

Regional Coordinating Council Meeting Notes
August 21, 2013
2:00 pm

Attending:

Curtis Garner and Tara Styer- TTD
Judy Weber- TRPA (Tahoe Regional Planning Agency)
Gerri Grego-El Dorado County Commission on Aging (EDC)
Ray Goodenough- OPEN (Ordinary People meeting Extraordinary Needs)
Christine Riggi – VA Volunteer Transportation Network
Deborah McCarthy- Barton Community Health Center
Mike Reynolds- RSVP Carson City
Leanne Wagoner- Barton Health
Wendi McCray- Alta California Regional Center
Liz Barnekeff- EDCOE CDP
Deirdre Slater- EDCOE CDP

Tara: TTD submitted a New Freedom grant in April which was approved by Caltrans, final approval comes from FTA, but it is good preliminary news to support mobility management efforts in CA.

Senior Center Van: The County has expressed a desire to discontinue the MOU with the City to operate the senior transit program. The van is in transition, but it seems to be moving in the right direction to streamline the use of the van. A survey has been drafted to be distributed to seniors to determine ridership characteristics and this will be circulated once the van situation is finalized.

Logisticare, the company who will be managing NEMT for Medi-cal managed care (Anthem Blue Cross and CA Health and Wellness) has a new representative for the Tahoe Region and onset of the service was pushed back to November 1st. Tara invited the representative to speak at an upcoming RCC meeting.

Christine Riggi, Voluntary Service Assistant /Transportation Coordinator from VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno, is here to discuss the Volunteer Transportation Network.

Christine: The Volunteer Transportation Network is a system that was created in 1987 by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to provide transportation to medical appointments. Any veteran qualifies as long as they have a VA-related appointment. Some appointments are not put in the system (e.g. mental health), but the veteran can call Christine directly. Christine must see an appointment in the system to schedule a ride. This is a service, not a benefit, so it is a first come first serve. There are some limitations for South Lake Tahoe; there are three drivers, so the service only operates on Thursdays. Program is currently looking for volunteer drivers in this area to expand service days and veterans served. A list of guidelines for drivers is included in the handout. All drivers are volunteers. Also included is a memorandum that discusses service animals and caregivers. Caregivers can accompany veteran, but it must be stated when the appointment is scheduled (same with service dogs).

Question: As it stands now, it is just one day?

Christine: Yes, every Thursday, as long as a driver is available. It is an extensive process to become a volunteer driver. The VA requires a two-step TB, background check, physical, driving record, current driver's license, and insurance. Oftentimes, the background check or physical is an issue.

Ray: Is there a van or do they use their own vehicles?

Christine: Yes, there is a van. The DAV donates the van and it is here in South shore at a local VA office.

Ray: Inquired about the service in Placerville.

Christine: Yes, there is still a van in Placerville. In North shore there is a van coming from Grass Valley, but the veterans have to meet the van and many of the veterans do not have any transportation.

Tara: Spoke with the coordinator from the Grass Valley (Suzette Clothier 530-273-3396). This service runs Tuesday and Wednesdays. The van will stop in Truckee, but the meeting location must be near Interstate 80. The requirements are the same as those outlined by Christine.

Ray: Is there coordination between the primary care physician and transportation on Thursdays?

Christine: Veterans fill out a form and they are given a number to signify which van they may use. Christine enters this information into the system, so when an appointment is scheduled it shows that they only have transportation on certain days. Appointments should be scheduled as early as possible to avoid long waits. It becomes challenging when the VA physicians only work part-time.

Tara: Is the vehicle wheelchair accessible?

Christine: No, it is only for ambulatory veterans.

Tara: How many passengers?

Christine: Up to eight. The director requires that the vehicles are four wheel drives, so some vehicles can only accommodate four passengers comfortably.

Tara: What time do they usually leave South shore?

Christine: Between 7:00-8:30 depending upon the first appointment. The same is true for returning, it depends on the last appointment. Inform veterans to bring money or pack a lunch, and bring all of their medications that they will need for the day.

Tara: Typically, how long is the process to become a volunteer?

