



## GETTING AROUND: IT'S A MATTER OF INDEPENDENCE

Part of transitioning to adulthood includes taking steps to make sure you can live as independently as possible. Part of being independent includes being able to get to where you need to go. Driving oneself may be an option for some autistic adults; others use paratransit, which is available to people with disabilities who are functionally unable to use regular fixed-route transportation. However, many autistic individuals rely on public transportation, like subways, buses, and trains, to get from place to place.

Navigating public transportation can seem daunting at first. How do you figure out the schedules? What happens if things don't go as planned? Travel training (also called travel instruction) can help you learn to use public transportation and know what to do when surprises happen.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its regulations include travel training in the definition of special education. Travel training is instruction that enables students with disabilities to develop an awareness of the environment in which they live and to learn the skills necessary to move effectively and safely from place to place within that environment. Travel training is often included in the transition plan included in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) as it is a necessary component for preparing a student for employment and independent living in the community.

Travel training usually consists of both classroom-based and community-based instruction. A student will learn how to use maps and schedules for trip planning, which are often available as a paper brochure and online (perhaps even in a smart phone app that can alert the user to when trains are running late or are canceled). The student will also learn how to purchase tickets, including both the exchange of payment and communicating with transportation employees. Safety precautions will be taught (for example, how to cross streets, how to recognize and respond to danger, how to recognize the need for assistance and request help from an

appropriate source), and scenarios, such as delayed trains, trains that don't make anticipated stops, going the wrong way, and getting off at the wrong stop, will be role-played. In the community, students practice the skills, while accompanied by a travel instructor, who will fade support as the student is ready.

In addition to instruction provided at school as part of an IEP, travel instruction can also be obtained through other organizations. Some public transportation entities may provide some instruction, though the training may not be as thorough as you may need. The Federal Transit Administration funds and Easter Seals administers Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation in Our Nation), a national technical assistance center on accessible transportation, which provides training for schools, parents, and other service providers on the implementation of travel, and includes various webinars and tool kits on its website.

#### Related Articles:

- [Driving and ASD: Determining Readiness](#)

#### Additional Resources:

- [Project ACTION](#)
- [Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation](#)
- [Competencies for the Effective Practice of the Travel Instructor](#)
- [Definition of Travel Instruction](#)

The Center for Autism Research and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment . The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap & trade; and CAR Resource Directory & trade; should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available . Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual's and family's particular circumstances .