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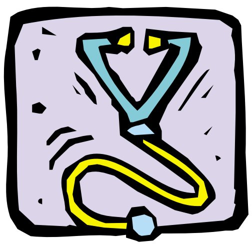
The Newsletter for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers • The University of Kansas Transportation Center



Fostering a Healthy Relationship with Medicaid

by Ira Allen

Medicaid-related transportation accounts for a significant portion of transit ridership. This article explains the relationship between Kansas transit providers and the Medicaid program, and explores ideas for developing and nurturing this relationship.

A few years ago Medicaid transportation managers from across the nation met to discuss ways to handle their Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) services. They looked at loopholes in their programs that allowed intentional or unintentional fraud and made it difficult to get free of those who abused NET services, whether providers or riders. They went through various states' NET processes with a fine-toothed comb, and identified solutions to the problems they encountered. These managers outlined some of the methods and requirements they believed

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Transporting Head Start Kids

Program staff identify high priority needs

by Pat Weaver

Bring together a group of 50 or 60 Head Start program staff from Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa. Ask them to identify the greatest needs in their transportation programs. Then stand back...to hear plenty. More vehicles, more funding, and more training for drivers were identified as the most critical issues. The question remains:

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Inside:

Medicaid and non-emergency medical transportation,

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should apply to transit providers. The result was a comprehensive guide for dealing with NET procedures nationwide.[1]

What is NAMT?

The national program, NET, is known in Kansas as NAMT, for Non-Ambulance Medical Transportation. It provides transportation to selected medical services for Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries. Beneficiaries include people participating in the "KAN Be Healthy" program, women receiving prenatal services, and participants in the Home and Community-Based Services Program (HCBS), among others. Participants in the HCBS include the frail elderly and those who are physically disabled.

Other eligible transportation services for Medicaid recipients under NAMT include:

- travel more than 50 miles to specialized medical services,
- transportation to approved out-of-state medical services,
- transportation for transfer to medical facilities, and
- medical or nonmedical transportation that will prevent placement of the client in a nursing facility or hospital.

Transportation is reimbursed only for services to the nearest qualified provider and must be to or from Medicaid-compensable or coverable services, except for KAN Be Healthy and HCBS beneficiaries. If free transportation is available, Medicaid will not cover costs incurred using another provider. Transportation for nursing home residents, including new admissions, is not covered.

The NAMT program allows riders an alternative to ambulance transport for medical trips, and some non-medical trips, too.

Criteria for Provider Selection

Medicaid-related transportation accounts for a significant portion of transit service in Kansas, particularly for those providers who primarily transport elderly and/or disabled riders. In the last year or so, Medicaid has paid close to 10 million dollars for transportation in Kansas, primarily for NAMT transportation. To become involved with this program, you must become familiar with the criteria and procedures of the Medicaid-providing agency for Kansas—Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). Learn the procedures they use for selecting providers and determining rates—and rules to follow when providing transportation to Medicaid clients.

Jim Baze, at the Douglas County SRS office, described a few of the criteria his agency uses in selecting transportation providers for their NAMT program. Because there has been a problem, nationally, with rogue providers from out of state swooping in on contracts and behaving fraudulently, Douglas County SRS prefers local providers, and looks extensively at their history. Providers with a track record of reliability that are well known and respected in the community are preferred. Of course, they must also be financially viable— that is, their financial records must show that they will be able to provide quality service at least for the length of their contract. Providers with experience providing similar services are also given preference.

While SRS does not typically conduct pre-enrollment testing, it requires providers to maintain licenses, certifications, and registrations, all of which can only be obtained through testing from other agencies, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles. SRS rarely refuses provider applications. SRS has no policy for screening transportation providers but providers can self-screen if they disagree with any of the requirements outlined in the provider application.

Unfortunately, Medicaid has been a target for defrauders, and there have been a few such instances in Kansas. Harvey Hillin offered an example of a provider who was contracted to take a Medicaid client to the doctor's office, but instead took the client to the liquor store or supermarket. While this sort of abuse may seem relatively harmless, Medicaid funds are not intended to provide taxi service for its clients. SRS does have a Fraud and Recoupment unit that addresses these abuses. Although they do not automatically cancel contracts for fraudulent providers, SRS has legal recourse through the district attorney's office, under the Medicaid Fraud Laws.

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[1]This guidebook is listed as a source on the next page and can be found at our web site, *www.kutc.ku.edu,* at the RTAP link.

Two Types of Providers

SRS uses a variety of transportation providers, distinguishing between two general types: noncommercial individual (or volunteer) providers and commercial group providers.

Noncommercial providers transport Medicaid-eligible persons in private vehicles. This category can include Medicaid clients themselves; family, friends, or neighbors of the client; program or agency staff (such as case managers, foster parents, or social workers); and individuals with no relationship to the client other than transporting him or her. Each trip must be pre-authorized through SRS's Medicaid fiscal agent, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, Inc.

A number of commercial groups or organizations are qualified to provide NAMT services. These include not-for-profit organizations such as public transit systems; "rider-specific" not-for-profit agencies such as services for disabled or elderly persons; for-profit transportation organizations such as taxi companies and medical transportation service companies; and several others. As with individual NET providers, each state may use all or only some of the types of providers listed above. Kansas uses transit agencies as NAMT providers where possible.

Reimbursement

SRS uses a predetermined maximum rate to calculate reimbursement. For example, SRS will pay up to 20 dollars to a noncommercial provider to drive a patient 10 miles or less, and one dollar per mile after ten miles have been traveled.

