

# Rockdale County Senior Services

## New Freedom

## T RANSPORTATION

## V OUCHER

## P ROGRAM



# PROCEDURE MANUAL

7-1-12

## **Program Description**

The objective of the Rockdale County Transportation Voucher Program is to **improve accessibility and mobility** for low income Rockdale County residents age 60+ and persons with disabilities (age 18-59) by providing funding for access to transportation for quality of life trips.

The Rockdale County Transportation Voucher Program gives Senior/ Disabled residents of Rockdale County the opportunity to arrange transportation with the knowledge that they can pay for services using vouchers they purchase at a rate below the fair market value.

It is anticipated that the project will operate from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. Voucher payments will be made through June 30, 2013. (Vouchers will need to be submitted for reimbursement within 30 days of travel.)

### **The goals of this program are:**

1. Provide a fare assistance program for low income qualified clients who will pay for services using vouchers purchased for a nominal cost share. (Reliable affordable transportation)
2. Provide a simple payment method using voucher books
3. Assist riders with the development of a support network of family, friends and neighbors
4. Provide flexible, personalized transportation services without travel boundaries or time limitations
5. Decrease isolation and increase the independence of the 60+/disabled population
6. Develop more Community partners including local cab companies, medical and disability transport companies, Health Department, Health Clinics, and Rockdale Medical Center.
7. To meet the transportation needs of the senior/disabled population in Rockdale County
8. Implement an efficient sustainable solution

### **Qualification- Target Population**

In order to qualify for this program, potential clients must have an annual income of less than 200% of the poverty rate, reside in Rockdale County, age 60+ (or be an adult age 18-59 with a disability), and have expressed a need for transportation assistance by contacting Rockdale County Senior Services.

## **Collaboration**

**Partnerships include** local cab companies and medical/disability transport companies, and the family, friends, and neighbors of the client requesting service. New Freedom funding will provide additional Rockdale County residents the ability to live independently by providing door-to-door transportation to work, medical appointments, social activities, and other desired quality of life trips. **Travel boundaries and after hour services will be unrestricted.**

### **Staff Description and Responsibilities**

The RCSSTVP is staffed by a Program Coordinator employed by Rockdale County and based at the Olivia Haydel Senior center in Conyers, Georgia.

The Program Coordinator will work with all clients from the point they are identified as potential participants and throughout their participation in the project. The Program Coordinator will maintain all records and coordinate with other agencies as necessary to assure that the program operates in a seamless manner.

### **Program Coordinator Responsibilities:**

- To recruit participants
- Verify eligibility of all participants
- Schedule and conduct orientations for participants;
- Negotiate acceptance of vouchers by individuals and transportation providers in the Conyers area;
- Enroll transportation providers suggested by participants;
- Maintain records of participants;
- Assemble and forward documentation to the Rockdale County Finance Department for issuance of reimbursement checks;
- Create program materials as needed;
- Monitor funding and check disbursement;
- Generate necessary reports on clients and services provided;
- Provide public relations and community outreach;
- Be available to answer questions and aid in issues participants encounter throughout process.

### **Scope Of Services**

The Transportation Voucher Program has limited services. Up to 30 individuals will participate in the Voucher Program. The participant will negotiate a fee with the transportation provider for the trip. The participant has the authority to negotiate a trip that will be paid partially with vouchers and partially with another form of funds. In this and all cases, only the voucher portion of the payment will be reimbursed. The maximum voucher value is \$10.00. A maximum of two vouchers may be used per day by each participant.

In the instance that vouchers are lost or stolen, the participant must report the missing vouchers to the RCSSTVP office. Lost vouchers will be designated void and

replacement vouchers issued. If a participant loses vouchers more than once, they may be terminated from the project.

The RCSSTVP is scheduled to begin July 1, 2012 and continue through June 30, 2013 or until all vouchers have been distributed. Vouchers must be submitted within 30 (thirty) days of travel to be reimbursed. *When the project has completed, unused vouchers will have no cash value.*

Each enrolled participant will have “an account” of up to 100 vouchers per year to be used for voucher reimbursed travel. If two or more qualified individuals live at the same address, all will be eligible to participate but will receive an adjusted amount of vouchers and will have a total limit of 120 vouchers per year combined

All trips will be reimbursed only after all of the appropriate paperwork has been submitted from both the participant and the transportation provider.

