation options. Through a committed network of volunteer drivers, people with disabilities can control and direct their own lives by deciding when and where to go. Enhanced mobility of people with disabilities through the voucher project provides a chance to interact in social settings, community events, at shopping centers and in many other communal spaces. Our communities are strengthened by the natural interaction of people with and without disabilities. A diverse community thrives as it benefits from the full array of its citizens' skills, talents and investment.



Tim's Success Story:

Tim has been a participant on the transportation voucher program for more than two years. He lives in Fremont and is Assistant Director at the Empowerment Network drop-in center. His transportation needs are limited to visiting distant friends during the Holidays and using his vouchers for dental and medical appointments. He was unable to obtain transportation to social and family functions during the holidays prior to participating in the voucher program. Tim says he has enjoyed the program very much and appreciates its financial help and flexibility.



Brian's Success Story:

Brian has been part of the transportation voucher program for over two years. He is a White Cloud, MI resident. He lives with his Uncle who also has a disability. They are unable to drive. Before the voucher program they either walked or rode bikes to meet their transportation needs. He uses his vouchers for transportation to the Empowerment Network drop in center in Fremont. He visits the Center twice a week to learn independent living skills and to socialize. Brian enjoys playing pool, watching movies and visiting with his friends at the Center. He helps prepare one or two meals a week at the Center and enjoys dining with his friends.

4b. Rural/Remote Areas.

Most voucher programs in the United States operate in rural areas.

Individuals with disabilities that live in rural or remote areas face barriers to community inclusion that are different and in some ways may be more severe than people who live in urban areas. With a lower tax base, public services in rural areas tend to be very limited.

In rural areas the distances to grocery stores, medical services providers and employment often is beyond a comfortable walking distance. An additional problem for non-drivers in the Upper Peninsula is that walking

or riding a bicycle for transportation is often complicated by severe weather.

Because of low population density and significant mileage between desired destinations, public transportation, if it is present at all, tends to be underdeveloped in rural areas. In rural communities that have a public transportation system, services are often available primarily in the larger towns and the county seat of government with outlying areas being significantly underserved.

A voucher based transportation system is one way to improve access to these types of communities for non-drivers. The Access Baraga County project was developed as a response to these barriers faced by individuals in a very rural location of the Upper Peninsula.

Because the reimbursement formula for vouchers is based upon miles traveled, drivers are provided an incentive for proving longer distance transportation to riders. This feature of the voucher design has distinct advantages for rural riders. During the last year the average reimbursed trip for ABC riders was 78 miles.

Long Distance Travel Success Stories

Wayne utilized the "Miles with Meaning" voucher program in northern Michigan to get a ride to and from the airport in a neighboring city where he took his first plane ride, and flew to Kentucky to visit family members that he had not seen in 12 years.

A Native American man from L'Anse in the Upper Peninsula has been able to use vouchers to visit his sister who lives on the reservation in Mt. Pleasant.



A useful feature of the accounting system developed for Access Baraga County is the mechanism by which miles unused in one month can be rolled over into the next month. One individual who had previously been estranged from her family in Wisconsin has been able to use vouchers for three visits since the inception of the program.

4b. Cities and Suburbs.

Even cities that have large transit systems may have significant gaps in services. Not everyone can ride the regular bus routes. Service agencies often provide transportation services. Accessible Transportation in Wayne County Michigan continues to be almost non-existent. Funding for this purpose continues to be limited. A voucher program can help fill in those gaps, and help agencies reduce overlapping and redundancy in their services.

Some communities have a central city with good public transit systems. In many counties in Michigan, the transit only serves the city, or provides only minimal dial-a-ride service to the rest of the county. The DD Council funded projects in Detroit/Wayne County, Jackson, and Muskegon to find out if voucher programs could help fill the gaps in services and funding.

4c. Coalition Based.

The transportation voucher pilot projects were each developed and monitored by a governing coalition. A coalition is a diverse group of individuals and organizations that work together to reach a common goal. In this case, the common goal is addressing the transportation needs of the local community through the successful development of a voucher program.

The coalition, also referred to as collaborative community partners, includes service agencies with an interest in expanding transportation options for those individuals they serve. Examples of organizations that serve those target populations include the mental health providers, rehabilitation service providers, workforce development providers, senior centers, hospitals, and developmental disability providers.

