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Considerations for Selecting and Hiring Travel Trainers A Compilation of Resources

Resource Sheet

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Introduction

Easter Seals Project ACTION staff provides services to educators and transportation providers across the country to support a continuum of transportation options for students in school and in transition to post-school settings, including higher education, employment and independent living. This resource sheet is a condensed summary of resources and strategies available to assist educators who are considering expanding their travel instruction services to include travel training.

Because it is important for educators to understand the position requirements and demands related to travel instruction, including travel training, this resource sheet begins with a multi-pronged definition of travel instruction offered by the Association of Travel Instruction (ATI). When human resources personnel have an understanding of the nature of the work, as described in the second section of this sheet, they can consider the characteristics or attributes of a potential travel trainer and can be better informed as they review a candidate's job application and conduct interviews. This resource sheet concludes with an annotated list of resources related to travel training and instruction. These resources include links to online and face-to-face forums where community members may



share resources regarding recruitment sources for travel trainers, and other information to identify and select travel trainers.

As educators realize the importance of accessible transportation in supporting student transition to post-secondary settings they will want to consider the competencies of the professionals they hire to provide travel training services. In many ways, the field of travel training and instruction is evolving, and educators are still learning how the competencies and skills of travel trainers affect outcomes for students with disabilities receiving travel-related services. For this reason, it is important that educators hiring travel trainers have a thorough understanding of their student's needs, be clear and transparent regarding the role of the newly hired travel trainer within the organization and have plans for performance monitoring and feedback to ensure that the trainer's performance is aligned with the needs of students and the educational setting.



The following materials and resources are suggestions for educators as they consider the characteristics that are important for travel trainers, regardless of whether the professional is employed directly by the educational organization, or is affiliated with a consulting organization. As in all hiring decisions, educators will want to consider their specific needs and conditions to ensure that there is alignment between the credentials of the individual selected and the needs of the organization.

Definition of Travel Instruction

ATI considers travel instruction to be the professional activity of teaching individuals with disabilities and older adults how to access their environment and community and use public transportation independently. The practice of travel instruction, as provided by a professional travel trainer, requires knowledge of human development and behavior, travel-related concepts and skills, public transportation services, the natural and built environment, paths of travel, and the interaction of these dynamics. The Competencies for the Practice of Travel Instruction and Travel Training (Easter Seals Project ACTION) provides guidance on the competencies that are essential for the practitioner. Travel instruction practice, as characterized by ATI, includes the professional application of a code of ethics, guiding principles, methods, strategies, and emerging best practices.

Travel instruction one of the family of services offered to individuals with disabilities, older adults, and others who need assistance to increase their mobility and travel on public transportation independently. It includes a variety of plans, methods and strategies used by professional travel trainers to increase the

independent travel skills of the people they serve. It is understood that individuals may require different travel-instruction services during their lifetime as their needs change. The following are specific services included in the ATI definition of travel instruction.

Transit Orientation

Group or individual activity conducted for the purpose of explaining transportation systems; options and services available to address individual transportation needs; use of maps and schedules as resources for trip planning; fare system; use of mobility devices while boarding, riding, and exiting; and vehicular features.

Familiarization

Individual or small group trip activity to facilitate use of transportation systems with a travel trainer accompanying experienced traveler(s) on a new mode of transportation or route to point out/explain features of access and usability.

Travel Training

One-to-one, short-term instruction provided to an individual who has traveled independently and needs additional training or support to use a different mode of travel, a different route, or travel to a new destination; or one-to-one, comprehensive and specially designed instruction in the skills and behaviors necessary for independent travel on public transportation provided to an individual who does not have independent travel concepts or skills to go from point of origin of trip to destination and back.

Selecting a Travel Trainer

Currently, there is no national certification for travel trainers. However, the Association for Travel Instruction members, along with Easter Seals Project ACTION staff, developed a comprehensive set of competencies related to the travel training profession. This list or set of competencies are available from ESPA and are included in the resources section of this document. Educators can consider these nationally recognized credentials as they develop their own list of travel-trainer credentials and protocols for attaining travel training services for their students. Because the role of travel trainers can vary across settings, populations and organizations, it is important for educators to know and understand if their school or state educational agency has certification or credential requirements for travel instructors, including travel trainers.

School hiring managers, relying on the national competencies suggested by ATI and ESPA, can consider the following questions in their hiring process:

- Has the individual completed any structured course or training offered by a recognized vendor?
- Has the individual had experience in all phases of travel instruction?
- Does the individual have school-based travel instruction experience?
- If the individual has completed training, what was the performance of the individual in the course? Is this performance review documented?
- Does the individual have practical experience as a travel trainer? In what settings and with what populations?

- Has the individual worked with educators and contributed to transition planning?
- Is the individual experienced with the transit systems they will be instructing students to use?
- Does the individual belong to any professional associations, such as ATI, where they can receive ongoing professional development?

Other administrative questions to consider:

- Will your hiring process include an opportunity for you to observe the candidates in the field?
- Can other school professionals, such as occupational therapists and special educators, participate in the hiring process, as they will likely be working closely with this professional upon hire?

Identifying Sources to Hire Travel Trainers

Educators can check with local Centers for Independent Living (CILs), human service organizations, local public transportation systems, and orientation and mobility centers to identify whether these organizations provide travel-training services. Educators may also want to consider professionals who are already employed in the school system and whether these individuals can receive training to perform the duties of a travel trainer. For instance, some school districts use their job coaches or work experience staff to provide travel-instruction services. Regardless, assuring that any professional in this role has the proper training and experience is critical.

