Components of Successful Travel Training Programs: Research Findings

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Transit Travel Training: Recommended Best Practices

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Project Overview

- Builds on previous research and new case studies of current travel training programs
  - Via Mobility Services, Boulder CO
  - Regional Transportation Authority, Chicago IL
  - NJTIP@Rutgers, New Brunswick NJ
  - RideWise, Ride Connection, Portland OR
  - Freedom to Go, Riverside Transit Agency, Riverside CA
  - Partransit, Inc., Sacramento, CA
  - Senior Mobility Orientation, The Kennedy Center, Inc., Trumbull CN
Project Overview

Data from case studies used to explore what is special and unique about successful travel training programs

What does success mean?

- Demonstrating that older adults completing the program have already experienced or are likely to experience measurable mobility improvements
- Program is targeting and graduating at least some people who otherwise might be expected to face significant mobility problems
- There are demonstrably positive outcomes for local transportation services
- Program is able to generate support that can sustain its activities over an extended period of time
Key Components of Successful Programs

- Focus on customer service and benefits
- Professional, well-trained staff
- Emphasis on individual abilities/learning patterns
- Able to obtain stable and sustainable funding
- Strong program partners that include public transit systems
- Monitoring of travel training results
- Integration into community outreach and education efforts
Focus on Customer Service and Customer Benefits

- Philosophy, vision, mission of program should focus on serving older adults
- Savings in public transportation should be result, not primary objective of program
- Social service model of program delivery - i.e., meeting needs of older adults and supporting skills they require to remain active, mobile, independent, and able to age in place if desired
Professional, Well-Trained Staff

- Competent staff that excels in customer service and understands social service delivery model
- Personal qualities often as/more important than job experience/background
  - Enjoying working with people/able to connect
  - Having personal traits such as empathy, likability, respect, patience, and kindness
  - Using transit on a regular basis and having established relationships in the transportation community
  - Possessing flexibility, resilience, and calmness to deal with unexpected changes often encountered in the real-world training environment
Emphasis on Individual Abilities/Learning Patterns

- Successful programs provide possibility of tailored one-on-one training even though not every customer will need it.
- Individualized programs begin with in-home appointment to explore available transportation options based on specific mobility needs, ability levels, proximity to transit, transportation goals.
- Other keys: scouting of walking/riding travel routes by the trainer, establishing individualized travel training plan, short/simple training steps.
Able to Obtain Stable and Sustainable Funding

- Expenses (staffing, materials, facilities, general operating support) should be tied closely to local needs and resources
- Most programs dependent on a few but highly focused funding sources (e.g., Federal Transit Administration, state DOTs, state transit agencies, or local government agencies)
Strong Program Partners that Include Public Transit Systems

- Programs are heavily dependent on partnerships to support travel training and provide referrals.
- Key partners include: transit agencies, human and social service agencies that provide services to older adults, organizations that advocate for older adults, sponsors of places where older adults gather such as senior centers.
- Partners provide opportunity to leverage resources and bring people in need into program.
Monitoring of Travel Training Results

- Important for documenting benefits of programs
- Surveys of travel trainees (immediately upon completion, 3, 6, 9, 12 months)
- Program results should also include costs of providing travel training and resulting transportation cost savings that accrue from increased use of fixed route transit
- Individuals’ personal stories about how their quality of life has been enhanced also provide compelling evidence of success
Integration into Community Outreach and Education Efforts

- Broad community support is important
- Outreach and education begin with program partners so they fully understand program, how it operates, and how older adults can benefit
- Outreach also important to other community organizations that help older adults so they are aware of travel training opportunities
THANK YOU