Christine: It depends on the individual. The first step is the physical, which may take time. On average, it takes 30-60 days.

Geri: Do the volunteers pay for the testing?

Christine: No, the VA pays for all of the fees. They have to provide the DMV printout, which is only \$3.00 online. The physical is completed at the VA, so they must come to Reno. The two-step TB is a barrier, it can be initiated and read at the Minden clinic, but that still takes time. The VA is trying to find ways to make the process easier, but it is difficult because the volunteers must be processed as an employee. There is only one physician that evaluates the volunteer drivers.

Tara: Typically how many passengers do you have on Thursdays?

Christine: One or two, availability is open as long as there is a driver.

Tara: For the South shore service, do the veterans need to meet at a central location?

Christine: No, the driver will pick up the veteran at their home.

Ray: Comments on how the service has improved.

Christine: Rides have doubled in last six months. The service operates at least once a month and Christine would like to increase the frequency, but additional drivers are needed.

Tara: How far in advance do they have to schedule?

Christine: 24 hours in advance. Christine is willing to schedule a month or more in advance.

Mike: Who coordinates the logistics and maintenance on the van?

Christine: The drivers are trained every year to monitor miles (determined by owner's manual and GSA regulations). All of the logistics go through Frounie (sp?) who approves or denies the report.

Mike: Who is that?

Christine: Frounie is with FMS and is a fleet manager with Reno VA. The vehicles that are donated become part of the VA fleet and she ensures the maintenance is taken care of. The drivers have a daily sheet to check that tires are inflated and seat belts and lights are working.

Tara: Is there transportation to the Carson City clinic?

Christine: There is not transportation to the rural locations; there is only transportation from the rural clinics to the VA in Reno.

Tara: Inquires about the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI). The initiative is a federally coordinated partnership that will make it easier for U.S. veterans, active service members, military families, and others to learn about and arrange for locally available transportation services that connect them with work, education, health care, and other vital services in their communities.

Christine: The initiative has been discussed in nationwide volunteer meetings. Christine believes that it is unlikely that the initiative will be developed in Reno, since it involves creating positions and the current program is supported by volunteers. It is a grant-funded program that would require someone to oversee it.

Tara: To revisit ongoing topics...The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan will be available for review in upcoming months. Currently, awaiting disability data to be released from U.S. Census Bureau, but the Plan may move forward with 2000 data.

Tara discusses interest from community groups, particularly North shore, to have a questionnaire to administer in social service agencies to determine the most common transportation needs.

Jaime: Suggests the Community House in Kings Beach.

Tara: A meeting at the Community House is actually where this idea was generated. It would be helpful to have more data driven information.

Gerri: Inquires if a survey for the senior center van has been distributed.

Tara: No, not yet. The County has expressed a desire to discontinue the MOU with the City. We are waiting to see who has ownership of the van so we can move forward with the survey. The documents were created with both the City and County in mind, so some revisions may need to be made depending on the outcome. TTD is still willing to provide the training for new drivers.

Ray: Inquires if the van will serve the County area.

Tara: Unsure, Tara will bring it up at the next meeting regarding the van. Tara inquires if Gerri has additional thoughts on the survey or distribution.

Gerri: Raises the concern about sharing private information. Gerri mentions distributing the surveys through medical offices and hospitals, in addition to several apartment complexes.

Tara: Asks Leanne and Debbie if they think it is possible to distribute surveys through Barton facilities. Tara clarifies that the previous MOU stated that the senior center van was for anyone over 60 and those with disabilities.

Leanne: Believes that a survey could be administered through some offices, while patients wait.

Wendi: Has not known that the senior center van is available for the disabled. Asks if the van would provide transportation off the hill?

Tara: Those types of questions are being determined. Current MOU does not state a geographical restriction. There may be changes with a new MOU or new ownership.

Ray: Comments that the van has been taken to Stanford.

Wendi: Inquires if the senior center van is used for OPEN.

Ray: Private vehicles are used by OPEN. In the past, the van was used when OPEN clients using wheelchairs required transportation.

