

POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON SAFE TRANSPORTATION

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of persons served as well as staff during transportation and include the provisions for handling emergency situations.

II. POLICY

When transportation is the responsibility of CHOICE, staff will assist in transporting, handling, and transferring persons served in a safe manner and according to their *Support Plan* and/or *Support Plan Addendum*.

III. PROCEDURE

The CHOICE Transportation policies, program, procedures and all changes will be arranged by the Administrative Team.

A. DRIVER REQUIREMENTS: Upon employment, staff are informed of the following requirements that all drivers transporting CHOICE participants shall:

1. Possess a valid driver's license
2. Notify their supervisor if their license is revoked or limited
3. Have no physical impairments that would prevent safe driving or be in violation of state law
4. Comply with all traffic laws and practice defensive driving techniques (see additional documents).
5. Use seat belts and ensure that passengers also use their seat belts prior to departure.
6. Not transport participants or operate a company vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, or medication which may impair judgment or performance.
7. Not transport unauthorized passengers
8. Be responsible for any fines and tickets issues to you for failure to comply with traffic laws.
9. All drivers are required to obey parking ordinances, and snow emergency regulations.
10. Not allow unauthorized personnel to drive a company vehicle. Termination of employment will result. The assigned driver may be held liable for total accident damage or loss if he or she consented to vehicle use by an unauthorized driver.
11. Willful abuse (i.e.- over revving engine or off-road driving) or neglect (i.e.- failure to adhere to local snow emergencies or leaving van unlocked) may result in termination of employment. If a van is stuck in the snow or mud, arrange for a tow truck.
12. Damage to property (i.e. equipment, vehicles) or loss of property (i.e. vehicle keys, cell phones) deemed the result of an employee's abuse or neglect can lead to termination.
13. Two at-fault accidents while driving a CHOICE vehicle within a 4-year period will result in a driver being ineligible to transport clients in a company vehicle. If an accommodation to assignments exists that could allow the employee to perform in a non-driving role, the employee may request reassignment. If an assignment does not exist, CHOICE, Inc. is under no obligation to create a position for the affected employee

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or to continue employment for an individual that is ineligible or unwilling to transport CHOICE participants with a CHOICE vehicle.

14. Handicapped parking signs cannot be hanging from the mirror when driving, nor can anything else (air fresheners, etc.).

B. **DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES:** With direction given by the Executive Director, all staff will assist in ensuring the safety of vehicles, equipment, supplies, and materials owned or leased by CHOICE, Inc. and will maintain these in good condition. Standard practices for vehicle, equipment, supplies, and materials maintenance and inspection will be followed.

1. If a warning light comes on while you are driving a CHOICE, Inc. van, please pull over and look in the owner's manual to see what the light is indicating. Report the problem to the Program Director. If the light is indicating a tire pressure problem, get out of the van and visually check the tires for low air. If they look fine continue driving and have the pressure in the tires check at a nearby service facility.

2. If a CHOICE, Inc. vehicle starts to make odd noises or starts to drive differently, please report the problem to your Program Director as soon as possible. They will get the vehicle in for maintenance and get it fixed. Report all problems as soon as you notice them, to avoid any sort of break down on the road.

3. Drivers will have available for their use a company fuel credit card. The card is for vehicle related purchases specific to the assigned van. Use of this card requires a PIN. Drivers should keep this card in their possession or in a safe place (not in the vehicle) and report its loss as soon as known. The assigned driver is responsible for all use on the card. Drivers should turn in to their supervisor at the beginning of each month an envelope with their name on it containing the receipts for all purchases during the month. The receipts will be reconciled with the statement from the credit card issuer.

4. All gasoline purchases are to be self-serve and 87 octane.

5. Arrive at CHOICE, Inc. with enough gasoline for daily use of van.

6. Check oil, antifreeze, and washer fluid levels monthly.

7. Head lights, tail lights, brake lights, turn signals, tire pressure, and tire wear are to be checked quarterly.

8. All potential mechanical problems are to be reported immediately to supervisor. All indicator lights are to be reported, low tire pressure must be addressed as soon as possible.