Essential members of a coalition also include the riders and drivers enrolled in the program. The success of a program relies on the involvement of the individuals receiving the services. It is important to involve participants from the very beginning and throughout the process of developing and overseeing the program. Surveys (see ParticipantSurvey122007) also play a key role in soliciting feedback and participation from those individuals that are unable to attend the coalition meetings.

The role of the coalition is to oversee the development of the program policies and procedures, forms, documents and tracking mechanisms, review the financial and activity reports, provide referrals to the program, and assist in promoting public awareness of the available service. It is especially important to the sustainability of the voucher program that the coalition members take an active role in identifying and soliciting possible funding opportunities. The public display of support and collaboration provides more stability and belief in the benefit the program has to offer the community.



Success Story: Shiawassee Transportation Advocacy Coalition

Identifying and addressing transportation advocacy opportunities within the community became an important aspect to the voucher programs. We created a transportation advocacy coalition to focus on advocating for improved and expanded transportation options in the county. The coordinator of the All Aboard! project of United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan served as the facilitator of the group. Individuals are learning to share their personal stories regarding transportation, and an action plan is being developed. This interest group is primarily made up of public transportation riders. Others involved include advocates for the disability community, the public transit provider, and service agencies.

4d. Advocacy

The Michigan DD Council provides funding for demonstration projects, with a particular emphasis on changing the service systems in local communities and in the state. Advocating for transportation for persons with disabilities is an essential, ongoing process. There are many barriers to overcome in advocating for a sustainable transportation system.

The first challenge is assessing and communicating the need for transportation to local township, city and county government to encourage programs that would assist persons with disabilities in maintaining or regaining their independence and inclusion into the community by developing safe dependable transportation programs.

Advocating for services that benefit everyone and not just persons with disabilities is the best way to gain the attention of policy makers. It is essential that we present the big picture of economic growth for the community, which leads to economic growth for the state and federal government. People need services. Money must be invested to make money. Services deemed necessary only for the poor and disabled are seen as charity and waste.

Funding to sustain rural transportation programming sometimes may seem like a daunting task, but it is not insurmountable. There are governmental and local non-governmental resources to pursue. Don't get discouraged in your quest for financial support. Applying for grants or campaigning for a local tax millage can be time consuming and may reap few tangible benefits but awareness of the need for transportation is the key to gaining support.

Research from the Transportation Voucher program serves as a tool to assess and present the need for alternative forms of transportation for everyone including persons with disabilities in rural and metropolitan underserved communities.

Step 1. Assess the need.

Operate a program model for improving transportation.

Collect data regarding participant transportation needs not currently being met from agencies working with persons with disabilities, but not providing transportation or providing only limited transportation.

Conduct surveys through local media, mailings and group presentations.

Step 2. Communicate the need to the public, local government, advocacy groups and agencies.

Seek others who realize the need for transportation for persons with disabilities and are willing to speak out in a collaborative way to advocate for, promote and support a sustainable program.

Present your program results along with success stories and data collected from other community partners to local governments, groups, rotaries, local chambers of commerce, associations, religious organizations, disability support groups, local newspapers and other media.

**Success Stories: Muskegon, Newaygo and Shiawassee groups
attend a Legislative Advocacy Day.**



Muskegon group with Legislators, left to right:
Jim Salter, Jill Lacy, Frank Minor, Mary Valentine D District 91,
Karen Wynne, Doug Bennett D District 92, and Bonnie Gonzalez.



Shiawassee group members talk with the legislative aide to State
Representative Richard Ball.



Resource One Success Story:

We celebrated meeting (in St. Ignace, MI) the "Road to Freedom Bus" a grass roots effort to strengthen the ADA. And in August of 08, Resource One is Partnering with Michigan Partners for Freedom and are hosting a Self-determination seminar in Gaylord, MI

Individual Advocacy:

Advocating for a person with a disability on an individuals basis to increase their transportation options is important. This can be accomplished by:

- Using natural supports such as family, friends, neighbors, local churches, co-workers, volunteers or other community members they may use for natural supports.
- Establish a team to advocate on their behalf as well as to offer encouragement and guidance to the individual in self- advocacy.
- An individual transportation needs assessment is helpful to determine the number of miles needed, how many trips will be taken and for what purpose transportation is needed.
- Develop a list of possible drivers to contact and advocate on behalf of the rider.



