

Hearts and Hands Faith in Action (HHFIA)

BEST PRACTICES

- Use of various funding sources as local match (federal fund braiding)
 - Older Americans Act grant funds.
 - Local organizational partnerships for fundraising efforts.
 - In-kind match from volunteer mileage and donated office space.
- Use of FTA Section 5310 to support operational expenses of a volunteer driver program which is a non-traditional Section 5310 project that fills the transportation gap for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Coordination with local government entities, businesses, faith-based and human services organizations to enhance community transportation options.



Image provided by Hearts and Hands Faith in Action

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Hearts and Hands Faith in Action (HHFIA) is a volunteer based non-profit organization that provides free transportation and in-home services for older adults age 60+ and adults with disabilities living in the Erie and Eastern Niagara Counties of New York. The program addresses social isolation through three avenues of service: transportation, household support, and companionship.

HHFIA volunteers provide FREE door-through-door escorted transportation using their personal vehicles. Their door-through-door services include the personalized care that HHFIA volunteers offer during a trip, such as taking the groceries into the home or providing company in a doctor's waiting room. There are no set schedules or routes, no specific trip purposes and no need for computers, smart phones, or internet access to schedule a ride. HHFIA provides transportation options for medical visits and lifestyle opportunities such as shopping, visits

with family and friends, and attending faith-based services.

HHFIA coordinators match the volunteer with the need of the care recipient. They assist recipients to the vehicle from their home, remain in the waiting room for medical visits and help to unload groceries from shopping trips when needed.

Volunteers receive mileage reimbursement for every trip mile travelled from their home. Driver reimbursement is paid by local funding sources, and the volunteer hours and mileage are used as in-kind contributions for local match for the 5310 grant.

Volunteer and care recipient profiles are housed in a software database that is also used for entering trip information. HHFIA used Section 5310 to purchase the software, and it funds the annual fee for software use. The software is also used for scheduling care

recipient's trip request. Each week, volunteers review pending trip requests through a volunteer portal. This allows the volunteer to choose trips that are convenient for their schedule and/or comfort.

HHFIA utilizes FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Operational funding for:

- Coordinator and Administrator Salaries
- Volunteer Insurance Premiums
- Volunteer Background Check Fees
- Program Overhead Costs such as Facility Rent, Annual Software Fee

Up to 45 percent of FTA's Section 5310 grant apportionment from NY DOT may be utilized for capital and operating projects that assist older adults and individuals with disabilities transportation needs as found in the newly updated [FTA Section 5310 Circular](#) (Section IV-5.3.a.). Eligible projects include travel training, mobility management and volunteer driver programs. FTA encourages innovative solutions to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities in their communities. Discuss projects with FTA regional staff to determine eligibility.

"I cannot express how much I appreciate Hearts and Hands. I have benefited immeasurably by the transportation provided by volunteers, which has allowed me to participate in the water fitness classes at the YMCA for several years. My doctor has stated that the water fitness exercise has kept me out of a wheelchair." – Connie, Care Recipient

FUNDING ●

The HHFIA is a subrecipient of FTA Section 5310 funding from the New York State Department of Transportation through a competitive grant program. The FTA grant funds cover 50 percent of the net operating costs, leaving 50 percent of the net operating costs paid by local share. The local share is paid through the Older Americans Act (OAA) funds from the two counties served and HHFIA program in-kind contributions. HHFIA uses donated office space, volunteer mileage, and volunteer hours for in-kind contributions. The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) created the [Federal Fund Braiding Guide](#) which provides guidance for using various federal funding for local match such as the use of Administration for Community Living (ACL) and OAA funding to match FTA Section 5310 grants.

In addition to local government and in-kind contributions, HHFIA partners with local faith-based organizations in fundraising efforts toward the local match. In recent years, as much as \$15,000 has been raised through these efforts.

Fundraising along with private and local foundation donations support direct costs such as volunteer mileage reimbursement, recruitment and retention efforts. HHFIA hosts volunteer recognition events such as monthly coffee hours and an annual volunteer picnic. Local businesses donate gift cards for a volunteer raffle and a local grocery store gift card is given to each volunteer once a year. These events are hosted to show appreciation and to celebrate volunteers.

COORDINATION/PARTNERSHIPS ●

Coordination and partnerships are established through regional focus groups, faith-based and local human service organizations. This is an example of mobility management at a local organization level.

Regional focus group meetings provide the opportunity to discuss case-specific needs and services of other regional organizations and agencies. HHFIA staff attend several monthly and quarterly focus group meetings hosted by local private foundations and the Erie County Department of Senior Services. It's through these meetings; case workers may present specific examples of client needs and HHFIA staff attempt to assist with mobility and transportation solutions when possible. These meetings also provide an opportunity to educate various human service organizations and associations about HHFIA services and volunteer opportunities.

Consistent communication with local government entities has established productive and effective partnerships through monthly reporting of completed trips, the number of clients assisted, miles driven, and volunteer hours contributed provides service details to their local government partners. HHFIA participates in the regional coordination

plan by providing feedback for transportation needs and services in the areas served. The local government entities create the plan and call on HHFIA to provide information gathered from client transportation requests. HHFIA also assists local government agencies by distributing community needs assessment surveys to HHFIA volunteers, staff and clients.

HHFIA has established partnerships with multiple local faith-based organizations. Each church invites HHFIA to present to their congregation at least once a year. The speaking engagement can vary, depending on context but have included a five-minute presentation on HHFIA services during announcements before a service; a 15-to 20-minute presentation during service; a panel discussion between the pastor and HHFIA staff; a hosted coffee hour before or after service and speaking to a specific church group. This has not only helped with fundraising but also helped with gaining volunteers. HHFIA has received funds from the church's outreach budget; special offering day designated to HHFIA; and a church hosted annual art show where the door entry fees collected are then donated to HHFIA.

PROGRAM IMPACT ●

Through its transportation services, HHFIA increases access to medical care, food security, and opportunities for physical and social activity. The door-through-door services include additional personalized assistance the volunteers provide during each trip. To better prepare their volunteers for this level of service, HHFIA requires all volunteers to complete a mandatory 90-minute training course provided by HHFIA. This training includes:

- CPR/AED Training
- Building Rapport with Clients
- Working with Clients who have Dementia or Alzheimer's
- Working with Clients who are hearing impaired
- Mobility Simulation (how to assist clients in and out of the vehicle with walkers, grab handles, swivel seats)
- Conflict De-escalation
- Hoarding

*"Volunteering with Hearts and Hands has really given me purpose and I get to meet new people, which is interesting. Each day, I know that someone is depending on me."
- Carole, Volunteer*

Optional training events throughout the year keep volunteers engaged and recognition events are held to show their appreciation for volunteer contribution.

In addition to the transportation service provided, HHFIA lends the opportunity for residents to provide volunteer service as little or as much as their time allows. The program makes it easy and flexible to coordinate with the volunteer's schedule. Business, faith, or civic groups are welcome, typically assisting with yard work or preparing for the winter and spring months.

HHFIA's Volunteer Transportation service has been successful in filling the gap in services for older adults and adults with disabilities while expanding their community's transportation services. They provide an opportunity for local residents to volunteer and continue to build partnerships throughout the areas they serve. With multiple funding sources, such as FTA's Section 5310, the Older Americans Act, local foundation grants, fundraising and donations, sustainability has been achieved. As important as program funding is, they attribute the program's success to its volunteers.



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Who We Are

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

The **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center** is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easterseals, USAgging, 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.

USAgging 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. USAgging 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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