

**DeSoto County
 Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan
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The Coordinating Board hereby certifies that an annual evaluation of this Community Transportation Coordinator was conducted consistent with the policies of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and all recommendations of that evaluation have been incorporated in this Service Plan. We further certify that the rates contained herein have been thoroughly reviewed, evaluated and approved. This Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan was reviewed in its entirety and approved by this Board at an official meeting held on:

Date

Coordinating Board Chairperson

Approved by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Date

Executive Director

**DESOTO COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED SERVICE PLAN**

MINIMUM CRITERIA

I. DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A. Introduction to the Service Area

1. Background of the TD Program.

The 1979 Florida Legislature passed the Transportation Services Act, Chapter 427, Florida Statutes, which called for the coordination at the County level of all Federal and State expenditures for the “transportation disadvantaged.” The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) is the agency authorized to oversee implementation of transportation service development plans for the transportation disadvantaged program in Florida.

2. Designation Date/History

In May 1981, the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) accepted the designation of Coordinated Community Transportation Provider for DeSoto, Highlands, and Hardee Counties. Prior to that date, CFRPC accepted the Local Planning Organization designation for the three counties.

The CFRPC administered the Transportation Disadvantaged Program in DeSoto County on a quasi-brokerage system. Every three years CFRPC requested proposals from transportation operators interested in contracting for services. Proposals were solicited from transportation operators nationwide. There was little competition for these contracts. Through March 1992 CFRPC awarded contracts to the same two operators. Fellowship Dining, a private non-profit agency provided congregate dining, and Florida Trails d.b.a. Annett Transportation, a private for-profit transportation company, provided all other transportation in DeSoto and the three county area.

In May 1991, the CFRPC decided not to continue as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the four counties, but remain the Official Planning Agency for transportation disadvantaged services in the future. The target date for achieving the shift of the CTC from the regional to local level was October 1, 1992. In early 1992 a formal selection process was initiated which culminated in the selection of Senior Friendship Center, Inc., a non-profit agency, in March 1993. The CTC role to transition from CFRPC to Senior Friendship Center, Inc was August 1, 1993.

In addition to the CTC changeover, the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners requested to takeover the official planning agency role for transportation disadvantaged planning.

This request was approved by the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission (now known as Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, CTD) and responsibilities transferred beginning October 1, 1993.

On October 2, 1996, Senior Friendship Center, Inc., notified the Planning Agency of their intent to withdraw as the CTC for DeSoto County. In January 1997, the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners issued a Request for Proposal for a Community transportation Coordinator. The Board received six letters of intent, however, only four entities responded. The highest ranked entity, *Intelitran*, made a presentation to the LCB prior to the final selection. Upon the LCBs recommendation *Intelitran* was recommended by the Board of County Commissioners and approved as the CTC by the CTD.

In the years of 2000, 2003, and again in 2008 a Request for Letters of Interest were issued with no response except for the current CTC (now doing business as Veolia Transportation Services) was recommended to continue as the coordinator and approved by the CTD.

3. Organization Chart:

Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Planning Agency – Peggy Waters, Social Services Manager
DeSoto County, Florida
201 E. Oak Street, Suite 202
Arcadia, FL 34266
(863) 993-4858

Local Coordinating Board – DeSoto County Board

Community Transportation Coordinator – Veolia Transportation Services,
Tim Banks, General Manager
1103 U.S. Highway 27 South
Sebring, FL 33870
(863)382-8469

4. Consistency Review of Other Plans

a. Local Government Comprehensive Plans

The DeSoto County Comprehensive Plan defining Goals, Objectives and Policies, adopted April 23, 1991, and amended August 25, 1992 and November 23, 1993 refers to transportation in the Traffic Circulation Element.

The primary goal identified is GOAL TO: Provide for a safe, efficient and economical traffic circulation system. [9J-5.007(3)(b)(1)].