Sheryl's Success Story:

Sheryl lives independently and owns a car. By using the transportation voucher program Sheryl was able to attend Mary Free Bed Hospital's driving assessment program in Grand Rapids, MI, complete a drivers training course in Muskegon, MI, pass a road test and was recently reissued her driver's license. Sheryl has been using the transportation voucher program for over two years to visit her family, do volunteer work and attend pre-employment classes. Sheryl is actively seeking employment.

4. Program Management

The program management is described very well in the APRIL Toolkit. This section is based on the elements as described in the Toolkit, showing how that program management structure was implemented in somewhat different ways within the 6 Michigan pilot projects, depending on the needs of the communities and organizations that were coordinating the local pilot.

5. Staffing

5a. Project Director

Every project had someone who was responsible for project management. In one it was the Executive Director, in others it was a senior staff person. The titles varied, sometimes called the Project Director, Program Manager or Project Coordinator.

The main responsibilities were:

- General oversight for the program.
- Supervision and support of project staff.
- Develops systems and written processes for voucher project implementation.
- Completes all reports related to project as required by funder.
- Program grievances.
- Any other tasks necessary to ensure the accountability and development of the program.

In some projects, the Project Director handled tasks that the APRIL toolkit lists for the Bookkeeper. In Shiawassee, the Director completed the financial reports, processing check requests for payments. In Jackson, the Program Manager maintained the agency database tracking program riders.

In some projects, the Project Director handled tasks that the APRIL toolkit lists for the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC.) In Baraga County, the Project Coordinator was also the CTC and bookkeeper, handling all aspects of the project.

Responsibilities for facilitating or attending meetings were handled by the Directors in some places, and by the CTC in others. The meetings included the community partners committee, project advisory committee, stakeholders meetings, advocacy coalitions, riders meetings, voucher project quarterly meetings, and the DD Council Transportation Workgroup.

5b. Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC).

The CTC manages all aspects of the day to day operation of the Voucher project. Again the title varied, including Program Specialists, Project Assistant and Voucher Coordinator. None of the projects used the CTC title.

The duties included and went beyond those described in the APRIL toolkit:

- Identifying potential community partners for the collaborative committee.
- Creating awareness of the program through presentations to the public.
- Identifying funding opportunities for program sustainability.

- Developing program forms and documents.
- Contact person for voucher inquires.
- Coordinating with existing transportation programs, matching riders with the most appropriate program.
- Processing voucher rider application, determining eligibility and enrolling riders.
- Training riders.
- Processing driver applications, registering and orienting drivers.
- Maintaining program files, including rider and driver files.
- Scheduling advocacy trainings and workshops.
- Planning annual recognition dinner for volunteers and community partners.
- Researching current transportation trends and best practices.

In most projects, the CTC recorded trip data from vouchers, issued check requests for driver reimbursement, and provided data management.

In Wayne County the CTC completed a quarterly transportation voucher newsletter

In Shiawassee County, the CTC completed the reports,

In Shiawassee County the CTC was assisted by an office assistant through the Baker College Work-Study program.

Muskegon/Newaygo had agency Administrative Support staff who tracked and recorded number of miles used, reason for use and issue dates of checks mailed

Resource One staffed a Member Service Office 20 hours per week. The office is staffed by trained volunteer transportation coordinators.

5c. Bookkeeper

The Bookkeeper function was similar to that described in the APRIL Toolkit. Tasks included:

- Writing reimbursement checks to drivers.
- Calculating mileage usage and accrual.
- Producing, tracking and reporting on budget.
- Completing financial status reports.
- Completing payroll for project staff.

Existing agency financial staff handled the bookkeeping responsibilities in most of the projects. In Baraga the CTC serves as the Bookkeeper. In Wayne County, these functions were contracted to another organization.

