Service Authorization: Guidance on Transportation Network Company (TNC) Services

Community Transportation

Community transportation is an essential support that allows the transport of a participant to and from a waiver service; place of employment; or community service, activity, or resource as specified in the participant's IRIS Service Plan (ISP). With the goal of broadening access to transportation, Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, have been added to the list of allowable service providers.

Community transportation does not include medical transportation, which is covered under the state plan. Transportation services are only allowable when the services are not already provided by a legally responsible third-party, such as a school, private insurance, or a public entity. Whenever possible, family, neighbors, friends, community agencies, or local government programs that can provide this service without charge will be prioritized and utilized. For additional information, see the IRIS Service Definition Manual, P-00708B (PDF).

Reporting

To maintain an accurate audit history, fiscal employer agents (FEAs) must maintain access to itemized reporting of participant trip information directly from TNCs. When requested, FEAs must provide IRIS consultant agencies (ICAs) with participant-itemized reports to verify appropriate service use upon request.

Participant Education

ICAs are responsible for educating participants on how to access and use community transportation. ICAs assist the participant in determining how transportation will be used to meet their identified long-term care needs and outcomes, as well as how much of their base budget will be allocated to community transportation. For more information, review the Uber Community Guidelines and the Lyft Community Guidelines.

If the participant believes their base budget is not sufficient to meet their needs, they may submit a request for additional funding to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) for approval to evaluate need and cost-effectiveness. For more information, see the IRIS Additional Funding Request Policy, P-03656 (PDF).

FEAs are responsible for providing information to ICAs about their payment processes and how it works in their system. FEAs must provide talking points to ICAs to educate participants on the process.

Authorization Process

1. Determine Participant's Transportation Needs

During the ISP development process, the IRIS consultant (IC) will assist the participant in determining the number of trips needed to meet the participant's identified long-term care needs and outcomes. The participant, with support of the IC, is responsible for prioritizing separate authorizations for community transportation based on the domains of self-direction defined in the IRIS Service Plan Policy, P-00708D (PDF). When creating these authorizations, the IC must include detailed notes for each domain addressed under the long-term care outcome, including the number and purpose of trips. A "trip" means one-way transportation to the participant's destination. It does not include the transportation back from the initial destination.

2. Determine Amount of Funding Needed

Once the participant has identified their community transportation needs and the number of trips needed, the participant calculates the amount of funding necessary to cover the trips. The participant, with support from their ICA, is responsible for determining if the service is cost-effective and can be fully covered within their base budget.

Participants won't be able to schedule trips that exceed their remaining authorized budget. The Uber and Lyft apps will not allow it. If the participant believes their base budget is not sufficient to meet their needs, they may submit a request for additional funding to the DHS for approval to evaluate need and cost-effectiveness. ICAs must submit participant-itemized reports with all additional funding requests. For more information, see the IRIS Additional Funding Request Policy, P-03656 (PDF).

Estimating Cost of Trips

For purposes of estimating trip costs, the service provider's app or web browser allows users to select a pick-up and drop-off location, including the time of day, to estimate the cost of the trip. Checking the trip's estimated cost can help the participant accurately assess the cost relative to their budget.

When estimating trip costs, consider these averages for authorizing funding:
As of February 2026, the average cost for an Uber trip in Wisconsin ranges from $1.50–3.00 per mile, while Lyft averages $1.23–1.29 plus $0.22 per minute. Estimates should be rounded to the nearest dollar.

Funding authorized for TNC trips may not be used for tips or gratuity. Authorizations must be calculated monthly as one unit with a note detailing how many trips are included in the authorization.

Applying Funds to Participant's Account (Initial and Ongoing)

Initially and monthly, the participant's FEA will enter the authorized amount of waiver funds for the participant's TNC account. Funds are applied to a participant's TNC account upon submission of an order form by the ICA to the FEA requesting that funds be added to support rides. At the end of each month, the TNC will provide an invoice to the FEA based on the actual amount of waiver funds used.