Rates paid to commercial providers differ slightly. SRS uses a competitive bidding process to select providers, and generally chooses the most qualified provider who bids under their maximum rate.

Brokers

SRS's Adult and Medical Services Commission does not use a broker to arrange for transportation, although the concept has been brought up from time to time. The SRS position is that brokers are good for urban areas but not for rural areas. Harvey Hillin, Program and Policy Analyst for SRS, says, "when you get to less densely populated areas it's an entirely different ball game." Kansas is primarily rural, and in many instances, the problem is not in choosing between providers but in finding providers at all.

Get With the Program

Harvey Hillin highlights the importance of Medicaid transportation to the transit industry, saying, "If a transit provider is unaware of Medicaid as a potential source of income, services, and riders, I want them to be aware of that."

A provider manual titled *Kansas Medicaid Commercial NAMT* can be obtained through Blue Cross Blue Shield at (800) 766-9012. This manual describes what's involved in providing NAMT services. Representatives at Blue Cross Blue Shield can also be contacted at the number above if you have questions.

SRS contracts with Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide transportation service administration, but each local SRS office typically has at least one person who handles contracts for NAMT services and stays current on the availability of providers in the area. Although there are instances of local Coordinated Transit Districts working with their local SRS representatives, further communication would certainly help provide more opportunities for medical transportation services in Kansas. Invite your local SRS Medicaid contact to CTD meetings. Provide information to SRS about your transit services. Coordinate long-distance medical trips with other providers. These are just a few strategies to improve availability of Medicaid-eligible transportation services.

Improving the Medicaid transportation system requires collaboration among many agencies: SRS, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council, local CTDs, and individual provider agencies. However, ultimately the responsibility for learning about Medicaid and NAMT, and applying to provide NAMT services, rests with you—the transit provider. Because non-ambulance medical transportation represents a significant slice of the Kansas transportation pie, it's in your interest to contact your local SRS agency and inquire about it. Kansas transit providers are key players in developing a transportation network in Kansas that serves the needs of as many people as possible.

Ultimately, the responsibility for learning more about this program rests with you.

Sources

Designing and Operating Cost-Effective Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Programs: A Guidebook for State Medicaid Agencies, Health Care Financing Administration and the Medicaid Management Institute, July 1998. ▲

Transporting Head Start kids

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How can we meet these needs?

A recent session titled *Meeting the Transportation Needs of Head Start Families* was presented at the 2001 Region VII Head Start Leadership Conference in Kansas City, Mo. Participants were asked to identify the three most critical transportation issues facing Head Start transportation programs—and their families—over the next three years. Each member of the group listed what they considered to be the top three needs. Then the group compiled their lists and identified the highest priority needs.

So many miles to travel...

A common theme was the challenge of traveling long distances for the program. Children in large rural school districts may need to travel long distances to a Head Start center. Rural Head Start families may need to travel many miles to use other essential services. Distance is likely an underlying cause of many of the issues identified.

Lack of public transit in some areas was identified as creating difficulties in getting around in large geographically-dispersed rural areas. Further discussion suggested the possibility that, in some cases, the issue may not be the lack of sufficient services, but lack of knowledge about what services already exist in the community.

Money, money...

Not surprisingly, the number one issue identified by Head Start managers was funding sufficient for purchasing buses for the centers. Some managers reported that vehicles are not available at all centers. Others, from rural communities, mentioned the high mileage required of the vehicles they do have. Head Start Centers also find it difficult to afford the cost of maintaining and repairing vehicles.

The group identified another vehicle-related need—availability of accessible vehicles to transport children with disabilities in compliance with the American Disabilities Act.

Keeping the right people...

Personnel issues were the second most highly-rated priority, especially hiring and keeping Commercial Driver's Licensed (CDL) drivers and monitors. Some agency managers said they find it difficult to compete in the job market for drivers holding a CDL and still have sufficient resources and time to train drivers.

What can we do...together?

This regional sample of Head Start managers identified a number of challenges to meet transportation needs of Head Start children and their families. These challenges go to the families, the Head Start agencies, the funding sources, and to the public transit providers serving the communities in which children and their families need to travel every day.

Some managers believe that the regulatory changes made recently to Head Start transportation programs make it more difficult to consider coordinating efforts toward a solution. This may be true, perhaps; but still it is still an essential task. Coordination helps create a healthy community where all children have access to education and other social services.

What can you do?

✔ If you're a transit manager, call the director of the Head Start program in your community. Set up a meeting and find out more about the transportation issues faced by the Head Start program and how your agencies may work together to better serve the public.

✔ Read the articles on Head Start regulatory changes in the last issue of the *Kansas Trans Reporter* and the *Community Transportation Reporter* to make sure you're current on what can and cannot be done—particularly before ordering new vehicles.

✔ Read the *School Transportation News* web site providing answers to 100 frequently-asked questions about Head Start Transportation (see web site address below).

✔ If you're a Head Start director, contact the general manager of the transit agency or agencies in your community to discuss common issues and ways you can work together.

✔ Read the new regulations so that you are able to help inform other transportation providers of your needs in the context of regulatory requirements.

✔ Participate in a community task force identifying solutions to the community's transportation needs.

✔ Encourage your program's parents to organize to have their voices heard in community forums related to transit service development.

✔ When planning new programs, make sure you consider transportation issues from the beginning of the planning process.