### **Participant Recruitment**

This program will accept participants from the Assessments completed by the Rockdale County Senior Services staff. Individuals who responded that they had “transportation needs” will be called by the RCSS staff and surveyed as to whether the transportation voucher program can address their needs.

If, during the course of the recruitment process, appropriate candidates are referred to the RCSS staff, their names will be added to the list of potential participants. Recruitment will continue until 30 individuals have been identified as participants. Additional names that are submitted once the program is filled will be kept, in order received, on a waiting list.

### **New Freedom Transportation Voucher Eligibility- Client Eligibility Requirements**

If there is a significant decrease in the amount of available funding for this program, the highest priority will be given to those that demonstrate the highest need.

To be eligible for RCSSTVP, clients must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Reside in Rockdale County, Georgia;
- Age 60 or older or be a person with a disability (age 18-59)
- Interview with RCSS staff (by phone or in person);
- Willingness to abide by the RCSSTVP rules
- Agree to participate in the evaluation process.
- Individual income of less than 200% of the poverty level.
- Demonstrate a need for Transportation Voucher services.

These eligibility requirements may be amended when the demonstration period is complete.

### **Intake Procedure**

Using the Intake Form, the RCSS staff will ask a series of questions of potential voucher recipients. **(See Intake Form)**

Ineligible participants will be sent a letter and a list of alternative transportation providers.

If the individual is eligible to participate in RCSSTVP, the staff will give them a detailed explanation of the program and determine their interest in participating. (NOTE: the individual might not be interested in participating and/or might express reluctance to arrange transportation for a fee).

Upon completion of the Intake process, the RCSS staff will open a file for any (eligible) potential participants. The file will contain copies of:

- Completed Intake Form (signed at Orientation)
- Copies of all vouchers received
- Up to date spreadsheet
- Pertinent notes about participant.

**Transportation Voucher Contributions-** A contribution of \$10.00 per book of 10 vouchers (10%) is required from participants of the Transportation Voucher Program. \$10.00 payment is due upon receipt of the voucher book.

### **Transportation Provider Recruitment**

Once a participant has identified transportation provider(s) they wish to use, they will provide the RCSS staff with the contact information for the transportation provider. The RCSS staff will contact the transportation provider and conduct a one-on-one interview and training with the prospective driver. The driver will receive a copy of the transportation provider information packet which includes the release form. The prospective transportation provider will be required to submit a copy of their driver's license, insurance card, and a certified 3 year DMV driving history report. Once the provider registration form is completed and accepted by the RCSS office, the RCSSTVP Coordinator will contact the transportation provider and any participants they wish to transport to advise them that travel can commence.

If a participant wishes to alter transportation providers it will be necessary to contact the RCSSTVP Coordinator with the new provider information. The procedure detailed above will be followed.

As part of the explanation and forms, the potential transportation provider will be asked if they would like to transport other participants. If so, their name will be added to the list of Transportation Providers that is distributed to new participants.

**Acquiring and hiring the driver to provide the transportation is the responsibility of the client. The responsibility of the RCSSTVP is to provide monetary reimbursement only.**

### **Participant Orientation**

Once interest has been confirmed and the Intake Form completed (over the phone) an Orientation appointment will be scheduled. The program coordinator will travel to the potential participant's home to complete the orientation if necessary. The goal of the Orientation is to confirm that the participant understands and is comfortable with the voucher procedure. All pertinent materials will be given to the participant at the Orientation.

During the Orientation, the staff will:

- Review the program;
- Explain how the vouchers are used;
- Review the voucher form and how it is to be completed;
- Discuss/ Brainstorm for ideas of potential transportation providers;
- Explain the evaluation process and the role expected of participants.
- During the orientation, each participant will receive:
  - Welcome letter;
  - Initial set of vouchers equaling \$100;
  - One page explanation of the program;
  - Release form for the participant to sign (during the orientation);
  - Contact information for the Transportation Voucher Coordinator.

If during the course of the Orientation, it becomes apparent that the participant is reluctant to use the program and arrange for transportation (including the taxi service), the staff and participant should discuss the appropriateness of their participation in the program and a mutual determination be made as to whether the participant will participate.