9. Vans are to be kept clean (exterior and interior).

10. Record client incidents and behaviors.

11. Windows must be free of snow, ice, or fog before driving.

12. Log all miles driven with a vehicle.

13. At all times the radio will not be played at a volume or in a manner that poses a distraction to the driver's ability to be aware of traffic, emergency vehicle sirens, or the supervision of the passengers in the vehicle. The radio station or music played should not be offensive in content, volume or genre to the people we serve and if a concern is raised by a participant either the selection will be changed or the radio turned off.

14. Staff are prohibited from smoking, eating, drinking or using mobile devices while operating the program

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vehicle.

15. Staff are responsible for maintaining the pickup and drop off procedures. Staff should arrive at a residence and should wait for participant for 5 minutes. Once 5 minutes has been reached, the driver will call the participant. Driver will not leave participant residence without notification to the residence. Staff will drop off participants at designated location with observation of participant entering the residence. Drivers are prohibited from leaving the premises if a participant has not entered their residence. When dropping off persons served at a site which requires a change in staff, transporting staff will ensure that staff or another responsible party are present before leaving the person served unless otherwise specified in the person's *Support Plan* and/or *Support Plan Addendum*. Any necessary information will be presented to the staff or other responsible party.

Failure or omission to ensure proper supervision of care during transportation is “neglect” and must be reported as neglect by a mandated reporter. Any act deemed to be neglect is cause for discharge from employment at CHOICE, Inc.

- C. DRIVER PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: The following standards apply to all drivers transporting CHOICE, Inc. participants. Any person with any of the following combination of violations or accidents will be considered ineligible to transport clients in a company vehicle or in their personal vehicle for a period of 24 months.

1. Three or more “at fault” accidents in the last three years.
2. Any type “A” violations in the past three years.
3. Any combination of accidents and type “B” violations that equal four or more in the last three years.

Type “A” Violations:

1. Driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs
2. Implied consent (i.e. refusal to take the DWI or DUI test)
3. Hit and Run
4. Reckless driving
5. Permitting an unlicensed person to drive
6. Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
7. Negligent homicide arising out of use of a motor vehicle
8. Operating a motor vehicle while license is suspended or revoked
9. Operating a motor vehicle without the owner's permission
10. Speed contest (street racing)
11. Using a motor vehicle in the commission of a felony

If an employee is cited for a type “A” violation the employee must report it to their supervisor upon arrival

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to work. Failure to do so will result in termination of employment at that time when CHOICE, Inc. is informed by another source. Employees arrested for type “A” offenses will not be eligible to drive a company vehicle or transport participants in their personal vehicles pending legal resolution of the case.

Type “B” Violations: All moving violations not listed as type “A” violations

After 24 months, the employees’ eligibility to drive and transport participants will be reviewed with our insurance carrier. Eligibility to drive is not assured after 24 months. If an accommodation to assignments exists that could allow the employee to perform in a non-driving role the employee may request reassignment. If an assignment does not exist, CHOICE, Inc. is under no obligation to create a position for the affected employee or to continue employment for an individual that is ineligible to transport CHOICE participants.

- D. **CONTRACTED TRANSPORTATION:** The Designated Coordinator and/or Program Director will ensure that all required documentation is completed and submitted before the first trip is scheduled. Staff will arrange ongoing use of contracted transportation or will assist persons served, as needed, in arranging transportation for themselves. All subcontractors will conduct background studies on their own employees and those employees are not bound to the CHOICE, Inc. policy and procedure on transportation. All CHOICE employees will assist with communication when necessary.
- E. **SAFETY RESTRAINTS:** Anyone riding in a moving vehicle must wear seatbelts and/or straps/safety restraints or child safety restraints at all times. Staff will provide physical assistance with seatbelts, as needed to ensure they are correctly fastened and will assist with the use of any ramp or step stools to ensure safe entry and exit from the vehicle. Staff will implement goals and record data for participants with transportation related goals. Staff will assist participants who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices to be transported safely.
- F. **VEHICLE SUPPLIES:** Program vehicles are to be utilized exclusively for the purpose of transporting persons served by this program, and equipment and supplies related to the program. When equipment used by a person served is needed, staff will place the equipment in a safe location in the vehicle such as the trunk of a car. If a program vehicle does not have a designated storage space such as a trunk, staff will place the equipment in an area of the vehicle and secure it, when possible, so that there is limited to no shifting during transport. All agency vehicles should include the following items and information and all staff should assist in maintaining/updating these items:
 - 1. CHOICE, Inc. phone numbers
 - 2. Name and phone number of person(s) to call in case of emergency
 - 3. CHOICE participant personal information. *Information will be limited to the minimum information necessary to ensure safe and accurate transportation services and to act in medical or other emergency. Any additional information needed will be accessed by calling the Program Director at the CHOICE location in which the person receives services.
 - 4. Cellular phone or driver personal phone
 - 5. First aid kit
 - 6. Proof of insurance card
 - 7. Copy of current Transportation Policies
 - 8. Transportation Mileage Log