Staff Success Story

The "Miles with Meaning" voucher program has only hired persons with disabilities to manage the office, bookkeeping, report writing etc. This has been a learning experience for all involved and has given our organization, Resource One, opportunities to be successful in new ways and to show us opportunities for improvement in our processes. This will only help us become a stronger consumer run organization.

6. Financial Management

Agencies seeking to create a voucher program will benefit from considering the APRIL Toolkit descriptions and these three examples from the Michigan pilots.

Jackson describes the basics. Grants funds are received from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MUCH) for provision of the Transportation Voucher Project. Funds are dispersed to volunteer drivers as reimbursement for mileage expenses. Limited funds are used to offset staffing and other costs associated with maintaining the program.

The Shiawassee project describes their process in more detail. Program funds are distributed by the Michigan Department of Community Health (MUCH) to the Executive Director of the sponsoring agency and deposited into a separate checking account for the transportation voucher program. The Executive Director pays bills for expenses such as voucher payments and supplies, based on check requests submitted by the Transportation Coordinator. Checks written for over \$250.00 require two signatures, the Executive Director and an agency board member. The sponsoring agency invoices the program monthly to be reimbursed for expenses incurred. Monthly financials are exported to an outside accounting firm that prepares the general financial statements for the sponsoring agency. The Executive Director completes and submits the monthly Financial Status Report (FRS) to the MDCH for payment. A copy of the FRS is sent to the DD Council and the Transportation Coordinator.

Community Living Services in Wayne County funds transportation for individuals in the form of transportation voucher accounts. The transportation voucher accounts are managed through a Fiscal Intermediary agency called Personal Accounting Services. Monthly payments are made to the fiscal intermediary who applied it towards the individual accounts. The individual secures their own transportation provider service. The transportation provider must meet guidelines (see transportation process attached). The Fiscal Intermediary insures a transportation agreement is completed and signed by the transportation provider and the individual. The Fiscal Intermediary runs a check on the transportation providers driving record and insures meets guidelines. Once the arrangement is established and in writing between the individual and the transportation provider, services rendered are documented on a voucher form, signed by the individual and forwarded to the Fiscal Intermediary on a monthly basis. The Fiscal Intermediary pays the transportation provider retroactively. Revenue and expense reports are completed monthly by the Fiscal Intermediary and forwarded to the transportation voucher Director for review.

Reimbursement rates

Most programs used the Federal Reimbursement rate, which changed periodically during the project. Others established rates ranging from 35 cents per mile, up to 48 cents per mile.

The Jackson project had a premium reimbursement rate for lift equipped vans.

7. Rider Enrollment

In every project, riders had to fill out an application. The referral process, application procedures, forms and eligibility criteria for securing a voucher varied.

Each rider who enrolls in the program is given a monthly “budget” of miles depending on his or her unmet needs. Those miles can be used to go to the doctor, shopping, visiting, etc. The Wayne County was the exception, with each person having a budgeted amount of money instead of miles.

Each rider is given a book of vouchers and they need to complete a voucher at the end of each roundtrip ride.

Jackson.

Applications are submitted by potential riders and will be prioritized according to a number of factors such as current sources of transportation. The referral source, if other than the rider needs to be involved with the entire process. . After the application has been turned in to the Travel Voucher Coordinating staff it will be scored to consider the individual's eligibility status. When eligibility status has been considered he/she will be called. If eligible, the individual will be required to go through an orientation.

Policy: If participant is a rider he/she must:

- Live in Jackson County
- Is low income
- Have a disability or be a senior
- Not use the vouchers for getting to and from work
- If participant is a driver he/she must have a valid driver's license and up to date insurance on the vehicle they will be using.

Wayne County (CLS)

Applicant referrals come from known area agencies as follows: The ARC of Detroit, CLS of Oakland County, the Detroit 360 project and CLS enrollees. Individuals who meet criteria for developmental disabilities are referred to the CLS voucher program. An application is completed and reviewed by the Transportation Voucher Project Assistant. Approved applicants secure their own transportation provider and complete a transportation agreement.

Muskegon/Newaygo

The individual completes an initial rider application with a disability in need of transportation. Disability Connection staff often assisted with filling out the application. The applicant is often referred by a collaborating agency or organization.

