

# Aging In Place - The Woodlands Transportation Service

## Drivers Manual

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Welcome to the Aging in Place-The Woodlands (AIP-TW) Transportation Program. Our mission is to assist members with their transportation needs so they can remain in their homes and neighborhoods while staying active and engaged as they age.

This manual spells out the duties and expectations of those people who volunteer their time as drivers for the program.

Some members of AIPTW may not have access to personal transportation and thus require rides to and from appointments, errands, and social and community events.

## **Driver Requirements and Training**

To be accepted as a volunteer driver for AIP-TW the person applying must :

- Have a valid Texas Driver's License and safe driving record (no suspensions in last 2 years).
- No moving violations in last 3 years.
- Have no health problems that constitute a hazard to safe driving.
- Pass a criminal background check and annual driving background checks.

A volunteer must demonstrate :

- Willingness to commit personal time to travel and provide assistance on behalf of seniors or persons with disabilities.
- Compassion, friendliness, tact, good communication skills, emotional stability, and reliability.
- Ability to drive regularly or to ensure that the Transportation Director knows your availability for driving.
- Willingness to accept direction from the Transportation Director and follow procedures.
- Ability to work respectfully with a wide range of cultures and personalities.
- Experience with frail individuals is a plus.

Personal Vehicle Insurance Requirements:

- Volunteers must carry motor vehicle insurance that meets the minimum Texas standards. In the event of an accident, this will be considered the primary insurance.

- AIP-TW carries additional insurance for motor vehicle accidents and is the secondary insurer.

Current auto insurance with required Texas coverage amounts are available on the Texas Department of Insurance website at:

[tdi.texas.gov](http://tdi.texas.gov).

The present minimum liability requirements for a driver and a vehicle in Texas are:

\$30,000 for each injured person

\$60,000 total per accident

\$25,000 for property damage per accident

In addition to the above minimum coverage, AIP-TW requires Personal Injury Protection (PIP) insurance, commonly called no-fault insurance, and Uninsured Motorist Insurance.

Expectations and Duties :

- Participate in an initial orientation with the Transportation Director covering your responsibilities and available support.
- Specify available days and times, and notify Transportation Director of any changes.
- Commit to 1–3 hours per scheduled trip.
- Promptly and safely transport a member to and/or from their destination/s.
- Be sympathetic to member's concerns.

- Participate in periodic Transportation Committee meetings to share experiences, make recommendations, and receive useful information.
- Notify the AIP-TW Call Manager if you cannot keep an appointment; 24 hours prior is very helpful.

### Legal Issues for a Volunteer Driver :

Volunteer drivers need to be aware of the responsibility they have to the organization and the effect their actions have on the organization. Accidents, violations of traffic laws, and negligence can result in legal action not only against the driver but also AIP-TW.

AIP-TW can suspend or terminate a driver for many reasons. Some of them are:

- Suspension or loss of a valid driver's license
- Lapse of required insurance coverage
- Traffic law violation or chargeable collision
- Physical limitations preventing safe and proper customer assistance
- Criminal history conviction including, but not limited to, any crimes committed against a person
- Driving a member while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or prescribed medications that alter your ability to drive safely
- Failure to represent AIP-TW in a positive manner in the community
- Inability or unwillingness to properly assist all members
- Violence or theft
- Improper conduct
- Violation of program confidentiality policies
- Repeated collisions or a single serious collision (i.e. reckless driving)

- Engaging in physical or verbal confrontations while fulfilling a volunteer driving assignment;
- Failure to provide high quality member service

### Safety

- Volunteers are expected to drive safely and to strictly adhere to all laws and street signage concerning motor vehicle operation.
- If a volunteer's ability to drive safely becomes questionable for any reason (illness, medications, cognitive decline), they must notify the Transportation Director as soon as possible.
- Drivers should do whatever they can to avoid distractions. Using a cell phone is a noted source of distraction. There are other sources of distraction such as spilling coffee, eating, map reading and even conversing with passengers. Driver distractions are among the most frequent causes of automobile accidents.
- Volunteers and passengers are required to use safety belts.
- AIP-TW policy requires that all passengers must be ambulatory. Volunteers cannot provide personal transportation to someone who requires significant physical assistance. This means you cannot lift a member or bear their weight in any manner. If we have assigned you a passenger who requires more than light assistance DO NOT attempt to transport this person. If you take a member who you think is deteriorating, please inform the Call Manager of your concerns.
- When transporting a passenger you should have in your vehicle:
  - A basic first-aid kit

- A cell phone
- An AIP-TW issued ID
- An 8 1/2 by 11 inch laminated sign that identifies your vehicle as an AIP-TW volunteer
- All vehicles that transport members must be in excellent working condition, properly maintained and checked by the driver prior to each trip. Vehicles must be easy for passengers to enter and exit.