Policy T1.10 addresses Transportation Disadvantaged by, "DeSoto County shall continue to monitor the need for special transportation services for the elderly and the handicapped residents of the county by continuing to participate in the coordinated Transportation Disadvantaged Program which serves the County.

- b. Regional Policy Plans
- c. Transit Development Plans
- d. Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged 5Yr/20Yr Plan

5. Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

In August of 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for users (SAFETEA-LU), reauthorizing the surface transportation act. SAFETEA-LU requires that the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan be developed through a local process that includes representatives from public and private transportation providers, human service agencies, interested parties, and the general public.

Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan – A Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

This Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 427, Florida Statutes; Rule 41-2, Florida Administrative Code and the guidelines provided by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. In addition, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires the development and adoption of a "Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan" (CPTHSTP) for recipients of FTA Section 5310 (Elderly and Persons with Disabilities), 5311(Rural Public Transportation), 5316 (Job Access/Reverse Commute) and 5317 (New Freedom) grant funding programs. The State of Florida has received concurrence from the Federal Transit Administration to allow the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan to fulfill this requirement. Consistent with the direction given by the State of Florida Department of Transportation, the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, and the guidelines issued by the Federal Transit Administration, this TSP has been prepared as a CPTHSTP. This plan was developed through a process that included representatives of public, private and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.

6. Local Coordinating Board Certification

This certification lists the members of the local board that have been appointed by the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners. This certification is signed by the Chairman of the Board, Juril O. Mansfield, April 24, 2012.

2012 – 2013 DeSoto County

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGES LOCAL COORDINATOR BOARD

AREA/ENTITY REPRESENTED	MEMBER NAME	ALTERNATE'S NAME	Term
Elected Official – DeSoto County-Chairman	James Selph		2010-2014
Dept. of Transportation	Julia Davis		Agency
Dept. of Children and Families	Patricia Higel	Gary Bordner	Agency
Public Education	Georgia Holmes	Daniel Dubbert	Agency
Vocational Rehabilitation	Cathy Parella	Patricia Napper	Agency
Veteran Services	Roger Bumgarner		2010-2013
Economically Disadvantaged	Raye Southwell		2011-2014
Elderly	Larry Kirsch, Sr		2010-2013
Disabled Citizen	Matt Arndts		2011-2014
Citizen Advocate – Vice Chairman	Karen Blanchette		2011-2014
Citizen Advocate/user	Lynn Castle		2011-2014
Children at Risk	Vacant		2010-2013
Dept. of Elderly Affairs	Suzanne Clarke	Marilyn Gregory	Agency
Private Transp. Industry	Dwain Hayes	Sandra Mansfield	2011-2014
Ag for Health Care Admin.	Joe Martinez	Karen Brooks	Agency
Reg. Workforce Dev. Board	Roger Hood	Lenora White	Agency
Local Medical Community	Mary Kay Burns	Penny Kurtz	2010-2013

B. COUNTY PROFILE/DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Service Area Description

DeSoto County is a rural inland county with 73% of the population located outside urban areas. The main population center is the City of Arcadia with a population of approximately 6,700. It is also the County seat. The county is serviced by a US Highway dividing the county from north to south and three state roads, one dividing the county from east to west and two originating in Arcadia and proceeding south and west respectively. There is no public transportation originating in or passing through DeSoto County. According to the Center for Urban Transportation Research statistics, forty-six percent of DeSoto County's population qualifies as transportation disadvantaged as defined in Chapter 427, FS.

