

## Travel Training for Increased Independence

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Identifying and accessing appropriate services becomes a priority when a family member receives a diagnosis, as you or your family member approaches transition age, as caregivers age, or if you plan to relocate to another city. Many of you probably already know about and take advantage of early intervention, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and more.

In the search for resources and services, you may or may not have heard of travel training. Travel Trainers teach seniors and persons with disabilities how to safely use public transportation. Schools, social service agencies, and transportation authorities, as well as a variety of other organizations may provide travel instruction.

Travel training generally refers to individualized one-to-one instruction, based on the individual's abilities, needs, and preferred destinations. In addition to information about the transit vehicles, stations, and rules, travel trainers also cover subjects like street crossing, trip planning, safety, and more.

Travel instruction refers to orientation, familiarization, and travel training. Some organizations provide all three, others provide one or more of the above. Some programs provide small group or travel buddy options.

Travel trainers realize that individuals have different learning styles and learn at different paces. Generally, trainers practice routes with the individual multiple times, if needed. Skilled practitioners create or use a variety of approaches and teaching tools based on the individual's needs. These may include route cards or booklets with words, images, or a combination of the two; color coded destination cards; number matching cards, and more.

Some individuals may focus on specific routes, to and from school or work, for example. Others work on generalizing those skills and teaching trip planning skills.

Safe travel on public transportation also involves time management, safety, contingency planning, self-advocacy, and personal responsibility—all helpful skills as one becomes more independent.

Learning to safely use public transportation in cities and towns where it's available increases an individual's independence and options for getting to work, school, and social activities. The ability to use public transportation increases one's ability to get and keep a job. Other benefits of using public transportation include flexibility, independence, increased self-esteem, and saving money.

While many individuals, even those with significant challenges, can learn to safely use public transportation, some individuals may need to work on safety issues or social skills before beginning travel training. Organizations which provide travel instruction can help

you determine if and when travel training would be appropriate for you, a friend, or family member.

For more information about Travel Training please visit the Association of Travel Instruction website: <http://www.travelinstruction.org/travel-training>. The Consortium for the Educational Advancement of Travel Instruction (CEATI) also has information on their website: <http://www.ceati-travelinstruction.org>.

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