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Serving Customers with Disabilities is Smart Business!



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Rights & Responsibilities of Drivers & Customers

The law protects both customers with disabilities and taxicab drivers, and each group has its own sets of rights and responsibilities. While these standards ensure safe and fair treatment for customers and drivers, they are also a formula for good service!

Drivers must:

- Provide transportation to any person with a disability.
- Offer assistance to passengers if requested (not to include actual lifting).
- Serve customers with disabilities traveling alone and only use the assistance of family members, companions, or medical/public safety personnel if the customer requests or agrees to help from such persons.
- Give the same reservation services to customers with disabilities as are available to other customers.
- Not charge customers with disabilities extra fees for necessary assistance. For example, drivers must charge the same amount to stow a wheelchair or other aid device in the trunk as they would charge for a piece of luggage.
- Not deny service to a customer with a disability solely because the disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience the driver.

Customers with disabilities must:

- Know whether or not they can use a typical taxicab/van. Not all taxicabs can accommodate oversized mobility aids.
- Be able to transfer from their mobility aid to the passenger compartment of the taxi without the driver's help.
- Tell drivers if they need help and explain what help they need.
- Control their service animals at all times.
- Know their destination.
- Pay their fare.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Shows the Way

The ADA is a civil rights law that guarantees people with disabilities an equal opportunity to take part in our society. Access to transportation services is key to full community participation.



The law protects both customers with disabilities and taxicab drivers.



Taxicab Operator's Pocket Guide



Today, 54 million people in the United States live with disabilities. These people have jobs, families, classes, meetings, travel plans, and other activities that keep them on the move. To help them get where they're going, they need transportation, including taxicabs! Think about it: **54,000,000 fares!**



Smart businesspeople want to meet or exceed customers' expectations. Your customers, including those with disabilities, desire good and safe service. By providing courteous service to people with disabilities, you will gain:

- loyal customers
- repeat business
- referrals and additional business
- increased revenue
- recognition and reward
- personal satisfaction

1. General Guidelines for Serving Customers with Disabilities

- Treat customers with disabilities as you would like to be treated.
- Smile, listen, and show respect. Be friendly and courteous.
- Use person-first language (e.g., person who uses a wheelchair instead of wheelchair user; people who are deaf or hard of hearing rather than deaf people; seniors or older adults in place of the elderly).
- Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give other customers.
- When you first meet, take the time to identify customers' needs and determine how best to serve them.
- Never make assumptions about your customers' physical or mental abilities.
- Customers with similar disabilities often need different accommodations to make independent travel possible.

It's **easy** to provide good service to customers with disabilities; just follow these tips on **assistance** and **communication**.

- Ask customers if they need assistance—don't assume they do.
- Do not touch customers without their permission.
- Speak directly to customers, not their companions.
- Speak clearly with a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
- Always have a pad of paper and a pen available.
- If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.

2. Serving Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Face customers when speaking to them, and don't let objects obstruct their view. Speak clearly.
- Do not raise your voice—doing so distorts your lip movement and makes lip reading difficult.
- If you are picking up a passenger, do not honk your vehicle's horn to announce your arrival. Instead, knock on the customer's door or use the accessible doorbell.
- You or the dispatcher may need to call Relay Services at 711 in order to contact the customer. In your call, give or enter the customer's TTY number, and the Relay Services operator will relay the message to the customer.



Ask customers how you can assist them.

3. Serving Customers with Visual Disabilities

- Identify yourself and use the customer's name if you know it.
- Respond verbally when the customer gives you information, so that he will know that you have heard him.
- Ask the customer what type of assistance is needed and how you can best provide it.
- Count the customer's change out loud, as you would for any other customer. Identify the denomination of the bills when you give the customer her change.
- Before you leave the customer, give specific directions to allow her to reach her destination. Say "turn right," or "turn left to reach the front door." Ask if further assistance is needed.

4. Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs

- People who use wheelchairs are easy to accommodate—don't pass up the fare!
- Ask customers how you can assist them.
- Customers must be able to manage their transfer to the passenger compartment of the taxi.
- Wheelchairs, walkers, canes and other mobility aids are part of the customer's personal space. Do not hold or lean on them without the customer's permission.
- Make no assumptions about how to operate or store mobility aids.
- Whenever possible, mobility aids, such as canes and walkers, should travel in the customer compartment of the taxicab. Wheelchairs and other large devices can be stored in the trunk.

- Power and rigid-frame wheelchairs require an accessible vehicle equipped with a lift, low floor, or a ramp. If your vehicle cannot accommodate a wheelchair, call your dispatcher (if applicable) to order an accessible vehicle and wait with the customer, if possible. If your company does not own an accessible vehicle, ask the dispatcher (if applicable) how to acquire transportation to meet the customer's needs.
- If your company does not own a vehicle that can accommodate a wheelchair, you as an independent contract driver may consider buying one. It could be a smart business investment!

5. Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals

- People with various types of disabilities use service animals.
- Service animals are highly trained and allowed by law to ride in the customer compartments of taxicabs.
- Dogs are the most common service animals, but other animals may help people with disabilities.
- Some, but not all, service animals wear identification like a tag, vest, or special harness. If you are not sure that the animal is a service animal, ask. Certification or identification is not required for the animal.
- The owner must stay with the service animal and keep it under control at all times.
- Never touch or talk to the service animal—it is working!