The Transportation Voucher Committee at their monthly meeting determines eligibility by reviewing the rider application and coming to a consensus. The program manager is responsible for following up with the rider to address any unanswered questions before eligibility is decided and enrollment is completed.

- a. The Transportation Voucher Committee reviews the application. The decision to open an individual is based on many factors.
- b. Program status. Are there miles available? An application may be approved and be placed on a waiting list if there are no miles available at the time of review.
- c. Number of persons on the program that indicated they have a developmental disability. Newaygo County averaged around 70% riders who indicated they were DD which was well above the 51% required by the program.
- d. The need was determined by applicant's responses to questions on the rider application form.
- e. After the applicant approval a determination on the number of miles approved and the purpose for the use of miles was decided by the committee.
- f. A packet and determination letter along with vouchers is mailed to the applicant and a phone call is made to inform each applicant of the approval/denial of their application. Verbal instructions are given along with the written instructions included in the packet. Approved applicants are invited to call or visit Disability Connection for further instruction if needed.

Baraga County

Riders had to make their own request to be enrolled or indicate in some other way their interest. In most other projects, agencies were the main source of referrals.

Baraga and Shiawassee used the same enrollment form. Riders had to sign the form. It included the rules of the program. Riders were informed that they will be disenrolled from the project for any acts of dishonesty or non-compliance with program rules.

Shiawassee

The SIT Program received referrals from collaborative partners, program participants, and community agencies; Initial contact with interested individuals usually made by phone. Next they sent a form letter) along with the Participant Criteria Policy, Mileage Reimbursement Policy, Participant Application, and program brochure.

Eligibility for the program included Developmental Disabilities, Acquired Disabilities, Seniors, and Low-Income (see Participant Criteria Policy)

Shiawassee had a checklist for the rider enrollment. The items on the checklist were:

- Participant Application, which provided the program with necessary information to determine eligibility and transportation needs.
- Senior and Low Income Verification form or Verification of Disability form-
 - *Participants with a disability (developmental or acquired), as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, may be required to provide verification of disability through a physician-signed affidavit (see Verification of Disability). Individuals with disabilities not clearly evident may also provide proof of disability income, SSDI, as a means to determine eligibility.
 - *Participants enrolled as Seniors and Low-Income must provide proof of income (see Senior and Low Income Verification Form).
 - *Most of the participants enrolled qualified for the program in more than one eligibility category; The Transportation Coordinator most often chose the disabilities enrollment category first and foremost as a benefit to the rider because of the difference in allocation of miles received each month.
- Mileage Planner Guide
- Attend the MANDATORY Participant & Driver Orientation training
- Reviewed and signed Rules for Enrollment form
- Issued voucher book containing vouchers

Priorities

Because the pilots were funded by the Developmental Disabilities Council, Persons with a developmental disability receive the first priority. In some projects, individuals living independently were prioritized over those living in group homes.

Priorities were given for seeking employment, support for independent living, unmet medical transportation and recreation in Baraga County.

However, in Jackson and Resource One, vouchers were not allowed to be used for getting to work.



Baraga Work Success Stories:

A local woman who lives in Baraga has been able to maintain a full time job because she has been able to reimburse co-workers for rides to and from work.

Two women with disabilities have used ABC vouchers for transportation to and from their jobs working at local motels.

Dan & Wayne's Work Success Story:

Dan & Wayne have used the "Miles with Meaning- voucher program" to get to and from work and to Resource One community based activities.

Education

A young mother enrolled in Access Baraga County used the program for transportation to classes and has acquired her GED. She is now employed and used the program for transport to and from work.



Ruth's Work Success Story:

Ruth is a relatively new rider on the transportation voucher program. She volunteers in the gift shop at the Gerber Memorial Hospital in Fremont, MI. She is learning marketable work skills and is actively seeking employment. Ruth uses the transportation voucher program to help with fuel costs to get back and forth to her volunteer work. Ruth and her husband express their thanks and gratitude often for the transportation support to help with the very high cost of fuel.

8. Driver Registration

In all programs, drivers had to register to be able to receive payment. They had to fill out a registration or application form. All programs required a copy of his/her driver's license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration.

Two projects, Shiawassee and Muskegon/Newaygo, required that drivers complete the Driver's Registration form authorizing a criminal and driving record background check.