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- G. **TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS AND VEHICLE BREAKDOWNS:** All staff are required to follow all traffic safety laws while operating the program vehicle. All accidents, no matter how minor, are to be reported immediately to the Program Director. Staff will take the following steps in the event of an accident:
1. If possible, move the vehicle to a safe area as quickly and as safely as possible. Staff will use a cell phone or any available community resource to contact “911” for help if needed. If medical attention is needed, staff will call “911” and follow first aid and/or CPR protocols according to their training.
 2. Obtain the name, address, and phone number of the other driver if another vehicle(s) is/are involved.
 3. Obtain insurance information and the license plate number of other vehicles involved.
 4. All required accident reports will be filled out by the driver.
 5. Call police if an accident involves another vehicle or there is significant damage to property.

If an accident or breakdown occurs after 4:00 PM, drivers will attempt to contact their Program Director, or Mike (952-807-6001). In the event that a driver is unable to make one of these contacts and the vehicle is disabled, the driver has the authority to make arrangements to transport the participant riders home. The participant rider’s group home/residence needs to be notified of the situation and if possible transport the person. If that is not possible, attempt to reach one of the other van drivers for assistance. If necessary, utilize a taxi (Suburban Taxi 952-545-1234 is one). These are some options to use if the vehicle must be towed:

Bobby and Steve’s Auto World 952-831-8833	Frankie’s Towing 763-595-0321
Leroy’s Great Bear Tire and Auto 952-884-6152	Maliks (Golden Valley) 763-546-7676
Dale Feste Auto 952-938-9808	Arboretum Tire and Auto 952-368-5000
Rudy Luther Toyota 763-544-1313	Williams Towing (Eden Prairie and Mtka) 952-470-0542
Waconia Ford 952-442-4411	Frankie’s Towing –Plymouth 866-989-0349

Chevrolet and Ford vans come with a roadside assistance package that is good for 3 years or 36,000 miles, whichever comes first. If you are in a disabled van and it falls within the 3 years or 36,000 mile range, please call the following phone numbers for assistance with the following problems: towing, flat tires, dead batteries, lock problems and fuel delivery. **Ford Roadside Assistance-1-800-241-3673 and Chevrolet Roadside Assistance 1-800-243-8872.**

- H. **EMERGENCIES:** If there is an emergency while driving, staff will follow emergency response procedures to ensure the person(s) safety. This will include pulling the vehicle over and stopping in a safe area as quickly and as safely as possible. Staff will use a cell phone or any available community resource to contact “911” for help if needed. If a medical emergency were to occur, staff will call “911” and follow first aid and/or CPR protocols according to their training.

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1. Severe Weather Emergency: In the event of a severe weather emergency, staff will take the following actions:
 - a. Monitor weather conditions. Listen to local television or radio or a weather-radio for weather warnings and watches. Allow extra time for travel and be prepared to communicate revisions.
 - b. Follow directions for the need to change plans and activities, or seek emergency shelter.
 - c. Inform passengers why plans and activities have changed. Assist passengers remain calm.
 - d. If CHOICE closes due to weather an automatic notice will go out to all residences.
 - e. If CHOICE remains open drivers must use their discretion in determining if roads/driveways are passable in order to avoid a potentially dangerous situation. Drivers will provide necessary communication to anybody being affected by inclement weather decisions.
 - f. Drivers should not enter unplowed roads or driveways to pick up participants.