The key to success is for everyone involved in the issue of transporting low-income children and families to assume that developing adequate service in the community is his/her job. Don't sit back and wait for someone to contact you.

Sources and references...

School Transportation News Head Start Transportation Frequently Asked Questions web site: *www.stnonline.com/stn/government/headstart/hs_faqs.htm*

Head Start Transportation Final Rule (January 18, 2001) web site: *http://fr.cos.com/cgibin/getRec?id=20010118a6* ▲

When Are Employee "Stand-Downs" Allowed?

by Pat Weaver and Tim Harris

DOT clarifies policy for removing drug-tested employees from the job

Several new provisions were introduced in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) revised drug and alcohol testing rule (49 CFR Part 40) published on December 19, 2000. A provision introducing waivers for "stand-downs" has created confusion and misunderstanding within the transit industry.

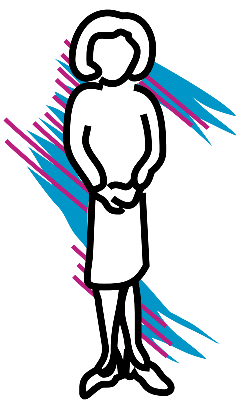
The term "stand-down" refers to an employer practice of temporarily removing an employee from the performance of safety-sensitive duties upon learning that the individual had a confirmed laboratory positive drug test, but before the MRO has completed the verification process.

Stand-downs have always been prohibited under the DOT regulations and continue to be so under the new rules. MROs are not permitted to inform employers of a laboratory positive test until the MRO has determined if there is a legitimate medical explanation for the test result and verified the test as either positive or negative.

The preamble to the rule explains that "standing-down" the employee is premature if done before the MRO verification process is complete. It could be considered to undercut the rationale for the MRO review and has the potential to compromise confidentiality. It may result in unfair stigmatization of the employee as a drug user.

Recognizing, however, that some employers advocate stand-downs as a means to enhance safety and reduce liability, the new rule (Section 40.21) includes a mechanism for employers, on a case-by-case basis, to seek waivers if certain conditions are met. Specifically, the employer must have a well-founded stand-down plan that effectively protects the interests of the employees, including confidentiality. The plan must be based on a sound factual basis that represents a genuine and plausible safety concern. The

FTA anticipates that few transit employers will be able to meet the stringent requirements delineated in the waiver request process and will not seek to make a policy or procedural change.



Stand-downs have been prohibited under the DOT regulations, but the new rule includes a mechanism for employers, on a case-by-case basis, to seek waivers if certain conditions are met.

Some of the confusion about this issue has resulted from policies that require employees to be removed from service pending drug and alcohol test results following accidents and reasonable suspicion determinations. This practice is not considered a stand-down under the DOT rule, as the "incident" was the reason for the person being removed from duty, not the laboratory test result. In this case, the employer has no knowledge of the drug test result, only that a drug test was required.

Similarly, employers have been confused by how the stand-down prohibition relates to the practice of removing employees from duty following a non-negative test result (i.e., positive, adulterated, substituted) while awaiting the split specimen test result. Once the MRO has completed the review process and verified a test as positive/non-negative, the employer is required to immediately remove the employee from safety-sensitive duties. The employee's removal cannot be delayed while awaiting the split specimen result. This is not a stand-down as defined in the DOT rule because the laboratory test result is already verified by the MRO before the employer is notified of the test result.

Under the DOT rule, a stand-down is narrowly defined and specifically associated with the notification of the employer of a positive laboratory test result without MRO verification. This provision does not affect employer policies that require the

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Communication Etiquette

Today's communication tools call for good old-fashioned common sense.

by Arin Gustafson

Today there are many ways to communicate with co-workers and clients without ever coming face-to-face, including radio dispatching, e-mail, phone and fax. But these methods have their pitfalls.

Six skills for effective communication:

1. Listen carefully.
2. Get complete information.
3. Clarify information.
4. Give feedback.
5. Communicate a decision.
6. Maintain a polite, respectful, and interested tone.

To avoid jeopardizing your relationships with your employer, co-workers, or clients, it is vital that you sharpen your communication etiquette.

Dispatching

The dispatcher plays a crucial role in dealing with both the public and with drivers. *How* the dispatcher talks to them may be as important as *what* he or she says. Dispatchers must make quick decisions and then follow through with feedback to drivers or the public.

Tips for speaking with riders:

- Speak slowly and clearly in order to be more easily understood.
- Be patient with riders with special needs and try to help them.
- Clearly communicate your transit system's procedures without being impatient or rude.

Tips for talking with drivers:

- Speak clearly and concisely.
- Be brief. Say what you have to say and get off the radio.
- Never talk about passengers, complain about drivers or the system, or be negative in any other way.

E-mail

E-mail has allowed agencies to reduce long-distance telephone costs, and information can be shared more quickly than by regular mail. However, be careful not to get buried under unimportant and time-consuming e-mail messages.

Ideas for managing e-mail:

- Limit your e-mail inbox to one screen.
- Ask yourself why you are sending the e-mail in the first place.
- Limit the number of subjects discussed per message to one or two, and identify those subjects in the title of your message. Be concise to make the message more powerful.
- Choose your words carefully. This can eliminate the need for follow-up messages or costly long-distance phone calls to obtain further clarification.
- Prioritize e-mail by filtering. The easiest way to filter is to simply read message headers. Determine what's critical today, giving priority to messages from your boss and your clients. E-mails marked "FYI" or that have been forwarded may not be as important and can wait or perhaps be tossed. Don't be afraid to delete messages without reading them.
- Keep control of e-mail by opening it only at set times: in the morning, at breaks, and at day's end.
- Don't send or read personal or confidential e-mails at work.

