
How can I help my child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) prepare for independent travel?

Local Public Transportation

If you wish to teach your child how to use public transit independently, start the training process early (when they are a teenager).

- Review the transit website, train and/or bus schedules and route maps together. Plan out trips and practice riding the transit together.
- Practice using the bus with your child or have a peer mentor, aide, or travel trainer go along until they are confident and capable of travelling alone. Travel training should also include acquiring the skills for proper social conduct, the safe use of money to pay fares, as well as how to request help if needed.

Driving

Inquire about driving lessons from a school or learning centre that caters to the needs of individuals with disabilities. In addition, there are centres that will conduct an assessment to determine your child's readiness for driving. Keep important directions to home and other places easily accessible in a file in the glove compartment. The use of Google Maps, or other map apps, installed on your child's cell phone can also be very helpful. Also include with this information other safety information such as emergency contact numbers. As with all teenagers, supervised driving is very important while learning how to drive a car.

Long-Distance Travel

Reduce anxiety by planning ahead and teaching the necessary travel skills as soon as your child is ready. Call the airline and any associated security programs and ask what you can do to help the check-in and security screening experience go more smoothly. If the trip has to be made without advance planning, try to arrive early, bring printed information about ASD (a letter from your family doctor can be very helpful) and explain your individualized needs to the gate agent.

- Watch YouTube videos with your child to become familiar with the various aspects of airline travel (e.g., using the bathroom, airport security, airplane take offs and landings, baggage claim). Visit the airport's website with your child to see pictures and possibly videos of what to expect. Consider also visiting the airport days before your travel to show your child parking, the lines at the counters, and let them see a preview of security.
- Some air carriers also offer special assistance services for inexperienced, young and/or disabled travellers. Both Air Canada and WestJet have a program that allows an attendant to fly for free (within Canada) for individuals 18 years and older with a disability who cannot travel alone. A form is required and needs to be signed by your physician.

RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

Air Canada - Travelling with an Attendant

Website: aircanada.com/content/aircanada/ca/en/aco/home/plan/medical-mobility/travel-with-an-attendant.html

WestJet: Guests with Special needs

Website: westjet.com/en-ca/travel-info/special-needs/index

Apps

Calgary Transit App

Assists with trip planning, finding schedules, and real-time bus arrivals. Available on Android and IOS - powered by Transit App.

Website: calgarytransit.com/calgary-transit-app-0

AMA Alberta Motor Association Driver Education Programs

AMA offers online and in-class driver training. For the in-car practical hours, AMA may be able to provide car adaptations and training for individuals with disabilities depending on their needs. Contact the driver education department and discuss your specific needs with them.

Phone: Calgary 403.240.5450
Toll Free 1.800.642.3810, ext. 4

Address: AMA Calgary Main Centre Bow Valley Room, Main Floor, 4700 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB
Other Calgary Locations for Driver Education: In Crowfoot (NW) and Avenida Place (SE)

Website: ama.ab.ca/auto-and-driving/ama-driver-education

Service Alberta Registry

Every Alberta approved license Registry, including the AMA, has accommodations for test-writing including audio read-outs of the test questions over the computer and an option to sit for an oral exam instead of a written test. In order to qualify for the oral exam, an individual must have failed the test a minimum of 3 times in a written form.

Website: servicealberta.ca/registry-agents.cfm

Alberta Transportation: Driver Fitness & Monitoring

You can obtain information from the Ministry of Transportation regarding personalized assessment requirements and legalities of driving with an ASD common co-occurring condition such as ADHD, depression, or a cognitive or functional impairment.

Phone: 780.427.8230; Toll Free 403.310.0000

Address: Main Floor, Twin Atria Bldg, Alberta Transportation, 4999 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB 6B 2X3

Email: driver.fitness@gov.ab.ca

Website: transportation.alberta.ca/542.htm

Info: cmmta.ca/images/publications/pdf//CCMTA_Medical_Standards_Dec_1_2015_final_clean_copy.pdf

Access Calgary

An accessible transit service for the Calgary area. This service offers "hand-offs" at destinations as well.

Phone: 403.537.7777

Website: calgarytransit.com/calgary-transit-access

Calgary Transit Travel Training

This is a short-term service that provides a one-on-one instructor for individuals with disabilities to learn how to use Calgary Transit services. Students will learn the key elements of planning and implementing a bus route or C-Train trip.

Phone: 403.262.1000 (General Inquiries)
Phone: 403.537.7777 (Calgary Transit Access)
Website: calgarytransit.com/accessible-transit/travel-training

Community Accessible Rehabilitation (CAR) – Pre-Driving Assessment

This service will assess reaction time, visual fields and provide medical examinations. It is the only publicly funded pre-driving assessment service in Calgary and requires a physician referral.

Phone: 403.943.0279 (Central Intake)
Address: Provided at Sheldon Chumir (1213 - 4th Street SW, Calgary, AB) within the CAR program
Website: albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1072222&serviceAtFacilityID=1112773

Dreams Transportation Ltd.

A private busing alternative to ACCESS Calgary. Dreams is based in Calgary, but operates in most areas in Southern Alberta. They accept private pay, as well as FSCD and PDD billing (PDD billing needs pre-approval). When accompanying an individual, an Aide can ride for free.

Phone: 403.590.RIDE (7433)
Website: dreamstransportation.ca

Mount Royal University Transitional Vocational Program (TVP)

TVP offers part-time life skills based programming and a class focused solely on preparing for the Learner's permit.

Phone: 403.440.6872
Email: tvpm@mtroyal.ca
Website: mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/ContinuingEducation/tvp/index.htm

Rocky View Regional Handi Bus Society

An alternative transportation service in the Calgary region for individuals with assistance needs. They operate from 7am to 4:30pm on business days and offer a shared-ride program.

Phone: 403.948.2887
Email: info@rockyviewbus.ca
Website: rockyviewbus.ca/index.htm

4 Seasons Transportation Calgary

A private busing alternative to ACCESS Calgary. This company offers special needs transportation in wheelchair accessible buses and minivans. They require 24 hours advance notice for bookings and these can be made by phone, email or online through their webpage.

Phone: 403.899.1882
Calgary Board of Education Parent Inquiries 403.462.1712
Rocky View District Parent Inquiries 587.432.1029
Email: admin@4seasonstransport.com
Website: 4seasonstransport.com

DriveABLE – Driving Assessment

Provides assessments for cognitively at-risk drivers using an in-office cognitive assessment tool and an on-road performance evaluation (2 part assessment). Requires referral from a clinician (physician, psychologist, etc.).

Phone: 1.855.825.9538

Address: 30 Glendee Circle, Suite 100 Calgary, AB

Website: driveable.com

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