Wendi: Lack of Medi-Cal dentists require many of Wendi's patients to travel to Placerville or Sutter if the client requires hospital dentistry. The dentist at Sutter has been trying to get a contract with Barton, but there had been challenges acquiring suitable equipment. Some clients live independently and do not have access to transportation. Clients may be willing to take Amtrak, but that requires that there is someone at the hospital with them.

Tara: Comments that Amtrak only runs once a day, so it would require an overnight stay.

Wendi: Interested in learning more about the service area of the senior center van.

Ray: Comments that he has been transporting many people to Kings Beach for dental services.

Wendi: The Kings Beach clinic is willing to take El Dorado folks with Medi-Cal.

Deirdre: The same issues exist with children. Deirdre comments that Ray transports many of the EDCOE CDP clients for dentistry needs.

Tara: Asks Deirdre and Liz to describe their programs.

Deirdre: Head Start and State preschool programs that serve low income families. The program requires dental exams and physicals for all children; physicals within the first 30 days and dental exams within the first 90 days of enrollment. There have been inconsistent Medi-Cal dentists and dental vans in the area, so when children are diagnosed with something that requires them to go off the hill (e.g. surgical issues) then transportation is needed.

Liz: It frequently occurs that children must go off the hill to have the dental exam performed. This is the beginning of the year, so the biggest need is now, but it also occurs throughout the year as new families are enrolled. Teacher or family service workers go into the homes to coordinate services to the family (job training, health issues), so issues come up throughout the year that were not identified at the initial visit.

Tara: Is there any funding for transportation within Head Start?

Liz: Only in the early Head Start program. Each Early Head Start teacher who manages 10 families has their own van, but this also depends on caseload and other technicalities. Preschool age children are in the need of this service. Additionally, transportation is needed during inclement weather for families who can walk to the site when the weather is nice. There is a decline in children coming to school due to this issue.

Deirdre: There is especially a problem at the Kyburz location near the 'Y' and E Street. The bus stops at the Kmart/Raley's area and clients have to walk the rest of the way.

Liz: Young families have a problem because they often have an infant when delivering a small child to school. Since the clients are low income they may lack appropriate clothing or boots, so they are being exposed to the elements just to get to school.

Tara: Inquires about the school bus system.

Deirdre: Head Start is not connected to the School District, so they do not have access to the buses.

Wendi: For the District, the family must pay for transportation unless the student is in special education and cannot get to a bus stop. Wendi's clients who are in wheelchairs or use walkers or those with severe behaviors have the door to door service. Higher functioning children are required to go to a bus

stop, they are still picked up by a special education bus, but it is in a more central location than the door to door service. Families are not responsible for transportation costs if the child is in special education, but families with children in general education are responsible for the cost. Families have a difficult time paying the yearly cost of transportation, so there is a decline in attendance during the winter for those students who can walk during better weather.

Wendi inquires about the Tooth Travelers program and potential location on Kyburz.

Deidre: Deirdre believes that Tooth Travelers has secured a location. Additionally, Tooth Travelers are trying to get another dental van to the area in the meantime. The dental clinic will be year-round and the van generally comes up in the spring and possibly in the fall.

Liz: Currently enrolling children into the Head Start program. It is a multifaceted program for not only the children but also the families. Refer and encourage families and young children to enroll by going online and completing an application and call the main office to get their child enrolled in a fabulous education program that is for 0-5 year old, Early Head Start (EHS) is 0-3, and actual preschool Head Start program is 3-5.

Deidre: There was a portable building at Bijou School, but there is no longer space for Head Start. Now there are three classrooms at the Al Tahoe Center (previously the Al Tahoe Elementary School) and most families want their children to go there since it is more centrally located, so the Kyburz site is very slow in enrollment because it is more difficult to get their child there.

Ray: Ray inquires if there ever been an attempt to include Head Start transportation into the school bus system.

Deirdre: No, it is very separate.

Liz: It is federal funds versus states funds.

Deirdre: Head Start can rent one of the school's buses for a field trip.

Cherrill: Announces that Rural NV RSVP was approved for two mobility managers (Pahrump and Carson City).

Tara: Asks what Counties the mobility manager in Carson City will be covering.