Voice Mail

Voice mail is a valuable office tool because it allows you to leave a message for someone else while they are on the telephone and it also allows you to check your phone messages while you are way from the office.

Voice mail tips:

- When you leave voice mail, tell the recipient when a response isn't necessary: this keeps your return voice mail messages from stacking up.

• When leaving a voice mail message for someone, say your name and phone number slowly at the beginning and ending of the message. This eliminates the need for the recipient to continually replay the message in an attempt to get the necessary information to call you back.

• Be specific and concise when leaving a message; don't ramble.

• If you are going to be out of town, change your outgoing voice mail message to let people know your whereabouts and availability. This lets your clients know when you will return their calls. Leave a contact name and phone number of someone who can help in case the caller needs immediate assistance.

Fax machines

Faxes allow for quick paper messages to be sent, and are especially valuable if either the recipient or the sender does not have e-mail or if there is a concern about e-mail formatting problems.

• Always include a cover page that includes your fax number, the number of pages being sent, and a phone number where the recipient can reach you. This way, if something happens during transmission, the recipient knows how many pages are missing and where to contact you.

Phone

Transit providers only have one chance to make a first impression, and often that impression is made over the phone.

When answering the phone, greet the caller with enthusiasm and sincerity—and identify yourself. People want to know that they've dialed the right number, and with whom they are talking.

Cell phones

Cell phones are a useful tool for transit drivers, especially during an emergency.

Tips for drivers:

• Drivers should follow their agency's policy on company owned cell phones. Many agencies only allow the use of cell phones during emergencies.

• Never talk on the cell phone while driving. If you need to use the cell phone, pull over to the side of the road or have someone else in your vehicle make the call.

When using the phone:

• Answer the phone as quickly as you can, preferably within three rings. Don't make the caller wait for you. Remember... the customer's time is important.

• When you answer, greet the caller with enthusiasm and sincerity. Be sure to identify yourself. People want to know that they've dialed the right number, and with whom they are talking.

• Use a greeting that's professional, comfortable, and natural for you to use.

• Project a positive, professional attitude that reflects your organization.

• Keep your energy up and try to avoid sounding apathetic, irritated, hesitant, or rushed. Give the caller your undivided attention. This will give the person the impression that his or her question or concern is important enough to be heard.

• Keep the conversation positive by focusing on what you *can* do, not what you can't do. And don't forget the importance of following through on those commitments.

• Be sure to say goodbye and thank them for calling.

Whichever form of technology you use to stay in touch with your employer, co-workers and clients, remember to use these basic skills to form a positive, lasting impression.

When "Mr. Bellows" is on the line...

1. Relieve tension by taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly before taking the call.
2. A smile on your face can put a smile in your voice.
3. Remember to remain calm.

If you are talking with someone who is angry, don't match the caller's of voice.

Sources

"Say What You Mean," *Successful Meetings,* October 2000.

"Getting Out From Under," *Successful Meetings*, October 1999.

"Etiquette for the New Millennium," *Successful Meetings,* March 2000.

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"Essential Skills for Dispatching," US Department of Transportation. ▲

New FTA Substance Abuse Regulations in Effect

by Janet Blue and Tim Harris

August 1, 2001 brought several changes to the Drug and Alcohol Testing Program under the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). To help Section 5311 grant recipients and collectors gain a better understanding of these changes, Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), in conjunction with The Mental Health Consortium, Inc., has held training sessions across Kansas. While the basic components of the regulations have remained the same regarding the use of controlled substances and misuse of alcohol[1], some procedures have changed. We've outlined the major changes below.

Changes for Transit Agencies

Clearer Definitions. The new FTA regulations in 49 CFR, Part 655 (combining 49 CFR, Parts 653 and 654) clarify terms used in drug and alcohol testing programs. The term "Employer" refers to both small and large operators, as well as contractors for transit providers. It also includes State recipients that pass FTA funds to subgrantees and subgrantees that have contractors performing transit operations.

Most State DOTs commenting through the Substance Abuse Program Management Alliance (SAPMA) thought the term "Employer" was not appropriate for States, preferring instead the term "Oversight Authority."

FTA asked for comments on "Dispatcher" job functions. These comments will help determine if dispatchers, under Section 5311, will continue to be considered safety-sensitive.

New Taxicab Rules. Taxicab companies were also solicited for comment. New regulations will affect single taxicab companies in areas where there are not multiple (more than two) taxicab companies to choose from. Section 5311 maintenance contractors will still be exempt under the new regulations.

Simpler Policies. Mark Snider, FTA contact for drug/alcohol testing, believes that agency drug and alcohol testing policies should be more concise, and suggests that policies refer to 49 CFR Parts 40 and 655 and not include detailed discussions of these regulations. Policies for individual agencies will still need to be approved by the governing board or highest-ranking official with authority to approve the policy.

Changes in Pre-Employment Testing. In Part 655, the definition of Pre-employment Testing has been modified to read, "a safety-sensitive employee must receive a negative pre-employment test prior to performing a safety-sensitive function" rather than "prior to hire." Also, FTA has made it a requirement that not more than 90 days elapse between the time of testing and the time an employee is hired or begins performing a safety-sensitive job. If this timeframe is not met, the person must repeat the pre-employment test.