In Shiawassee, drivers were enrolled when attending the orientation program.

In Jackson, the rider recruits the driver. Once a rider finds someone, that driver needs to go the program office to register.

Wayne County described their process this way: Drivers are secured by the rider. The fiscal intermediary completes a check on driving record to insure has a valid driver's license. The fiscal intermediary insures the driver has the proper vehicle insurance. The driver and the rider complete and sign a written agreement outlining services and negotiated rate of pay. The Transportation Voucher Project Assistant and Director monitor & track all paperwork to insure meets guidelines.

9. Orientation for riders and drivers

Riders complete an orientation & training program designed to help them choose safe drivers and to ensure that they understand how the program works. It is expected that riders will use any checklists or other materials provided to them in these trainings.

Baraga provided a color brochure with steps for helping the riders choose a driver. The training was provided by an officer from the State Police post.

The contents of the orientation and training varied somewhat, but there were many similarities.

Muskegon/Newaygo

Orientation for riders and drivers consists of:

- a. Verbal, visual and written instruction in completing program applications. Assistance is given in filling out the application as needed.
- b. The program is explained in detail.
- c. Brochures explaining the program are provided and also available at local agencies, organizations and community functions.
- d. A booth with information regarding the voucher program is available at the annual RICC conference and the Gerber Baby Food Festival in Fremont. Presentations are given at the RICC conference, autism parent group and upon request explaining the program.
- e. Once the application is approved a packet is put together containing:
 1. a brochure on how to use the vouchers
 2. , a checkbook of vouchers with the riders name, number of approved miles and approved purposes for using the miles approve

3. a copy of program policy and procedures
4. a list of approved drivers willing to drive for program participants
5. A driver information form and a letter of acceptance.
6. A list of reimbursement dates is also provided.

The orientation is ongoing for some participants as unforeseen questions arise and changes occur in their personal situation or program status.

The Shiawassee orientation checklist covered:

- ✓ What the programs is.
- ✓ Enrollment Rules and Policies.
- ✓ How to use the vouchers.
- ✓ What can the vouchers be used for?
- ✓ How many miles do I get each month?
- ✓ Driver enrollment.
- ✓ Properly filling out and submitting the vouchers for reimbursement.
- ✓ An invitation to become a member of the Shiawassee Transportation Advocacy Coalition.

Jackson County orientation and training included:

- Where did this grant come from?
- Purpose.
- How do I use this program?
- Reimbursement of mileage.
- Review of forms you will be using.
- Problems that might come up.

- For Drivers: Things you might want to ask a potential rider:
 - What kind of help they will need in terms of assistance.
 - What equipment they need? Tie downs, bungee cords, etc.
 - If there is an emergency of any type i.e. medical, breakdown on the road, etc. how will it be handled.
 - Your general gut feeling of this person? Do you feel they will be responsible and treat you well?
 - Discuss what assistance they need to be able to utilize your vehicle. Can/will you be able to assist as needed?

- For Riders: Things you might want to ask a potential driver:
 - Their driving record
 - Alcohol and/or drug abuse past/present. Any health issues that might make them unable to drive safely.
 - What equipment they need? Tie downs, bungee cords, etc.
 - If there is an emergency of any type i.e. medical, breakdown on the road, etc. how it will be handled.
 - Your general gut feeling of this person? Do you feel they are a good, safe choice for you?
 - Do you feel their vehicle is a safe to ride in? Is it in good repair?
 - Discuss what assistance you need to be able to utilize a person's vehicle. Can/will they be able to assist you as needed?

Success Story: Ron's Relationship with his driver.

Drivers, riders and the transportation coordinators have developed solid relationships over the past three years. This group of people has become a support network among themselves. Ron uses the "Miles with Meaning- voucher program" to visit his elderly parents on a regular basis. Ron often becomes anxious about pick up times and he will frequently call the office or the driver for reassurance. Ron has even invited the driver to family events. Resource One

10. Other Policies & procedures

Jackson had the most formal policy and procedures documents. They Include:

- Collecting and Reporting Data
- Driver Training
- Orientation to the Program
- Reimbursements
- Waiting List
- Rider Training
- Voucher Eligibility
- Using Vouchers for JTA (Jackson Transit Authority)

Shiawassee has a specific set of procedures that cover most of these same items, and included a Grievance Procedure.

