

## Recommending Transportation Network (Rideshare) Services

Independent community mobility is a desired outcome for many students, and supporting their success and safety is an important function of occupational therapy. In addition to driving and public transit options, transportation network services, such as rideshare services (RSS; e.g., taxis, Uber, Lyft) are increasingly available throughout communities. With RSS, the passenger rides in a private vehicle, and transportation and payment may be coordinated using a digital app.

When deciding to use a RSS, consider the student, the demands (e.g., technological, social), and contextual factors (e.g., time of day, availability of RSS, affordability, and distance to the travel destination). It is also important to use these services in adherence with provider policies and recommended ages.

### Assess the Student's Readiness for Using Transportation Network (Rideshare) Services

- Consider the student's age, maturity level, and ability to manage this process.
- [Assess the student's readiness for independent community mobility](#), including:
  - Motor skills
  - Process skills
  - Social emotional skills
  - Safety awareness
  - Efficiency and effectiveness with following travel routines
- Consider the safety risks associated with the student using ridesharing or other transportation services.
- Identify the student's areas of strength and weakness, and provide targeted intervention as needed.

### Choosing a Rideshare Service

- Consider the types of RSS available in the community.
  - Compare the different types of support services and associated costs.
  - Explore whether local RSS companies offer discounts for people with disabilities, and understand any added services or costs.
- Consider scheduling requirements. Some services require advanced scheduling, whereas others can be called/hailed as needed.
- Understand the different [accessibility features](#) available with each rideshare service.
  - Does the RSS have [accessible vehicle dispatch](#)?
  - What type of mobility devices and adaptive equipment is the RSS able to accommodate, and is there an extra cost to transport a mobility device or other equipment?
  - Does the RSS scheduling app offer voiceover services, braille displays, or vibrating alert notifications?
- Consult with family members to identify support options, select appropriate services, set up an account, and link to method of payment.

### Starting the Ride

- Determine where the student will board the RSS. Select a safe and accessible location (e.g., well-lit, in the presence of other people, indoors).
- Teach the student to match the description, tag number, and/or license plate of the vehicle provided on the RSS app with the vehicle offering the ride.

- Teach the student to ask the RSS driver who they are picking up *before* getting in the vehicle or providing their own name.
- Identify the appropriate place for the student to sit inside the vehicle.
- Coach the student on how to ask for assistance with mobility devices or other adaptive equipment.

## During the Ride

- Discuss strategies to anticipate and notice potential unsafe situations.
  - What situations would be *dangerous* (e.g., reckless driving, harassment from a driver, etc.)?
  - What would make them *feel uncomfortable* versus what would *be unsafe*?
- Identify possible actions to take in unsafe situations, and have the student practice these actions (e.g., asking the driver to change a behavior, ending the ride early, calling 911 or a trusted person).
- Help the student become familiar with any safety features in their RSS app (e.g., sharing ride information, using emergency call button).
- Coach the student on safe and appropriate social behaviors (e.g., making polite requests, not sharing private information, avoiding contentious topics if chatting with the driver, accepting or declining offers of candy or water).

## Ending the Ride

- Help the student discriminate between safe and unsafe drop-off locations.
- Teach the student to check that they have gathered all their belongings prior to exiting a vehicle.
- Review procedures for payment, rating rides, tipping, and reporting problems.
- Practice problem-solving potential issues (e.g., “What would you do if you left your bag in the car?” “...the driver asked you for cash?”, etc.).

## Safety Priorities

- Consider the student’s understanding of personal safety and use of public transportation (e.g., planning trips, calculating fares, reading maps).
- Support the student to develop strategies to manage challenging behaviors.
- Identify strategies for the student to stay in contact with caregivers or school personnel throughout the ride (e.g., GPS tracking, texting, video chat).

## Resources

- ADA National Network—[The ADA and Accessible Ground Transportation](#)
- AOTA—[Frequently Asked Questions: What is the Role of Occupational Therapy in Supporting Safe Youth Transportation?](#)
- Safe Rideshare Program—[Safe Rideshare Program Webpage](#)
- Safety.com—[Uber& Lyft Tips You Haven’t Already Heard](#)
- The Mighty—[How Uber can be a Positive Experience for Riders with Autism](#)

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