If an applicant or covered employee fails the pre-employment drug test, he or she must present to the employer proof of successfully completing a referral, evaluation, and treatment plan prior to being assigned a safety-sensitive function.

Pre-employment alcohol testing is not required under the FTA regulations. If an employer decides to do pre-employment alcohol testing, they must follow the 49 CFR Part 40 testing procedure and be consistent in testing all new hires for alcohol. FTA is making it very clear that random testing must be spread throughout all days and hours of service and should be completely unpredictable.

Changes for Specimen Collectors

Collectors face more changes than Section 5311 providers. Here are just a few of these changes.

Training. Additional training will be required every five years for collectors. Collectors beginning operations after August 1, 2001, must be trained prior to doing any collections.

Emptying Pockets. Donors will now be asked to empty their pockets and

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[1]The five drugs tested (marijuana, cocaine, amphetamine, opiates and phencyclidine) will remain the same, as will the circumstances under which testing can occur: pre-employment, random, post accident, reasonable suspicion, return to work and follow-up.

Use Graphics to Communicate a Clear Picture

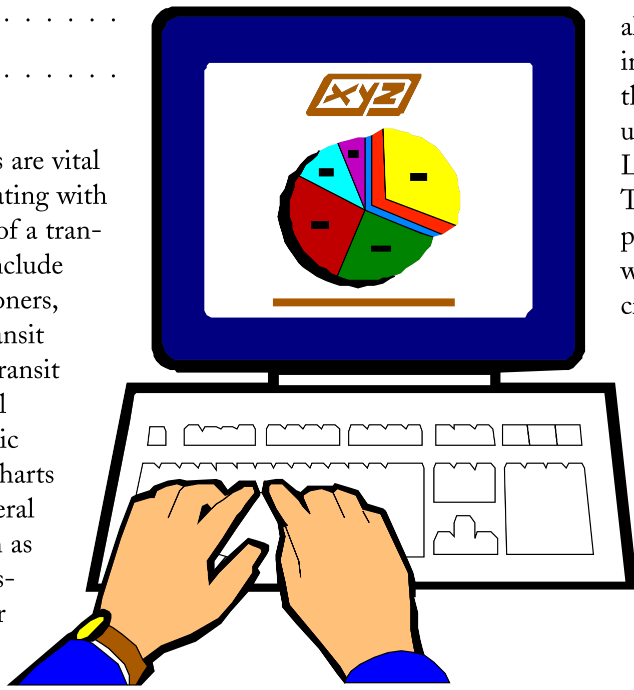
by James C. Holland

Good presentations are vital when communicating with the stakeholders of a transit system. Stakeholders include county and city commissioners, State DOT staff, other transit providers or coordinated transit districts (CTD), your local chamber of commerce, civic groups, and your riders. Charts and graphs can depict several kinds of information, such as the performance of the system, how the increasing or decreasing costs of rides influences ridership, the service area being covered, or rider demographics. Through use of graphic elements in presentations, your stakeholders can see a display of charts and graphs that are memorable and easy to understand.

Presentation software programs, like Microsoft Powerpoint, have become popular in the last several years. They are easy to learn and can be used to create attractive materials for giving graphic presentations. Powerpoint allows several presentation options, including creating a "slide show" on the computer that can be projected using a projection device like an LCD panel or pull-down screen. This kind of presentation has more pizzazz than transparencies or a word processing document. Also, creating Powerpoint presentations generally takes less time.

Powerpoint is useful when it comes to converting presentations for playback on the Web or a corporate intranet. Powerpoint has eliminated the need for an add-on to convert presentations to HTML. Instead, an HTML "wizard" walks the user through the process.

Using RealAudio technology, Powerpoint allows the user to record narration with the presentation. Now, a transit director can record a presentation, save it as a self-running presentation on a disk and leave it behind as a handout, mail it to it an audience or place it on the agency's Web site or intranet. When a stakeholder requests information about your program, you will have yet another way to spread the word about the good services your agency offers.



Many people want to see the "big picture" when watching a presentation, yet many speakers choose to present slides of bulleted text without graphics. According to many users, graphics help reach the point more quickly, especially graphics that link ideas together piece by piece.

Reno County Council on Aging developed a Powerpoint presentation as a public relations tool for a recent expansion of services. If you would like a copy of the presentation e-mailed to you, contact Lisa Harris at LMHarris@ku.edu.

Sources

"Technology and Techniques for Effective Communication," *Presentations,* March 1997.

Land Grant Training Alliance: *www.lgta.org*

Driving in the War Zone: How to Share the Road

by Pat Weaver and Ira Allen

We all know that road rage is a growing problem on the roadways, whether we drive on urban roads or rural roads. Since 1987, the number of miles of road has increased by only one percent, while the number of vehicle miles traveled has jumped by 35 percent. Furthermore, as of 1990, 91 percent of Americans drove to work, and according to a survey done by the Federal Highway Administration, almost 70 percent of urban highways are choked with traffic during rush hour. The result? More and more delays—and shorter tempers.

Road rage, or aggressive driving, has been described by researchers as “any unfriendly or threatening actions, including forcing another driver from the road, cursing another driver, or, in more extreme instances, shooting at the car of another driver.” While we know of no shootings involving Kansas transit drivers, and it is rather difficult to force a bus from the road, many have been on the receiving end of middle fingers and angry words.