2. Demographics

a. Land Use

DeSoto County has a land surface area of 636 square miles, and an estimated population of 32,000. Sixty percent (60%) of DeSoto County's land is covered by cattle ranches. Estimated 50,000-55,000 head generate \$70 million in annual sales. Citrus is largest industry, producing \$80 million. The County ranks 7th in statewide production of oranges, grapefruit, tangelos, temples, and tangerines.

b. Population/Composition

The County is largely rural in nature, with 72.8 percent of the population located outside urban areas. The City of Arcadia is the county seat with an estimated population of 6,687.

c. Employment

Larger employers within DeSoto County are DeSoto Correctional Institute, WalMart, DeSoto Memorial Hospital, DeSoto County, the City of Arcadia and numerous local growers and farmers. There are only two multi-business shopping centers, WalMart Shopping Plaza and Sweet Bay.

d. Major Trip Generators/Attractors

DeSoto County is a rural, low income county without major medical facilities, employment centers, or major service centers. There is one hospital, DeSoto Memorial Hospital. Typically, medical specialist must be found at larger out-of-county medical facilities. There is no public transportation services available. Some typical trip generators are:

Medical:

DeSoto Memorial Hospital - 900 N. Robert Avenue

DeSoto County Public Health Department - 34 S. Baldwin Avenue

Arcadia Podiatry - 414 N. Brevard Avenue

Arcadia Eye Clinic - 1010 N. Mills Avenue

Arcadia Internal Medicine Associates - 830 N. Mills Ave.
Arcadia Pediatrics - 1014 N. Mills Avenue
Family Care Medical Center - 1707 E. Oak Street
Arcadia Dialysis Center - 1341 E. Oak Street
Numerous private physicians through-out the city.

Social Service:

Arcadia Center for the Needy - 215 W. Oak Street
Catholic Charities of DeSoto County - 1210 E. Oak Street
DeSoto County Community Service - 201 E. Oak Street
Family Service Center - 310 W. Whidden Street
Department of Children and Family Services - 804 N. Mills Avenue
Senior Friendship Center, Inc. - 23 N. Polk Avenue
Vocational Rehabilitation - 310 W. Whidden Street

Shopping Centers:

Sweet Bay Supermarket - 1737 E. Oak Street
Cardenas Supermarket - 210 W. Magnolia Street
Wal-Mart Supercenter - 2725 SE Highway 70
Winn Dixie Store - 1330 E. Oak Street

e. Inventory of Available Transportation Operators

Within DeSoto County there are six agency's providing private for-profit transportation, JJ Transport, Hayes Medical Transport, and Peace River Cab, Zamora's Taxi, DMP Taxi, Gray's Taxi. Two of these operators have contracted with the CTC to provide agency (sponsored) and transportation disadvantaged service to the public. All operators provide 24-hour, seven days a week service.

C. SERVICE ANALYSIS

1. Forecasts of Transportation Disadvantaged Population.

In accordance with the statistics provided by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged the trip demand increases by a 7-8% rate each five years from 1995 through 2020. From a transportation demand figure of 46,037 in 1995, to 49,853 in 2000, and 54,130 in 2005. These figures will be readdressed in the fiscal year 2011 and updated in this Plan.

2. Needs Estimation

Understanding the existing demand and the need for additional transportation services plays a vital role in transportation planning in a number of ways. One, it allows agencies and governments to generate long range plans. Two, an accurate evaluation can be made of the percentage of the transportation needs currently being met in the service area. For example, if the existing transportation services are only meeting 40% of the need, then avenues could be explored to increase the cost-effective use of resources or to increase resources. Three, comparisons can be made between what services are currently available and services needed.

Are there certain types of trips that are not currently provided? Is there more need among certain types of trips that are not currently provided? Is there more need among certain transportation disadvantaged groups than others? How will the monies available from the Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged enhance the coordinated system.

3. Barriers to Coordination.

Major barriers to implementing a coordinated transportation disadvantaged system include:

Geographical Location.

- Problems associated with being primarily a rural area of the state, such as limited access to services, isolation, fluctuating populations due to migrants and winter residents, limited resources, etc.

- creates difficulty in trip scheduling and maximizing use of vehicles.

Lack of Public Transportation.

- no public transportation system in DeSoto County.

Lack of Services.

- health care and social services tend to be concentrated in Arcadia while the majority of residents live in unincorporated areas. The full range of medical and other services are not available within the county, therefore, people must be transported outside of the service area.