During the orientation, the client/participant will give the Program Coordinator a list of potential transportation provider(s) (individuals). The Project Coordinator will contact the potential Transportation Provider(s) and explain the program to them. If they are interested in participating, the Program Coordinator will send them the Orientation Packet that includes the Transportation Provider Waiver Form and other requirements. As soon as the completed Waiver Form and required documents are received by the RCSSTVP Coordinator reimbursable trips can commence.

**Two people living in the same household (address) may not have a participant/ service provider relationship.**

### **Reporting Requirements**

Before a participant can begin using the vouchers s/he must sign the release form that is included in the Orientation Packet. (This will generally be completed during the Orientation.) All Transportation Providers will also need to sign a Transportation Provider Waiver Form before they begin participating in the program. All agreements are to be filled out before the initial trip that is to be reimbursed. The Program Coordinator will maintain a file of the original documents at the Rockdale County Senior Services office.

### **Complaint Policy**

The Program Coordinator is responsible for establishing and maintaining a group of impartial volunteers within the community, who are willing to mediate any complaints that arise from clients, volunteers, or program staff. This group should be called to meet as soon as possible once a complaint has been made to the Program Coordinator.

### **Follow Up**

In the month following orientation, staff will call the participant to see if and how they have used the vouchers and review the procedure for reimbursement.

**If after six weeks, the participant has not used any vouchers, they can be terminated from the program.** In this instance, the first person on the waiting list will be invited to participate. **Persons found to be using the program in a fraudulent way will also be terminated immediately.** In either case, a termination letter will be sent. Vouchers will be invalidated (not reimbursable).

### **Reimbursement Procedure**

Participants using vouchers are instructed to submit the completed white copy to the transportation provider as payment for services rendered. The participant will keep the yellow copy for their records and immediately send the pink copy to the RCSS office in the pre-addressed envelope they received during Orientation. Vouchers must be used in sequential order.

Transportation providers are instructed to submit their original white copy to the RCSS office as soon as possible, with the understanding that reimbursement cannot occur until both the pink and white copies are received.

Both the transportation provider and the participants are informed that they must submit their vouchers to the RCSS office within 30 days of their trip. If one copy is received by the office but the corresponding pink or white voucher form has not been received, the Project Coordinator will initiate a phone call to the participant and or the transportation provider to reiterate that reimbursement cannot be initiated until both forms have been submitted.

***Vouchers submitted more than 6 weeks (42 days) after the trip occurred will not be reimbursed.***

Once both the white and pink copies have been received at the RCSS office, the reimbursement process is initiated for the trip as follows:

- Information is logged in the participant's file (on the spreadsheet).
- The name of the transportation provider is confirmed to be on the list of transportation providers
- The white copy of the voucher is sent to the Rockdale County Finance Department along with a request for voucher payment with the address and SSN of the Transportation Provider written in, as they are confirmed. (NOTE: Pink copies remain in participant's file at the RCSS office).
- Rockdale County Finance Department will issue and send checks as they are prepared.

The transportation provider shall receive one reimbursement check per month.

If a participant pays for a trip with more than one voucher (i.e. a trip costing more than \$10), the report should note all of the voucher numbers redeemed.

### **Confidentiality**

All records for participants will be kept confidential and only be accessible to the RCSS staff. Information about transportation providers will only be shared with participants if the transportation provider requests to be added to the list of transportation providers (on the release form).

### **Evaluation**

Participants will be contacted by the RCSS staff after they have been participants for 6-8 weeks to assess their degree of satisfaction with the Transportation Voucher Program. RCSS processes will be revised as appropriate.

Final evaluation of the program will include analysis of the data collected from:

- individual spreadsheets
- Use of vouchers
- Monetary increments per trip
- Types of trips taken (e.g. destinations)
- Frequency of trips
- transportation providers recruited

Participants will also be asked to attend a focus group session to discuss the RCSSTVP and share their thoughts and suggestions for improving it. (If necessary, the RCSS office will arrange transportation.)

This Program Manual should be thought of as a flexible document, and should be edited as experiences with the program dictate a need for changes in the structure or procedures.