In addition to the increased congestion, drivers today are more distracted from the road while driving. Cell phones and pagers, CD players, hand-held computers and fast food represent a society in a hurry. We use cars as personal space for carrying

out our daily business, while anyone outside our vehicles may be considered an anonymous, inconvenient impediment to our progress.

The danger to transit drivers is that buses must operate in way that most irritates an impatient driver. Being large, transit buses are slow to accelerate and difficult to see around, making passing difficult. The vehicles typically must make many stops in traffic, delaying nearby drivers anxious to get to their destinations.

Transit drivers may be prime targets for road rage incidents. Because of this, it is important that drivers be aware of the nature of road rage, methods for avoiding road rage situations, and ways to react positively if and when such situations do occur.

Faces of Road Rage

Road rage results when a driver loses his or her temper with another driver and reacts by driving or behaving dangerously. While their aggressive driving is not usually intended to injure anyone, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 66 percent of the 250,000 traffic deaths since 1990 were caused by aggressive driving actions.

There are two types of road rage—situational and habitual. Situational road rage is predicated on the situation of the frustrated driver. He or she may have recently received bad news, may be tired and irritable, may be angry about any number of things. These personal situations can prove fatal when a driver overreacts to irritants on the road.

Habitual road rage refers to the

driving behaviors we learned as children from our parents' driving habits—or from other outside influences such as reckless driving habits depicted on television and in movies.

Whatever the motivation for road rage, it is clear that it is at least partially stimulated by certain roadway irritants. Many aggressive driving incidents involve an initial traffic mistake or more serious error followed by "instructional" action from the offended driver, which can range from something as (apparently) innocuous as flashing one's headlights to forcing the offending driver off the road and/or a physical attack.

The most common behaviors that can anger other drivers are changing lanes without signaling, tailgating, failing to dim lights, cutting people off, running red lights, flashing headlights, weaving back and forth between lanes, and failing to move out of the passing lane if driving more slowly. These behaviors are, for the most part, foolish and dangerous in and of themselves, but the real danger is how drivers react to them. It is possible to be the victim of aggressive driving even when the anger stems from an incident that didn't involve you.

Many communities have begun implementing initiatives to combat aggressive driving, but until the situation changes dramatically, transit bus drivers remain at increased risk. Fortunately, there are measures you can take to avoid such incidents.

Reality Check

Aggressive driving is not something only other drivers do. What about your own driving? Do you sometimes feel yourself losing your cool in your transit vehicle or your personal vehicle? (If you are not sure, take the Road Rage quiz in our next issue.)

What do you do to keep yourself calm? It is important to find your own method for doing this. You may want to create a relaxing environment with music, use meditative breathing techniques, or even do something as simple as counting to ten when angry.

Instead of focusing on defensive driving, focus on supportive driving. Try to identify with and understand other drivers on the road. Imagine how you would react if the driver you are angry with was your next-door neighbor, pastor, or best friend. Slow down and relax. If your transit schedule is impossible to complete without speeding or taking risks, talk to your supervisors to let them know it is not possible to meet the time constraints. Then work with them to find a solution.

It is important to remember that while driving you are part of a larger picture, part of a moving community. What part do you want to play in that picture? Do you want to be the angry guy with his head out the window, swearing a blue streak and pumping his fist in the air? Driving is a social activity and every action you take while on the road affects other motorists. When another driver does something you don't appreciate, look at your own actions. Have you ever done to someone else what was just done to you? In many situations you will find that you have, and if you can forgive yourself for those mistakes, it's easier to forgive others on the road for their mistakes. And that is what most apparent insults on the road are: mistakes. Don't make them into insults in your mind. Be aware of how your actions may make other drivers feel. In this way, you not only minimize your chances of falling victim to road rage, but make driving a more pleasant experience for those around you, and also for yourself.

Avoiding Road Rage

Here are some simple, common-sense actions you can take to minimize your risk of falling victim to another's road rage.

- Use your turn signals. Failure to do this is one of the most common roadway irritants, and is often responsible for accidents even in the absence of road rage.
- Follow the rules of the road; stay within speed limits, even if you are running behind schedule.
- Keep a safe following distance.
- If you must use a cell phone, use it in the "hands-free" mode or when pulled to the side of the road. In addition, individual agencies may have regulations on the use of phones while at work.
- Don't read a schedule or map while driving; focus your attention on the road and on other drivers.
- If you're in an area of heavy traffic and cars are backing up behind you, find a safe place to pull out of traffic and allow them to pass you.
- If you make a driving mistake that causes a problem for another driver, gesture to the driver that you're sorry. An apology can do a lot to stave off aggression. Because gestures can be and often are misinterpreted, a humorous yet effective method for apologizing is flashing a "Sorry" sign. Here's how: Make a small sign out of heavy paper or cardboard, write "Sorry" on it with a marker, and hold

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What's the Password?

Let your computer help you protect your confidential files

by James C. Holland and Ira Allen

Transit agency personnel occupy their work areas throughout most of the day, but this does not guarantee the privacy or security of these areas. Some files must be kept confidential, such as drug and alcohol testing information or other sensitive personnel data. This can pose a problem when the manger is obliged to be away from his or her desk. Beyond protecting information from the occasionally prying eyes of employees, it is important to secure data beyond the reach of outside intruders.

