

Central Plains Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



Photo courtesy of Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

The Central Plains Area Agency on Aging (AAA) employs a range of best practices to enhance mobility and accessibility for older adults and people with disabilities. These strategies use Section 5310 and other innovative funding solutions, coordinated planning, collaborative partnerships, training and technical support.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The City of Wichita in Sedgwick County, Kansas, is a designated recipient of FTA Section 5310. Central Plains Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is a subrecipient and operates under the Sedgwick County Department of Aging and Disabilities, serving three counties that total approximately 130,142 people ages 60 and older.

Central Plains AAA began providing transportation in the Wichita area more than 30 years ago. Following the 2010 U.S. Census, much of the Central Plains

BEST PRACTICES

- Find opportunities to braid funding to support transportation services. Central Plains AAA has expanded its services and increased its impact by braiding funds for Section 5310 and Section 5311 with OAA Title IIIIE funds for caregiver support, mill levy and tax funds and other sources.
- In addition to vehicle funding, Central Plains AAA receives operating support to provide rides for medical appointments, employment, and more for older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers.
- Coordinate with other transportation providers. All local transportation providers who operate under contract with the City of Wichita, including the AAA, coordinate to fill gaps and lessen overlap of services.
- Be rider-centered. Central Plains AAA prioritizes rider safety, especially in poor weather conditions and at pick-up and drop-off locations. The agency also trains staff in both first aid and mental health first aid.

service area became part of the newly urbanized area around Wichita. The City of Wichita decided not to expand its services into the newly urbanized area, instead contracting with Central Plains AAA to provide FTA Section 5310 transportation services in the area. Today, with five full-time drivers and two part-time drivers, Central Plains AAA provides demand-response rides for medical appointments, employment, shopping and socialization in rural Sedgwick County with Section 5310 funds for older adults, people with

disabilities and caregivers and Section 5311 funding for rural public transportation. Section 5310 funds support both vehicle purchases and program

operations. The agency allocates a portion of Older Americans Act Title III-B funds to transportation.

FUNDING

Central Plains AAA is one of several transportation providers that receive FTA Section 5310 support from the City of Wichita, and it participates in a competitive funding process every two years. It receives funding for both vehicles and operations.

To meet its match requirements for FTA Section 5310 and 5311 funding, Central Plains AAA braids funds, which is using

funds from one federal program to meet the match requirements of another, including Older American Act Title III-E funds for Caregiver Services, mill and tax levy support and support from other sources including private foundations. In addition, Central Plains AAA charges riders \$3 per ride. Fund braiding has enabled Central Plains AAA to expand services and increase its impact over the years.

COORDINATION/PARTNERSHIPS

Central Plains AAA coordinates its services in several ways. One key approach involves collaborating with other public, private, and human service transportation providers in their Coordinated Transportation District (CTD-9), one of 10 districts in the state. Together, they look for ways to identify and address gaps in services. Central Plains AAA also coordinates with transportation providers

in neighboring CTD-5 in South Central Kansas.

Central Plains AAA has also worked with the University of Kansas Public Health Department on resource mapping. By identifying food deserts, they have assisted with plans for appropriate transit stops, increasing access for older adults and people with disabilities to groceries as well as medical care.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Central Plains AAA is the only public transportation provider in the outlying suburbs and rural areas of Wichita's urbanized area, consequently, they operate on the philosophy of putting the needs of the rider first, particularly under poor weather conditions at rural drop-off and pick-up locations. They also train staff on both first aid and mental health first aid.

Staff believe their services are critical, not just for connecting older adults and people with disabilities to medical care and groceries but to help combat social

isolation as well. Sometimes the only interaction an older person has in an entire week is with the driver who transports them. These relationships can be critical to the well-being of vulnerable riders. In one example of the importance of Section 5310 funding, finding that the rider was not at home even though a ride had been scheduled, a driver contacted social services to request a welfare check. The rider's family was deeply appreciative that Central Plains AAA took the time to ensure the rider was okay. In another example that illustrates the value of transportation services, a client's eligibility

for regular rides to medical appointments has enabled his wife to maintain steady employment.

Staff at Central Plains AAA are concerned about the growing need for dialysis rides in their region, particularly as dialysis clinics move to areas that are not served

by city transit, placing added strain on the agency's limited number of vehicles and drivers, even as the need for rides rises. Indeed, Section 5310 funds continue to play a critical role in expanding services to meet growing demand for transportation in Wichita.



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Who We Are

Established in 2015, the NADTC is a federally funded technical assistance center administered by Easterseals and USAgings based in Washington, DC.

The **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center** is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easterseals, USAgings, and the U.S Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

USAgings is the national association representing and supporting the network of Area Agencies on Aging and advocating for the Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Our members help older adults and people with disabilities live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. USAgings and our members work to improve the quality of life and health of older adults and people with disabilities, including supporting people with chronic illness, people living with dementia, family caregivers and others who want to age well at home and in the community. Together, we are ensuring that all people can age well. Our members are the local leaders that develop, coordinate and deliver a wide range of home and community-based services, including information and referral/assistance, case management, home-delivered and congregate meals, in-home services, caregiver supports, transportation, evidence-based health and wellness programs, long-term care ombudsman programs and more.

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