### **Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest**

Ethical driver conduct contributes to the overall success of a program and engenders community respect.

All volunteer drivers must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). This means you must not disclose any medical information about a passenger unless it is to a person who has a need to know. If you have questions about this ask the Transportation Director.

Drivers often know or become familiar with members. It is good to establish a positive relationship with a member and provide the best possible service. It is important to maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality is breached when information received from or about members is repeated to persons other than a Transportation Director. Drivers should share their concerns with the Transportation Director, but not with other volunteers, members, family, or friends. Only information that the Transportation Director "needs to know" should be communicated. The names of members receiving services from AIP-TW must not be shared.

It is a conflict of interest for a driver to make personal arrangements for transportation with a member outside the scope of duties as a program volunteer. Such arrangements are prohibited and can lead to serious liability issues for the driver and AIP-TW.

Members should not have access to personal phone numbers and addresses of transportation volunteers unless the volunteer shares such information with the member.

Drivers should not ask personal questions of their riders nor suggest medical, legal or other professional or treatment advice.

Drivers will not use to their personal advantage any information gleaned in the course of their duties.

### **Telephone numbers**

- In an emergency, or if you have any doubts about a member's immediate safety, call 911.
- The AIP-TW office number 281-845-4441 will be answered by volunteers during business hours. If you leave a message, you will be contacted as soon as possible.

## **Customer Service Standards**

- A volunteer driver provides safe transportation from the member's door to the door of their destination.
- When you arrive, present an ID and introduce yourself to the member. Ask how you may be of assistance to the member on his/her trip. Check to make sure he/she has everything they might need for their trip (keys to get back into their house, cell phone, medication list (for physician)). Ask the member if he/she has a handicapped Parking Placard and bring it with you for the ride.
- Many members enjoy the company of the driver in addition to appreciating the ride. While socialization with members is important, ensure that your safety as well as the safety of the rider is a first priority.
- When you leave, let the member know that you've enjoyed assisting him/her. If necessary, remind the member that someone else may assist them on their next outing if you are not available.
- To make it easier for your passenger to find you in a parking lot, place a sign (8 1/2 by 11 inches in your window showing the logo of AIP-TW ).

### Expectations and Communication

- Some members are so thrilled to have someone help them that they forget you are not a taxi service or errand person. Try not to take this personally and just remember your function is driving the member and providing needed destination assistance. Always be clear with the member to prevent unrealistic expectations or resentment, which can be upsetting to both the member and the volunteer.

- Plan extra time for the ride. Some members move slowly and may require extra time getting in and out of a car. A member may need help with the seat belt. By not providing sufficient time for the ride, the temptation is to make up for lost time by driving too fast. Worse yet, there may be the temptation to rush the member, risking accident and injury, not to mention an unpleasant travel experience.
- If a member asks you to do anything that is illegal (such as park, even temporarily, in a fire zone, etc) let them know that this is strictly against AIP-TW policy. If they repeatedly insist, you have the right to take them home.
- Let the member know you will have to leave after she/he returns home. Some members may be lonely and expect you to stay longer than you wish. We have a companionship program, and you can inform the Transportation Director that the member may be interested in this.

## Best Practices

These are a few things that are good to mention in order to avoid any awkwardness, liability or hurt feelings. Some of these things can feel fine in the moment but could turn into serious regret later.

Please do not:

- Lift or hold up a member (you may help direct them and provide a stabilizing arm).
- Provide household or garden chores, or personal care (getting dressed, grooming, etc).

- Drive members to places other than agreed on ahead of time.
- Make arrangements directly with a member for future trips. Instead, have him/her call the AIP-TW office.
- Give or accept money or gifts (other than small token gifts). If a member gives the volunteer any amount of money in appreciation for the ride, the volunteer must forward the money to the Driver Appreciation Fund held by the Transportation Director.
- Judge people's behaviors. We are all so very different from each other, yet all worthy beings. If a member has a different religion, political belief, sexual orientation, perspective on the world, etc. remember to treat them with courtesy and respect.

## **Scheduling**

When you applied to be a volunteer you submitted a schedule of times when you would be available. If that schedule changes, please let the AIP-TW Transportation Director know as soon as possible.

We may contact you about "short notice" requests. Please remember to feel free to say "no" if you cannot provide a ride for whatever reason.

You will normally be notified at least 48 hours in advance of an assigned trip. After being assigned a trip, contact the passenger before 5 PM on the day before the trip to clarify when you will pick him/her up and any other details about the trip.