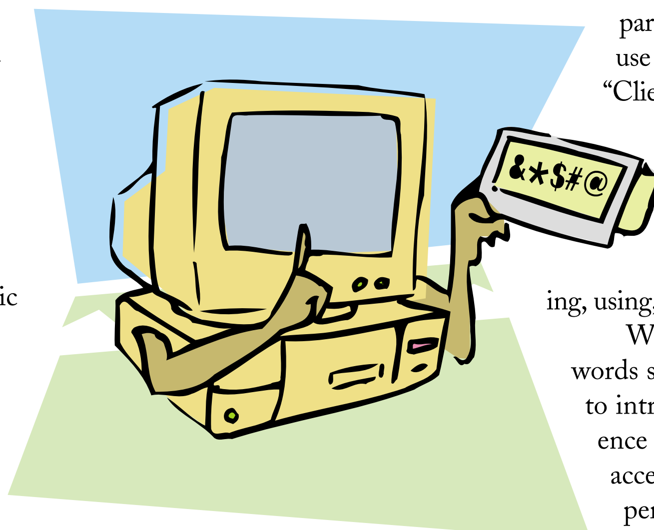
There are a number of electronic security measures you can take to achieve this, passwords being the most common and easiest of these. Limiting access to a personal computer or office area, however, remains the first line of defense for your information.

Physical Protection

There are many ways to limit physical access to your personal computer. Perhaps simplest is remembering to lock doors to private offices when the office is vacant, such as during lunch or after hours. It can also help to limit access to your office facilities during working hours. If your agency is too large for strangers to be immediately identified, consider developing and using organizational IDs with visible photos. If you require that they be worn at all times within the office, and identify visitors with brightly colored temporary IDs, it will be easy to see at a glance who belongs in the office and who does not.

Password Protection

While wearing IDs can help protect your information from outsiders on the grounds, they do not protect against electronic invasions or help



keep employees honest. The next step may be to require "Boot Access" —a password required at start-up— for every computer that might house sensitive data, or that is connected to the agency's office network.

All NT versions of Windows allow you to set a password log-on to gain initial access. Most BIOS's have a password option that will stop the operating system from booting, but can be bypassed by resetting the BIOS manually.

For Windows-NT systems, passwords can be set in several ways. The easiest way is to click on the Network icon in the Control Panel, and go to the pull-down menu labeled "Primary Network Logon." If you do not use a network, you can set this to "Windows Logon" and the following boot-up will allow you to enter your name and password.

Authorized personnel may then change the password at any time by clicking on the "Password" icon in the Control Panel. If you are part of a network, you may use the setting labeled "Client for Microsoft Networks" rather than "Window's Logon." Proper password protocols should be observed when choosing, using, and changing passwords.

Windows sign-on passwords still leave you vulnerable to intruders who have experience with unauthorized access to computers. Such a person will typically be able to bypass most simple security. For instance, if your computer's BIOS is set to boot from multiple devices, using a start-up disk in the floppy drive can usually bypass the Windows log-on completely. Sometimes, interrupting the boot-up process using the F8 function key to boot into DOS can also bypass simple security.

Therefore, effective security usually involves multiple layers. The more layers of security added to your system, the more impregnable your data is to unauthorized users. A second layer of security in the Windows networking environment can be established under the same Network icon in the Control Panel where you set the log-on, labeled "File and Printer Sharing." For network connections, File and Printer Sharing allows you to share your file or printer only with specified users. If you select the option to prevent access completely, that gives your information an additional degree of protection. The File and Printer Sharing icon has three tabs at the top, labeled "Configuration," "Identification," and "Access Control." Clicking on "Access Control" will allow you to set passwords for individual or group access over the network to specific drives, subdirectories, and even for individual files on your computer.

Specific software applications sometimes provide their own embedded password protection. In Microsoft Word 2000, for example, you can password-protect an individual file. To use this feature, use the "Save As" command in the software's File Menu, and under the Tools icon presented in the next screen, choose "Save Options." On the "Save Options" screen, there is an area that allows you to enter and confirm a password. You can also use one password to set access to the document and a second password to permit or deny the ability to modify the document. A determined intruder, however, can bypass even this type of protection by using a text editor.

Password Protocols

There are some basic security rules staff members should follow when using passwords for documents or applications. If more than one person uses a computer regularly, each person should have his or her own login name and password.

Never use passwords that can be easily guessed, such as names or birthdays. The best passwords are combinations of alphabetic characters and numbers.

Do not write passwords down where they may be easily found, such as under desk blotters, behind pictures, or on the inside covers of planners.

Do not write passwords down where they may be easily found, such as under desk blotters, behind pictures, or on the inside covers of planners. If you must write down your passwords, store them in a safe or lockbox if at all possible, or at home.

Depending on the sensitivity of your information, most security experts recommend changing your password every few weeks, although most casual users change their passwords infrequently, if at all. Always use a different password for each level of security and for each different application. That is to say, your Internet password should be different from your network password, which should be different from your boot-up password, which should also be different from your separate passwords for individual files.

Encryption

Passwords may be suitable for the majority of your security needs, but there are some data that require further protection. According to Craig Damlo, KUTC's Systems Administrator, "For individual file protection, the best route is to use encryption." An external encryption program like PGP will give you the best security on higher sensitivity files. PGP is a software routine built into several different shareware and public domain programs. Go to *www.PGPi.org* for a selection of security programs.

It's up to you to determine how many levels of security to implement to protect your sensitive information. You may choose only to lock your office door when you leave for lunch, or you may feel that your data needs a higher level of protection.