Demographics.

- demographic composition of the county, with regard to poverty levels, education levels, age, migrants/winter visitors ("snowbirds"), etc. influence service provision.

Vehicle Insurance.

- unreasonable insurance rates to transport multiple client groups versus being a single service provider for one group

Lack of Funding.

- difficulty in raising local match monies to access state and federal transportation funds.

Gaps in Existing Services and Improvement Areas.

This segment deals with key issues to be addressed in order to improve services the transportation disadvantaged of DeSoto County. Some can be resolved with relative ease, while others require long term changes. The first step of implementing change is to identify main problem areas. They are:

Unmet Need for Transportation Service.

Funding shortfalls.

Inadequate funding adversely affects both sponsored and non-sponsored provision of service. Sponsoring agencies who are funded by state and federal funds have witnessed a decrease in funding, whether from actual cutbacks or from budgets that have remained the same while inflation increased. The availability of non-sponsored trip dollars hinges upon local contributions and fare box collections. The budgeted amount will lever only about half of the available state TD Trust Trip dollars.

D. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.

MISSION: To provide safe, effective, cost efficient, quality transportation service to the transportation disadvantaged population of DeSoto County. To enhance mobility, uniformity and coordination of transportation services for DeSoto County's transportation disadvantaged in conformity with applicable law.

GOALS:

GOAL 1: Provide transportation programs that are consumer-oriented and effectively encourage the use of multiple occupancy vehicles rather than single occupancy vehicles

Successful attainment of this objective will result in a more efficient use of all vehicles in the service area. Consumer-oriented services are those services which are designed specifically to meet the needs and desires of potential users. This requires an on-going effort to continually improve the services to better serve the needs of the consumer.

Vehicles currently in use by the transportation operators are primarily lift-equipped vans and sedans. All vehicles purchased through the Florida Vehicle Procurement Program will be lift-equipped vehicles that promote multiple ridership.

GOAL 2: Promote cost and service efficiency by designing services that are based directly on the demand, with consideration given to the efficient routing, scheduling and operating procedures.

Not only must scarce transportation resources be coordinated to provide appropriate service to the consumer, but effort should be taken to influence other activities which influence transit usage, such as medical appointments, employment schedules, and others.

All routes are designed to multi-load passengers creating efficient, on-time service delivery, including out of county trips that strive to coordinate passengers going to like destinations.

GOAL 3: Stimulate use of private funds to reduce reliance on public subsidies.

The service area has a heritage of active, private enterprise which continues today. Nonetheless, if passenger transportation is to be improved and expanded, it is apparent that public expenditures will be necessary. A comprehensive and successful transportation program, designed to accommodate the variety of needs in the county necessitates cooperation between

public and private sectors. This goal can be seen as a desire to use public monies judiciously, and whenever possible to use them to stimulate private expenditures.

It is however, in this time of budget reductions and constraints, becoming more and more difficult to obtain funding which would prevent prioritization and trip denials. The alternative is to increase schedule efficiency, increasing passenger load factors and passenger trips per hour and decreasing the cost per passenger mile.

GOAL 4: Use the lowest cost alternative where two services equally meet public needs.

Given the demand for the limited resources in the county, it is imperative that the most cost-effective alternatives be selected. An important consideration in determining the cost of services involves the long-term implications of the decision. The lowest initial cost may not in fact provide the best alternative on the life-cycle cost basis. The use of existing facilities and resources should be consolidated to provide the highest level of service to the greatest number of people.

All operators used in the DeSoto County Coordinated System were competitively procured and are paid under the same rate structure. These rates have remained stable for the last three years, but due to the recent increases in fuel and insurance, the rates were increased this year.

GOAL 5: Promote a variety of services to serve the diversity of user needs.

