

# Freedom to Ride: Occupational Therapy's Role in ADA Paratransit Review and Eligibility

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# Introductions

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# Learning Objectives

- Learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit eligibility requirements
- Identify elements of the paratransit eligibility determination process
- Learn about the role of Occupational Therapy in paratransit eligibility determination process
- Describe the recommended process for Occupational Therapy in-person assessment of functional abilities in ADA paratransit eligibility.

# Disability Advocates of Kent County

- Local non-profit
- Founded in 1981
- Center for Independent Living
- We are who we serve
- Individual program services
- Systems change advocacy



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30+ Programs 12 Departments  
**1 ONE ORGANIZATION**  
Disability Advocates of Kent County

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# Programs and services

- Accessibility Reviews
- ADA Employment Advocacy
- Community Organizing
- Employability Workshops
- Family Support Services
- Independent Living Supports
- Information and Referral
- Nursing Facility Transitions
- Occupational Therapy
- Advocacy & Systems Change
- Veteran Peer Supports
- Workforce Development
- Youth Transitions

# Occupational therapy services

- Adaptive home solutions- Home evaluations
- Adaptive equipment loan closet
- Aging in place classes
- Caregiving solutions
- Hearing Specialized Services
- Paratransit review
- ZeroStep



# ADA PARATRANSIT RIDES

- Currently cost the transit agency **\$24.33 each way**
  - Less the passengers cost **\$3.50 each way**
- Transit agency pays **\$20.83 each way****

- Eligibility is not disability based, but functionally based. That is why it can change with service improvements, ie. all our fixed route buses are low floor, accessible, and call out stops with automated enunciator
- Going forward greater enforcement of trip by trip eligibility is likely
- Each applicant needs to re-certify their eligibility every 3 years
- Our board has asked us to verify eligibility under the ADA guidelines..*does their disability prevent them from using fixed route service bus, if so when and under what circumstances?*





# TRAVEL TRAINING

- Travel Training enhances independence and gives passengers access to the community
- One-on-One Travel Training is a free service from the Transit Agency
- *'In-Person Assessments'* are done with the Travel Trainer and our contracted OT
- Bus 101–Group familiarization for schools, agencies, and LEP populations are provided
- Individuals can receive familiarization training with their mobility device on an out-of-service fixed-route bus we bring the bus to their home



# Americans with Disability Act

- ADA Paratransit Service and Eligibility Requirements
- What is Paratransit

Origin to destination, door to door

For persons with disabilities who cannot use fixed route

Each public entity providing fixed route service must provide paratransit service

Must be comparable to fixed route service

# ADA and the Federal Transit Administration

## Improving Transit Access for People with Disabilities

- <https://youtu.be/Wr44TwH5WEg>
- Learn more at [www.transit.dot.gov](http://www.transit.dot.gov)

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Process

- History of local program development
- Collaboration with Occupational Therapy
- Collaboration with Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Eligibility Considerations
  - How does a persons disability(s) prevent them from using the fixed route system.

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Categories

- **Unconditional:** Person's disability(s) prevent them from ever using the fixed route bus, even when the busses and the system are accessible
- **Conditional:** Person can use the fixed route system for some trips but cannot be expected to use fixed route service under some conditions.
- **Temporary:** Disability is temporary or functional abilities are expected to change
- **Non Eligible:** no disability as defined by ADA regulations. Ability to use fixed route system.
- Personal Care Attendant need and Wheelchair use are designated

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Process

- Eligibility determination process (21 day)
- Application includes Professional Verification of Functional Disability
  - Application Review: (1-3 days)
    - OTR reviews application and documents the functional limitations. Recommends eligibility category
  - Interview: (1-3 days)
    - OTR interviews applicant, person assisting them and/or medical professional for more detailed information.
  - In-person Evaluation: (within 1-2 weeks)
    - Scheduled Face to face, live simulation of bus riding process and skills. Includes OTR, Travel Trainer, applicant and person/professional assisting them.

# Paratransit Eligibility Assessment

- <https://youtu.be/0jnINMPNDYg>

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Process

- Occupational Therapy Role
  - Current Functional Ability
    - **Physical:** Disability(s), mobility device, balance , endurance, pain, standing tolerance, shortness of breath, fatigue, fall history.
    - TUG Timed Get up and Go Test to assess mobility and determine fall risk.
    - Pain Scale 1-10
    - **Mental:** Disability(s), medication controlled and side effects, recent hospitalizations, orientation, confusion, focus, anxiety, panic attacks, delusions, hallucinations, crowds, coping skill effectiveness.



# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Process

- **Cognitive:** disability(s), follow directions/signs, know person/place, memory, problem solving, safety skills, learning strategies
- **Communication:** disability, language, communicate needs, comprehension
- **Vision:** affected by light/dark, glare, depth perception, visual field
- **Environmental Factors:** Weather, temperature ,humidity, snow/ice.  
Uneven terrain, slopes, curbs.  
Unfamiliar areas, 4 way stops, multiple traffic lanes
- **Coping Techniques for functional limitations & Effectiveness**  
Medications, devices, head phones, texting, worry stones

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Process

- Occupational Therapy training/education
  - Access to mobility devices
  - Alternate transportation options
  - Travel training recommendation
  - Community support services
  - Recommendation for bus stop bench
- Occupational Therapy Process
  - OT In-person Evaluation Scoring
  - TUG, Pain Scale
  - Functional ability/ limitations narrative
  - Recommended eligibility determination

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Decisions

- Eligibility decisions completed within 21 days of application received
- Written decision by mail
- Notification of Appeal process

# ADA Paratransit Eligibility Decisions

- Case studies
- Questions



**616.949.1100**

**[www.dakc.us](http://www.dakc.us)**

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Award for the Silver Line



AWARD-WINNING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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