Baraga and Resource One had relatively simple policy and procedures.

The Detroit project used its regular program policies and procedures for most purposes.

11. Problems encountered.

Getting riders to go places.

Many riders have had not had the opportunity to make choices and to go places in the community on their own. When given the chance, many had no idea what to do with their miles. The programs had to push and encourage riders to use their miles, and provide ideas of how they could get more involved in the community.

Locating and matching drivers to riders.

Many riders had limited connections with other people in their community, and had no one to ask to drive them. Liability concerns led most of the programs to not do any matching. The programs did not provide a list of potential drivers. Only Resource One provided a pool of volunteer drivers that are available to the riders to meet and select to drive them with available miles.

Strategies that did not actually involve making matches had some success. Some they told riders that referrals may be made among riders and drivers, and encourage riders to ask other participants for referrals. Baraga had an annual picnic and Shiawassee had an annual recognition dinner, where drivers and riders could meet each other.

Lift equipped vans.

People who needed lift equipped vans had the most trouble finding drivers. Jackson provided a list of agencies that had lift vans, and provided a higher reimbursement rate for those vans.

Misuse of miles.

Fraud and misuse was minimal. Programs actively monitored program usage for misuse and conflict of interest, and took action when problems were noted.

12. Sustainability

The biggest problem was finding funding to keep the programs going after the conclusion of the 3 year grant. Jackson County decided not to continue the project. Baraga is still seeking funding. Muskegon/Newaygo and Resource One have found small amounts of money for individual participants. Shiawassee and Wayne have found more success.

Shiawassee

The successful continuation of the voucher program, beyond the initial grant period, relies on the commitment of the coalition members in creating public awareness of the need and benefit the service provides to all aspects of the community. Opportunities for future sustainability of the program can be found in the community through service agencies, service clubs, school districts, senior assisted living facilities, day program providers, and local government bodies such as cities, townships, and county boards.

A critical component in demonstrating not only the need, but the impact the service provides, is sharing the success stories or personal testimonies of program participants. How have their lives improved through the use of the voucher program and how does this impact the community? For some individuals or entities, the benefits of the program may need to be seen through the economical viewpoint, whereas, others may view the improved quality of life for residents of the community of higher importance.

Shiawassee County developed an informational PowerPoint for presentations describing the details of how the voucher program works.

In an effort to create program sustainability, the Shiawassee County voucher program participated in the grant process for the Shiawassee Hunger Task Force. The voucher program was written into the grant, Shiawassee Hunger Network, to provide emergency transportation assistance to individuals or families with getting food. A referral form (see Hunger Network Referral Form) is provided to the participating food pantries and must be submitted by the referring organization to the sponsoring agency. Upon receipt of the referral, the Transportation Coordinator contacts the person, offers a \$20 gas card, and, if eligible,

discusses enrollment in the voucher program. Voucher funds are NOT used to purchase the gas cards.

Muskegon/Newaygo

Newaygo County Disability Connection has applied for and received an additional \$5,600 2007/2008 fiscal years through the Fremont Area Community Foundation's Amazing X grant.

We will re-apply for additional dollars for transportation to the Foundation for the next fiscal year.

Newaygo Co. Disability Connection has also applied to The United Way Lakeshore for \$10,000 for the transportation voucher program.

Newaygo applied for a \$15,000 50/50 cash match grant through the Federal New Freedom grant. This \$30,000 cannot be used to replace the existing grant but must be used to enhance current transportation. These funds will be used for transportation for short term/emergency needs as well as for participants in the supported self-employment program developed by Disability Connection and Newaygo County Community Mental Health.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services has subsidized 2 of their participants for transportation in conjunction with what the transportation voucher program provides them.

Wayne

CLS is currently working with DWCCMHA to access transportation funding. We are able to get some transportation costs reimbursed through a special funding project DWCCMHA is running. There is a time limit on this funding stream and limited use allowed. We are working with CMH to negotiate that. In addition, those individuals who are enrolled with CLS will have their transportation funded through their self directed individual budget account. This accounts for 40% of the current voucher account users.