The transportation needs of citizens of DeSoto County are diverse and require a variety of services to meet their needs. Because of such factors as the low demand-density and large geographical area, some non-traditional transportation services may be designed which are specific to the needs of certain target groups, such as the elderly, handicapped, and other transportation disadvantaged groups. In many cases, existing services will be available and simply need to be matched to the demand. Vehicles are available for ambulatory, wheelchair, and stretcher passengers. The DeSoto school buses are used for standing order group trips at a special group rate.

OBJECTIVE: To provide the greatest number of units of service in the most cost efficient manner possible while utilizing the most modern cost-effective procedures possible.

ACTION OBJECTIVES:

- A. Improve internal communications.
- B. Facilitate the development of Board activities and training.

OBJECTIVE: To design service to best address local transit demands, utilize vehicles efficiently, encourage ridership and achieve minimum costs through a combination of routing schemes, vehicles, and service hours.

ACTION OBJECTIVE:

A. Establish active planning process involving Board, staff and appropriate community representatives.

OBJECTIVES: To encourage, generate and maintain system support through a continuous marketing campaign while overcoming an image that the service is only for certain groups of riders.

ACTION OBJECTIVE:

A. Improve efficiency and effectiveness of marketing efforts by preparing a comprehensive plan and comprehensive data collection process.

B. To increase public awareness and create a positive community image and to increase general public utilization of services by attracting a reasonable percentage of residents of the region who are part of the latent transportation demand category.

C. Advertise, through public service announcements and newspaper articles the public transportation system in DeSoto County. Have Local Coordinating Board members advise their constituents of the service available and encourage the use of the system.

E. Implementation Plan

1. 5-Year Transportation Disadvantaged Improve Program

Veolia provides service through contracts with carriers and does not, therefore, purchase vehicles. However, the Board of County Commissioners, as a government entity, is entitled to purchase vehicles through the FTA Section 5310 program purchased three (3) new vehicles in 2005 and intends to purchase more new vehicles within the next five years, as funds become available.

2. Implementation Schedule

To determined during the budget process each fiscal year.

Part II

Service Plan Component

A. Operations Element

1. Types, Hours, and Days of Service.

All service is door to door. Ambulatory and wheelchair service is offered countywide. Drivers are not permitted to assist persons in wheelchairs or stretchers up or down more than one step. In addition to managing paratransit service, Veolia Transportation Services, schedules and manages non-emergency stretcher service. Requests for transportation may be made by calling Veolia Transportation Services. There are five phone lines available to accept reservations, also three administrative lines, and a fax line. No fax or telephone requests will be accepted after 5:00 pm.

Service hours for the coordinated system are 5:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday through Friday. There is limited service on weekends with no regularly scheduled transportation on Sundays or holidays. Special arrangements can be made for trips outside of these hours of operation. Though same day service can sometimes be provided on an emergency basis, users are generally required to schedule service by 2:00 pm three (3) business days (excluding weekends and holidays) prior to the requested trip date. Weekend trips and trips for the following Monday should be scheduled on the preceding Thursday. Standing orders are encouraged for regularly scheduled Medicaid trips. Return trips must also be scheduled in advance. Passengers are advised to be ready for pickup one hour before their scheduled time.

2. Accessing Services, including LCB Policies such as Eligibility, Prioritization, and Other Procedures

The Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) maintains an advanced telephone system with toll-free access for all users of the service. The numbers for the CTC reservations system and Administration are:

800/694-6566 Desoto County Reservations/Customer Service
863/993-4858 Desoto County Human Services
800/675-2125 Facsimile

Passengers can be assured timely service if:

- Return trips are scheduled in advance. If the passenger does not know the return time or is not ready at the scheduled return time, a vehicle will be dispatched upon notification; however, the wait for the dispatched vehicle can be up to two hours. When scheduling

medical appointments, return times should be verified by the doctor's office before being scheduled.