There are for-profit organizations that provide travel-training services. It is important for educators to gather specific information about

the costs of these services, and outcome information about the success of their services. School professionals may also want to speak with other districts that may have used the services of this travel-instruction consultant to learn more about their experience and performance.

Travel Training as Part of the School Team

Educators will want to consider how the travel trainer will work with other school professionals, especially the student's transition team. Often, information provided by classroom professionals and related service professionals is important to inform the travel-training process. Therefore it is critical that a regular communication system, across professional disciplines, is in place to assure current information about the student is shared. Educators will want to assure that information about the services provided by the travel trainer is shared, as appropriate, and that the information is part of the students' individualized education program (IEP).

Information must also be communicated with families, as families can be helpful in supporting travel-training services outside of the school setting. Respecting federal student privacy laws is important, but it is also important to record student performance and behavior that can affect travel-training services. The school should provide opportunities for the travel trainer to communicate information with the school team about the student's performance during travel training, and conversely, the school team should be encouraged to supply information that is relevant to the provision of travel instruction to the travel trainer.

www.projectaction.org

Resources

The following travel-training resources contain ideas regarding travel-instruction program implementation and administration. In addition, Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA) hosts events where schools and organizations share their experience and strategies related to implementing travel-training programs. When appropriate, we include these stories and experiences in our materials (e.g., *Project ACTION in Action: Helping Schools Meet the Transportation Needs of Students with Disabilities*). The following products are available on the ESPA website under Resources & Publications, www.projectaction.org.

Training

Fundamentals of Travel Training Administration-Online Course

ESPA offers Fundamentals of Travel Training Administration—a free online course about launching, operating and maintaining a travel-training program. Participants can learn more about creating job descriptions; hiring, training and supervising travel trainers; developing budgets; and understanding the family of travel-training services offered throughout the country. The course format is flexible with no scheduled meeting times, allowing participants to work at any hour of the day or night throughout the 6-week course.

Introduction to Travel Training -Free in-person, travel-training workshop

ESPA conducts in-person workshops to increase the skills, knowledge and abilities of travel-training professionals. It is an intensive course with classroom and field instruction. Workshop participants will acquire knowledge in the classroom and will have opportunities to practice new skills on the street. Enrollment is limited and an application selection process is necessary.

Online Communities

Accessible Transportation for Students—Online Community

As part of ESPA's student engagement initiative, the Accessible Transportation for Students Online Community allows students, their families, educators, human service providers, and transit professionals to learn from each other. Participants can use this forum to share stories and strategies related to providing accessible and inclusive transportation for students who are in school as well as those transitioning to post-school settings; discuss how transportation education content is integrated into class curriculum, instruction and academic standards; and upload or post links to helpful resources, projects, or organizations. Visit the Accessible Transportation for Students Online Community at <http://espa-ncst.communityzero.com/ats>.

Global Travel Training Community (GTTC)

The GTTC is a free, accessible Web-based community of practice to facilitate collaboration and share knowledge among the travel training community. The purpose of the GTTC is to provide a forum for members to:

- Pose questions, receive answers and participate in discussions about issues of interest to the travel training community;
- Share policies, procedures, job descriptions, forms, marketing materials, photographs, and other documents used in travel-training service delivery;
- Provide recommendations on the development of measurement and data collection tools, such as a standardized database for professional travel-training services; and network with professional colleagues from around the world.

Products and Tools

Mobility Options in Your Community

A resource-mapping tool to help you analyze the accessible-transportation resources in your community.

Building a Transportation Education Continuum

An activity to assist educators to build transportation education activities across multiple tiers.

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation: Transit Assessment Guide for Students, Families and Educators

A tool for students, families, and educators who would like to increase their understanding of transit systems and how people with disabilities use public transportation.

Competencies for the Practice of Travel Instruction and Travel Training [CD]

Compiles key guidelines and outlines the fundamental abilities needed for effective travel-training instruction.

Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes

This is a primer for school administrators interested in learning how high schools across the country are connecting students to travel-training services, developing and adapting goals, and supporting local implementation of travel-training programs. This resource includes the following:

A Practical Guide for School Administrators (PDF)

This 23-page booklet was developed by Easter Seals Project ACTION with contributions from education, disability, and transportation professionals. It offers multiple examples from across the United States of how schools are making travel-

Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation

training services available to their students. These initiatives range from offering travel-training services directly through school district personnel to enrolling students in travel-training programs offered by the local transportation provider or a human service agency.

*PowerPoint Slide Shows:
Travel Training for Student Success Part One:
Benefits of Travel Training
Travel Training for Student Success Part Two:
Getting Started*

Use these PowerPoint shows to inform and enlist other education officials, colleagues and community partners in support of goals related to travel training for students. The PowerPoint presentations include talking points. To view the talking points, right-click when the slides appear. Select "Edit slides" In the toolbar, select "View" and then "Notes Page."

Project ACTION in Action: Helping Schools Meet the Transportation Needs of Students with Disabilities [PDF]

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) ensures transportation services for eligible students who need public transportation to reach

school. Obtaining transportation services can sometimes be challenging for school districts that need to identify new funding, partnerships or resources to provide rides for students. This report discusses the process used by six school districts from across the country to identify their education and transition-services transportation challenges and solutions.

Organizations

Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) is committed to the development of competent travel skills for people with disabilities and seniors so they can establish the independence to freely elect to use all modes of public transportation anywhere in the world!

*Suggestion: Schools and educational organizations may be able to identify particular names of travel trainers through the individuals and organizations who are members of ATI, and those professionals who have presented at ATI conferences. However, because there is not a national credential related to the role of a travel trainer, it is still incumbent for the hiring manager to review the credentials and competency of these potential candidates.



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