

Care providers – are transport services a risk to your business, staff and passengers?



The need for transport

Transporting people with a disability or who are aging is a fundamental service provided by the vast majority of disability and aged care providers. Transport connects people between their homelife and their community. It's the bridge for life, freedom, connection and happiness. Without transport, people can become isolated and more disabled. Transport services are vital however should not be a risk to Support Workers or passenger's health, safety and life.

The need for SAFE transport practices

For clients

People living with a disability or who are aging are dependent on and trust their care provider to transport them safely. Yet, it is astounding how unsafe many people travelling with a disability are, when in the care providers. They are at risk of injury or even death when travelling. We see passengers and staff at risk day in and out in our work and it really concerns (and at times horrifies me).

For support workers

Support workers can be exposed frequently to the physically demanding tasks of assisting clients in and out of vans, securing them in confined spaces and operating specialised equipment. Assisting

with transport can also be a stressful job, meeting timeframes, managing behaviours of concern by passengers and not knowing the best way to complete this job. These support workers can be at high risk of sustaining a significant injury whilst transporting clients.

For the organisation

If clients and support workers are at risk of incurring injuries, then management is at risk of managing these injuries, escalating premiums and possible litigation. The Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 clearly states the need for employers to provide sufficient training for an employee to be competent and to manage risks adequately when performing high-risk tasks. Additionally, care providers must meet their duty of care and quality standards.

The three critical mistakes made when transporting people with a disability:

1. Inadequate training

Often, support workers receive little or no training in how to safely assist a person with a disability in and out of the van and secure them while seated in the van. They also need to know how to operate lifting platforms and restraint systems to secure people seated in wheelchairs for travel. This requires specialist knowledge and skills.

It is not enough to hand a support worker a set of keys and expect them to safely transfer their clients, let alone operate this highly specialised equipment without training. It is also inadequate to rely on adhoc training methods such as a support worker who has provided transport services training new Support Workers on how to complete these tasks. This just introduces another risk – that unsafe practices are passed down to new workers and so become entrenched.

The Right Education?

Care providers develop a yearly training schedule, which ensures all Support Workers undertake repeat, task-specific training before a support worker attempts this task. Check your trainer has expertise in risk management and people moving and handling. This will ensure your staff become familiar with the risks to both their passengers and themselves and how to reduce these during transport. Also ensure, the trainer is familiar with safe use of the equipment used during transport. Even better still, make sure your trainer is familiar with adult based training principles to deliver highly engaging training where the Support Workers will transfer their knowledge back into their workplace.

2. A one-size-fits-all approach is taken when purchasing disability accessible vehicles.

When purchasing a vehicle, it is important to consider more than just the budget. While no one vehicle will suit every organisation, it is a disaster waiting to happen when a care provider purchases a vehicle that requires support workers to be contortionists and elite athletes as they load and secure clients, walking aids and wheelchairs in cramped spaces with insufficient hand holds, foot holds or storage areas. This is commonplace in the care industry. As a result, care and transport is not dignified or comfortable for the passengers either.

How to select the right expertise?

Before purchasing a vehicle, it is essential to engage a manual handling expert to consult with clients and support workers and conduct a transport assessment. They will provide recommendations around how to reduce people moving and handling risks and assist in

planning the best layout and features in a vehicle, to ensure that the vehicle caters for as many of your needs as possible. This makes the Support Workers job easier and more efficient so they get back to loving their work. It enables the passengers to do more for themselves and a comfortable and dignified ride, and reduce behaviours of concern amongst your customers.

3. Lack of awareness of aids and equipment

The third mistake that is often made is simply a lack of awareness of all the great, innovative aids and equipment that are now available to make this transporting job easier for support workers and safer for those travelling.

How to stay abreast of and select the right equipment?

The manual handling expert will assist you to work with an equipment supplier that is a specialist in the area of transport. It is paramount that you consult with these specialists to plan the best vehicle options that meet your highest priority needs within your budget. They'll look at everyone's needs and suggest aids and equipment and vehicle floorplans and designs that are best suited for your clients and support workers, to make the job of transporting as easy and pleasurable as possible.

This is also where by using trainers with transport expertise they will update and expose your staff to this equipment to keep abreast.

Remember why you're doing this:

At the end of the day:

- people with a disability or who are aging need to be able to get out and about in the community to live their lives - safely, comfortably and in a dignified way
- support workers need to be able to do their jobs safely, without risking their physical or mental health and love what they do
- care providers need to comply with the regulations and their duty of care to keep their workers safe and to provide safe, dignified care for their clients

Got a minute?

We would love to hear from you if you're nailing this area or if you'd like some additional resources.

Jump on our website: www.riskmanaged.com.au You'll find a video series for support workers - they can access this for free and it's got lots of tips and tricks on how to use wheelchairs safely in the community and make the job a lot more comfortable and easier for everyone involved.

Or if you would like some more guided support contact us at: 0429 841 049

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