I. INCIDENTS: If there is an incident while driving, staff will pull the vehicle over and stop in a safe area as quickly and as safely as possible. Staff will use a cell phone or any available community resource to seek appropriate help as needed. In an emergency staff will call “911” and follow first aid and/or CPR protocols. If person to person physical aggression occurs, staff will pull over and stop the vehicle in a safe area as quickly and as safely as possible, redirect the persons served, and if necessary, attempt to contact Program Director and/ or “911” for assistance.

J. CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Employees should understand that use of an electronic device while driving poses a risk of harm to self and others by significantly increasing the chance of a vehicular accident. Employees should follow company policies and state laws. Employees found to be in violation of company policies are subject to disciplinary action. Employees found to be in violation of state laws could be subject to fines given by law enforcement. In this case, the driver is responsible for remittance of the fine, not CHOICE. Furthermore, use of an electronic device while driving places the organization at significant risk of legal action. All employees are to take all necessary action to avoid use of an electronic device while driving. For necessary communication and emergencies, drivers have access to agency cell phones and should use them only when it is safe to do so and the vehicle is parked. Minnesota has a Hands-Free Law that states that drivers may not hold their phone in their hand while driving. CHOICE drivers should not answer an incoming call, or make an outgoing call, when they’re driving. Staff are prohibited by state law (MN Statutes, section 169.475) from using a wireless communications device (cell phone, GPS, etc) while operating a motor vehicle in motion or a part of traffic upon a street or highway. This includes a program vehicle or a staff person’s own vehicle. Staff may not initiate, compose, send, retrieve, or read an electronic message; engage in a cellular phone call, including initiating a call, talking or listening, and participating in video call; and access the following types of content stored on the device: video content, audio content, images, games or software applications.

1. The prohibitions stated previously do not apply if a person uses a wireless communications device:
 - a. Solely in a voice-activated or hands-free mode to initiate or participate in a cellular phone call or to initiate, compose, send, or listen to an electronic message (this exception does not apply to accessing non-navigation video content, engaging in video calling, engaging in live-streaming, accessing gaming data, or reading electronic messages);
 - b. To view or operate a global positioning system or navigation system in a manner that does not require the driver to type while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic, provided that the person does not hold the device with one or both hands;
 - c. To listen to audio-based content in a manner that does not require the driver to scroll or type while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic, provided that the person does not hold the device with one or both hands;
 - d. To obtain emergency assistance to (i) report a traffic accident, medical emergency, or serious traffic hazard, or (ii) prevent a crime about to be committed;
 - e. In the reasonable belief that a person's life or safety is in immediate danger; or

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- f. In an authorized emergency vehicle while in the performance of official duties.
2. Employees may elect to utilize personal cell phones in case of emergency while driving company vehicles and will seek approval from their direct supervisor to do so. Any use of cell phones and other electronic devices while driving is prohibited, unless the driver needs to seek immediate emergency assistance. Cellular phones and tablets are to be utilized exclusively for the purpose of conducting agency business and in accordance with MN statute and Hand-Free laws. Use of cellular phones and tablets for personal reasons is prohibited.
3. Staff will ensure that phones or tablets intended for necessary or emergency use are present, turned on and sufficiently charged at the beginning of each day for use. Employees should keep their tablets or phone on their person throughout the work day. If a company electronic device is misplaced, staff will notify the Program Director immediately. Devices should be powered off at the end of the day and prepped for use the next day. Employees should ensure that the device battery is sufficiently charged at all times.
4. Company electronic devices should be on at all times when participating in CHOICE, Inc. business. CHOICE cell phones and tablets are to be used exclusively for CHOICE related business.
5. In the event of an accident, if it is determined that a cell phone, or other electronic device, was being used in violation of this policy, termination of employment will result.

According to MN Statutes:

Definition: For purposes of this section, “electronic message” means a self-contained piece of digital communication that is designed or intended to be transmitted between physical devices. An electronic message includes, but is not limited to, email, a text message, an instant message, a command or request to access a World Wide Web page, or other data that uses a commonly recognized electronic communications protocol. An electronic message does not include voice or other data transmitted as a result of making a phone call, or data transmitted automatically by a wireless communications device without direct initiation by a person.

Prohibition on use; penalty: No person may operate a motor vehicle while using a wireless communications device to compose, read or send an electronic message, when the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. See MN Statute 169.475 for violations and exceptions.