Of the three primary forms of data protection—physical protection, passwords, and encryption—passwords are generally the simplest and most cost-effective option. Staff ID cards can be expensive to produce and difficult to implement. Encryption can be confusing and expensive. At times these options may be viable and necessary, but for the majority of situations faced by transit agencies, passwords will provide sufficient security for your information. The password options discussed above are all relatively simple to implement, and require no additional expense.

Source

"A Sense of Security," by Ted Needleman, *The NonProfit Times,* February 2001. ▲

Employee Stand-downs,

from page 5

removal of employees from safety-sensitive duties for any other reason not addressed in the regulation.

Source

"Stand-Down Prohibition Clarification," *FTA Drugs and Alcohol Regulation Updates,* Issue 18, Spring 2001. U.S. Department of Transportation. ▲

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

September 30-October 4, 2001
American Public Transit Association Annual Meeting
Philadelphia, PA
Contact: APTA
Phone: 202-848-4040
www.apta.com

Fall 2001
RTAP Driver Training Workshops
October 2 in Salina, KS
October 3 in Hays, KS
October 4 in Great Bend, KS
October 9 in Dodge City, KS
October 10 in Wichita, KS
October 11 in Emporia, KS
October 17 in Topeka, KS
and...
October 23 in Chanute, KS
October 24 in Manhattan, KS
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg, KUTC
Phone: 785-864-2594
Fax: 785-864-3199
rosemary@ku.edu

November 14-15, 2001
Kansas Transit Managers Training Workshop
Salina, KS
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg, KUTC
Phone: 785 864-2594
Fax: 785-864-3199
rosemary@ku.edu

May 19-May 24, 2002
CTAA Community Transportation EXPO '02
Austin, TX
Contact: Charlie Dickson, Community Transportation Association of America
Phone: (800) 527-8279
Fax: 202-737-9197
Email: *dickson@ctaa.org*
Website: *www.ctaa.org*

Editor's Note: To include meetings or workshops in our calendar, send information to Kansas Trans Reporter, KUTC, 1530 W. 15th St., Room 2011, Lawrence, KS 66045

Winter's coming... Have you remembered to re-open the valve to your rear heater?

If you close the valve to the rear heater to keep your vehicle cooler in summer, don't forget to open it again before the cold wind blows. Check your vehicle manual if you are unsure of the location or correct position of the valve.

Driving in the War Zone,

from page 11

it up in situations where an apology would be appropriate.

Facing Rage Safely

Unfortunately, there may be times when all the precautions in the world won't placate an angry driver. When confronted with road rage, remember that you cannot control the other driver; you can only control your own reactions. At times, the other driver may be truly out of control, so it is important that you act appropriately in one of these situations.

Don't react to an aggressive driver by making eye contact, shouting, or making obscene gestures. Control your own temper and keep your cool in traffic. Use your horn only when needed for safety, and don't stop to talk with another driver who is upset or aggressive (unless you are involved in an actual accident, of course).

If the incident persists or seems to be escalating, call the dispatcher for assistance or, in more extreme cases, drive to the nearest police station.

Remember that you can only do your best to protect your own safety and that of your passengers, and your best does not include the ability to control other motorists.

Sources

"Road Rage: Guilty or Not Guilty," *Tap In,* Indiana Rural Transit Assistance Program, Issue 4, 2000.

"Advice: How to Avoid Road Rage," *Roadragers.com.*

Prevent Road Rage, Dr. R. Jerry Adams, EDI, 2000; Vest, Jason, Warren Cohen, and Mike Tharp, Road Rage, U.S. News Online, *www.usnews.com.* ▲

New FTA regulations,

from page 8

remove any excess outer clothing, like jackets, blazers, sweaters, etc., prior to collection.

Refusals. Collectors now have the discretion to end a test if the donor refuses to provide a specimen or won't give enough of a specimen. Frequent harassment and even assault of collectors in the past contributed directly to this change in regulations.

New Forms. The Chain-of-Custody forms have been changed and by August 1, 2001 the new forms must be used. If any Kansas agency still has the old forms, discard them and contact Judy Coates at The Consortium, Inc., at (800) 886-1123, ext. 122) for new ones. If you notice collection sites still using the old forms, let Tim Harris, from The Consortium, Inc., know right away. These are just a few of the changes made for collectors.

While it may be inconvenient to adjust to new regulations at times, it is important to remember that these laws are continually revised to help transit agencies better perform their primary function: transporting passengers safely and efficiently.

If you have any questions regarding the new regulations please feel free to contact Janet Blue at (785) 368-7091 or blue@ksdot.org. ▲

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Publications

❏ **Managing Medicaid Transportation: A Manual Examining Innovative Service Delivery Models Under State Medicaid Managed Care Systems** (24 pages). Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), December 1997.

❏ **Medicaid Transportation Resources** (3 pages) CTAA, 2001. Valuable resources for those who want to learn more about non-emergency Medicaid transportation.

❏ **Headstart Final Rule** (7 pgs). *Federal Register,* January 18, 2001.

❏ **Headstart 100 FAQs (Sections 2, 3, and 4 on regulations, vehicles and fiscal issues)** (17 pgs). *School Transportation News,* 2001. Answers to frequently-asked questions about Headstart.

Videotapes

❏ **Building Quality Service: Everyone's a Customer** (20 minutes). USDOT/FTA/RTAP, 1995 Discusses the basic concepts of quality service in rural transit systems.

❏ **Preventive Maintenance for Rural Transit** (7 minutes). Kansas University Transportation Center, 1989. Stresses the need for good preventive maintenance practices for rural transportation programs due to the unique circumstances under which they operate.

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