Normally you should transport only the member requesting a ride. If someone or something is added (companion, service animal, luggage etc) you should have been advised of that at the time you were assigned the ride. Pets must be in a pet container.

There will be times when the member will cancel the appointment due to sudden changes in health or other reasons. Sometimes members will make other arrangements without notifying us. Please let the Call Manager know if a member does not keep a scheduled ride.

## **Data Recording and Reporting**

After completing a ride the volunteer driver should contact the Call Manager with the mileage driven, the rating of the rider (1 to 5 with 5 being best) and any other pertinent information. This can be done by calling or emailing AIP-TW. This should be done within 24 hours of ride completion so that the service request documentation can be completed and archived.

## **Disabled Parking Permit**

If you are driving a particular member on a regular basis and experiencing difficulty parking due to the member's disability, please let us know and we will send the member an application for a Texas State Disabled Parking Permit. These permits are portable and the member can give it to you to place on your dashboard while using a disabled parking spot.

## **Emergencies**

**In any emergency, or if you have any doubts about a member's immediate safety, call 911.**

When the emergency situation has stabilized please call the AIP-TW Call Manager and update him/her on the status of the member (what happened what interventions EMS performed and what hospital they took the member to). The Call Manager will call the member's emergency contact person and update them on the situation.

If a driver ever feels that his or her passenger's safety is threatened, he or she should take steps to restore safety and calm as soon as possible. In addition to calling 911, the driver might have to ad lib.

- Verbal intervention: "You seem really upset. Is there anything I can do to help?"
- Accompanying the passenger into a doctor's office to alert the staff about the passenger's emotional state.
- Often this will be a judgment call, but the driver should always do what he or she thinks is best to restore safety.

## **Incidents of unusual behavior by the passenger**

If you see or sense something you believe to be potentially harmful or dangerous, take immediate action.

Notify the AIP-TW Call Manager as soon as possible. The Call Manager will follow up by phone and/or email with the member's emergency contact person and explain the situation. The Call Manager will discuss the situation with the Transportation Director who will decide if further action is indicated.

## **Medical Emergencies**

In the event of a medical emergency call 911. If you have any doubts about how your member is doing, call 911. No matter what the circumstances, do not jeopardize your member's safety (or your own) by fast, unsafe driving to a medical facility.

## **Vehicle Accidents**

In the event of a vehicle accident or injury to your passenger, take whatever steps are prudent to ensure the safety and well-being of your passenger and yourself.

Then you should – in this order:

- 1 Call 911 if there are serious injuries or death.
- 2 Call the AIP-TW Call Manager to advise him/her of the situation. The Call Manager may have to get another driver to complete the ride.

TxDOT Accident Reporting Requirements

Texas law requires that a Driver's Crash Report (Form CR-2) must be completed by a driver involved in a traffic crash when:

- A law enforcement officer does not come to the accident scene or complete a report;
- An accident occurs that did not result in injury or death;
- Damage to property or vehicles is not more than \$1,000.

Reasons Why a Driver's Crash Report is Important even for a minor accident:

- Injuries may not become apparent for a few days or weeks.
- You may not notice all the damage to your car immediately.
- The other party may make false claims about the car accident later.
- The other party may admit fault to you but change his mind as time passes.

When a traffic crash results in injury or death or apparent damage is \$1,000 or more, a law enforcement officer investigating the crash must file a Texas Peace Officer's Crash Report (CR-3). This report must be filed by the law enforcement officer not later than the 10th day after the date of the crash.

For more information on crash reports visit the TxDOT webpage dedicated to Crash Reports:

<https://www.txdot.gov/driver/laws/crash-reports.html>.

Effective Sept. 1, 2017, the Driver's Crash Reports (Form CR-2) are no longer retained by the Texas Department of Transportation.

Drivers involved in a crash not investigated by a police officer should retain this form for their records.

#### First Steps Following an Accident:

After determining that everyone is safe after the accident, and administering first aid, if necessary, you will need to gather some information. Exchange names, addresses, phone numbers driver's license numbers, insurance information, and complete vehicle descriptions of all parties involved. If there were witnesses, get their names, addresses and contact information. Write down the weather and road conditions at the time of the accident. Take pictures of both vehicles to document either minimal or no damage.

### **Severe Events**

In the event of severe weather the Transportation Director may alter ride schedules. If the AIP-TW office closure becomes necessary a message about the closure will be put on the AIP-TW telephone number and on the website.

#### Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, which can be defined as anytime the public schools or other public agencies are closed for bad weather, drivers should notify the AIP-TW Call Manager if they not available to volunteer due to driving concerns. The Transportation Director will decide if rides will be cancelled.

We encourage you NOT to drive if you have concerns about the weather and feel unsafe.