Cherrill: Lyon, Mineral, Douglas and Storey. They will be bringing people into the rural areas. The Pahrump mobility manager will be facilitating the corridor between Pahrump and Las Vegas and connections into Las Vegas. This might be expanded further for rural areas in Southern Nevada. They are still awaiting FTA approval, but feel it is likely.

Gerri: Discussed the RSVP program with the Commission on Aging to possibly get a volunteer group organized for the County.

Mike: Mike is a new volunteer driver and pilot with RSVP. He is also an applicant for the mobility manager position.

Tara: Inquires if the RSVP mobility manager will provide rides.

Mike: Mike confirms that it is in the scope.

Geri: The Commission on Aging just opened a day care center for seniors in El Dorado Hills.

Curtis: Inquires if Christine can share any successful recruitment techniques for volunteer drivers.

Christine: Newspapers, word of mouth, and when volunteers are from the Carson area, Christine specifically inquires about their willingness to provide transportation. One volunteer drives 45 miles from his home to pick up the van to provide transportation, which is an additional challenge.

Tara: Asks if there is mileage reimbursement for his travel to the van.

Christine: No

Wendi: Suggests advertising at community college.

Christine: Most college students are interested in the medical volunteering programs.

Tara: Suggests advertising for volunteer driver programs at Starbucks.

Christine: Volunteers who provide transportation do not have a set amount of time they are volunteering; it can take an entire day. Volunteer Transportation Program can provide drivers with a print out of their hours to submit with taxes.

Ray: Ray has been in contact with the owner of a new cab company who is interested in providing transportation locally.

Curtis: Are Disabled American Veterans trying to move away from exclusively providing transportation through volunteers? Is there a safety net in place for times when there are no volunteer drivers?

Christine: No, if the program is not running the veteran has to find their own transportation.

Tara: What service is in place for those in wheelchairs?

Christine: There is a wheelchair van for local trips (Reno) and bus passes are also donated for local service.

Curtis: What training is provided for the drivers?

Christine: There is an annual training with a defensive driving course and volunteers are required to go through the same orientation as an employee (PPI, Security training, How to handle disgruntled individuals). Drivers have the right to ask passengers to exit the van if they are making the driver feel uncomfortable.

Curtis: Inquires if there are other VA programs? Is there a difference between rural and urban programs- are the programs in urban areas more robust?

Christine: All programs are the same and Christine coordinates the programs. Other rural locations have coordinators who check in with Christine and schedule the passengers on each van. There are to vans servicing the local (Reno) area, so the service is rarely unavailable in Reno.

Curtis: Inquires if there is still availability or if the program is at capacity.

Christine: There is still availability. Carson City, Hawthorne and Fallon are often at capacity. The Auburn vehicle is not from DAV, it is a fleet vehicle from the federal government and the operators are paid employees. The Auburn and Reno programs are the only services that operate Monday thru Friday.

Wendi: Inquires if a veteran has an appointment at the Reno VA and the service is not operating will that cause the veteran rescheduling problems.

Christine: It will not be a problem as long as the veteran gives enough notice to the VA. The problem arises with 'no call, no shows'. When drivers cancel, it still allows enough time for the veteran to contact the hospital and explain that the driver canceled.

Tara: Next meeting will be on September 18th and it will be held at Stateline since there was not a room available at the Parasol building. In upcoming months, we will have representatives talk about a current programs or services (e.g. Logisticare rep). Tara requests that the RCC participants submit ideas for transportation topics that need more clarification or programs that require promotion.

Wendi: Suggests that the City discuss the senior center van once the MOU is finalized.

Judy: Additional members are needed for the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC). Judy reviewed the requirements and clarified that there will be one annual meeting. Unmet transportation needs will be gathered through the RCC and other groups. Those findings will be compiled and will be discussed at the annual SSTAC meeting. Additional information will also be solicited during the annual meeting. The Council will determine if there are unmet needs and if they are reasonable to meet, and if necessary Judy will go to the TRPA Governing Board with a resolution or with information about the findings. There are seven categories on the Council and three have been filled.