K. **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS USING CHOICE, INC. TRANSPORTATION:** All persons served by CHOICE, Inc. being transported by CHOICE staff or in CHOICE vehicles must adhere to the following:

1. Seat belts must be worn at all times.
2. Transport only items necessary for their workday (i.e. lunch, purse, etc.).
3. Maintain appropriate behavior while riding in the vehicle. Posing a threat of danger or harm to themselves, other passengers, or the driver, may result in the revocation of their privilege to utilize CHOICE, Inc. transportation.
4. Participants are to be ready at their scheduled pick-up time. Drivers will wait only the standard “5 minute wait period” after the scheduled pick-up time. Prior to departure the driver will notify the residence that the van is leaving.

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5. Eating and drinking in CHOICE, Inc. vehicles is strongly discouraged.

- L. Staff will transport persons served with a program vehicle. If there is no program vehicle, CHOICE will attempt to use public or contracted transportation. If those options are unavailable, staff will use their own vehicle for transportation of persons served.

- M. Persons served using wheelchairs will be transported according to manufacturer's safety guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, safe operation and regular maintenance of lift equipment, checks of straps to secure the wheelchair to the floor of the vehicle, and use of adaptive seating equipment (i.e. headrests, lap trays) when appropriate. Staff who are transporting persons served and who complete "tie-downs" of wheelchairs will receive training on how to do so and will be required to demonstrate competency prior to transporting persons using wheelchairs.

- N. Staff will receive training on each person's transferring or handling requirements for the person and/or equipment prior to transferring or transporting persons. All transfers and handling of persons served will be done in a manner that ensures their dignity and privacy. Any concerns regarding transportation, transfers, and handling will be promptly communicated to the Designated Coordinator and/or Designated Manager who will address these concerns. This will be done immediately if the health and safety of the person(s) served are at risk.

- O. Persons served are prohibited from driving program or staff vehicles at any time.

Policy reviewed and authorized by:

Nicole Brown- Designated Manager



Print name & title

Signature

Date of last policy review: 8/1/24 NB

Date of last policy revision: 6/22

Legal Authority: MS 245D.10, subd. 3 and 4

Employee Guide to the Transportation Program:

- Hands-Free Law – All drivers should follow company policies and MN state laws.
- Pre-trip Check – Take a quick scan for hazards around the vehicle and check that tires look full and intact. Report if any dashboard lights are on to Program Director.
- Space Management – Allow plenty of space when you are behind another vehicle. Keep a distance of 4-6 seconds. Large vans have a much wider turning radius than average vehicles so try to avoid tight spaces.
- Speed Management – Reduce speed for poor road conditions. Large vans need more time than average vehicles to accelerate and brake.
- Weather Conditions – Adjust speed and allow yourself extra time to avoid rushing around on the roadways. Drivers will use their discretion regarding impassable roads and driveways due to poor weather conditions.
- Parking – Try to find a spot with easy access to get out. Avoid backing up and tight spaces. Do not attempt to enter parking garages, drive thru services or uncertain car washes with large vans.
- Reversing – Avoid, if possible, as it is especially difficult to see behind the van when occupied with many passengers. If you must reverse, look around the back of the vehicle before getting in and backing up.
- Gradual Maneuvers – Avoid sudden turns and allow extra time to accelerate and brake. Remember to ease off the accelerator and gently apply brake when beginning to stop. Recognize that some situations may prompt your immediate response to suddenly brake or swerve that it can actually increase the risk of a serious accident (ex: small animal on road). Please be cautious when making that decision.
- Distractions – Avoid personal technology devices and remind passengers of noise levels and any of their actions that could be a distraction to the driver.
- Blind Spots – Adjust mirrors and scan them often. Be aware of other vehicles and where they are on the roads.
- Emergency Preparation – Ensure there is a charged cell phone and enough fuel in the van. In winter, all vans should be equipped with a scraper, a shovel and sand.
- Seatbelts – Drivers and passengers are required to wear their seat belts and drivers should always enforce this rule. Report a faulty or damaged seatbelt immediately to Program Director.
- Driver Responsibilities – All employees drive agency vehicles as part of their everyday duties. Communicate any concern with driving an agency vehicle to Program Director. All employees should assist with the Transportation Program as requested.