

How can I support myself or my autistic loved one to prepare for independent travel?

INFORMATION & 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.

Local Public Transportation

If you or your child wants to learn how to use public transit independently, start the education process early.

- Review the transit website, train and/or bus schedules and route maps. Familiarize yourself with apps that can provide transit directions.
- Practice using the bus with a trusted person who is skilled in navigating your local transport until you are confident and capable of travelling alone. Travel readiness may also include acquiring the skills for expected social conduct, the safe use of money to pay fares, as well as how to request help if needed. You may want to carry a cell phone with a data plan so you are able to search for directions based on your current location
- Consider the sensory demands of public transportation. Plan in advance to prioritize your wellness and safety. Some autistic people may find it helpful to avoid travel during peak times when possible. You may want to consider sensory supports like noise cancelling headphones and bringing along a fidget item.
- Private services like taxis, Pink Car, and Uber may be helpful. If you don't have a credit card or struggle using mobile apps, your parent or caregiver can book a ride on your behalf. A guardian can book an Uber and track the ride and access the driver's name, phone number, vehicle model and license plate. If you book the ride yourself, you still have the option to share the tracking information with someone else directly within the app.
- Prerequisite skills for independence in transportation is community independence. You will need to understand safety in the community, have memorized contact information and home address, know what to do if you are lost, and carry ID in your wallet with emergency and contact information.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Calgary Transit Access (CTA)

An accessible transit service for the Calgary area. Riders must apply for this service. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis and is based on the rider's physical and cognitive ability to use standard public transport. This service offers "hand-offs" at destinations. Some users may be eligible for the additional ACE Program through CTA which provides a \$56 monthly credit for taxi rides booked directly with approved providers.

Phone: 403.537.7777

Website: calgarytransit.com/calgary-transit-access

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

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

Dreams Transportation Ltd.

A private busing alternative to Calgary Transit Access. 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

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/

Pink Car

A Calgary-based ride sharing service specifically for vulnerable populations. Users must apply to become a member and after approval they can use the app to book, track, and pay for rides using credit card.

Website: pinkcarservice.ca

4 Seasons Transportation Calgary

A private busing alternative to Calgary Transit Access. 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

Driving

In Alberta, a Class 7 license (learners permit) is obtained by passing the Driver's Knowledge Test at any local registry. The test is a multiple choice format. An individual can request accommodations for a verbal test if they have failed the written test a minimum of 3 times. A Class 5 license is Alberta's basic driving permit. You will need to pass a practical driving test which can be booked through your local registry.

Driving lessons are helpful in preparing to drive safely. Some people may need more lessons than others. Take as many as needed for you to drive safely and confidently. There are driving lesson programs that are specifically

designed for disabled and neurodivergent people. There are also centres that will conduct an assessment to determine your readiness for driving.

It can be helpful to keep important directions to home and other places easily accessible in a file in the glove compartment. A navigation phone app or device for hands free use can also be very helpful. You may want to include other safety information such as emergency contact numbers and an emergency kit for your vehicle.

Driver's Education & Related Services

Alberta Motor Association (AMA) 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. Chief Instructor, Wayne McLaughlin can help match you with an instructor equipped to support you. Contact him directly at 403.727.3488.

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

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

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

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 Glendear Circle, Suite 100 Calgary, AB
Website: driveable.com

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 Licence test.

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

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

Long-Distance Travel (by air)

Reduce anxiety by planning ahead and teaching the necessary travel skills early. 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 autism (a letter from your family doctor can be very helpful) and explain your individualized needs to the gate agent.

- Watch YouTube videos 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 to see pictures and possibly videos of what to expect. Consider also visiting the airport days before your travel to familiarize yourself with what to expect and what the sensory conditions may be.
- 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.

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

Last updated May 2020

4