- As a courtesy to others, passengers should be ready at least one hour prior to the scheduled appointment time. Longer trips will require earlier pickup times. Drivers will wait no more than five minutes for a passenger.
- Passengers must cancel a requested trip no later than one hour before the scheduled pickup time preferably 24 hours in advance of a trip. Trips are canceled by calling the CTC.
- Failure to cancel a trip will be assessed as a no-show. A door hanger indicating the time the vehicle arrived, the vehicle number, and the driver's name may be left for the passenger. The passenger will be assessed a no-show.
- When scheduling trips, passengers should be specific about the type of service required (i.e., wheelchair, non-emergency stretcher service, etc.) and the destination (i.e., correct destination name, street address, suite number, and telephone number).

Service is door-to-door. Drivers are to assist passengers from the door of the trip origin to the door of the trip destination. The driver should not be expected to assist passengers to specific offices, departments, or floors within large medical facilities and cannot provide personal attendant care. Confused passengers or those unable to care for themselves must be accompanied by an attendant or escort.

a. Eligibility

Non-sponsored trips are funded by a Trip/Equipment Grant from the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission. A local match of 10% will be required (generated through the farebox and local sources). With concurrence from the Desoto County Transportation Board, these funds will continue to be allocated on a daily basis with an equal allocation for each day (Monday to Friday). No TD trips can be scheduled once the daily cap is reached. This service is offered only to those persons who are transportation disadvantaged as defined by Chapter 427, Florida Statutes and persons who meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this service plan. Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund trips cannot be subsidized by a funding agency.

b. Prioritization

TD trips are scheduled strictly on a first-come, first-served basis in accordance with prioritization policies established by the local coordinating boards indicated below.

DESOTO COUNTY LCB PRIORITIZATION POLICY FOR NON-SPONSORED TRIPS BY TRIP PURPOSE

In an effort to reduce ridership demands on the current Transportation Disadvantaged system because of a lack of funding, a prioritized ridership policy for trips funded through the TD Trust

Fund “Non-Sponsored Trip/Equipment Grant”, has been developed.

Although prioritizing non-sponsored trips based solely on trip purpose seems to be a rational solution to providing transportation to those who most need it and avoiding gross misuse of the system, it does allow for maximum system efficiency or coordination of trips. By scheduling most of the trip routes around medical and life sustaining trips and then filling in the empty seats with shopping or recreational trips whose origins and destinations are along the same routes, maximum coordination and efficiency can be obtained. The goal of the program is to provide the most riders with the most number of trips while utilizing the least amount of mileage. However, the importance of all types of trips in the TD system cannot be overlooked.

The prioritization procedure, which emphasizes the necessity of carrying out the medical and other life sustaining trips on a timely basis without excluding work, recreational, or shopping trips, is followed on a daily basis. The Coordinator shall, to the maximum extent feasible, fulfill the medical and life sustaining trips without significant delay and place less significance on the shopping and recreational trips while maintaining maximum system efficiency. This discretionary policy allows the Coordinator more flexibility in coordinating trips while acknowledging the LCB’s commitment to ensuring that the most essential trips are provided. The Coordinator shall place the highest priority on the following trips in the appropriate order:

1. Medical
2. Grocery Shopping (life sustaining only)
3. Employment
4. Education
5. Personal Business (bank, post office, etc.)
6. Recreational (includes non-life sustaining shopping)

Advance Reservation Requirements:

There is a three (3) business day (excluding weekends and holidays) advance notice requirement for all trips scheduled within the coordinated system, except under special circumstances.

Reservation Service:

The name(s) and address(s) of the passenger(s) to be transported are placed with the CTC by 2:00 pm three (3) business days before the day of travel.

Subscription Service:

The purchaser or passenger submits a request for subscription service no later than 2:00 pm three (3) business days before the service is to start.

The purchaser will provide the CTC with timely revisions to the subscription.

Demand Response Service:

The name(s) and address(s) of the passenger(s) to be transported are placed with the CTC by

2:00 pm three (3) business days before the day of travel.

Will call trips and call back trips are discouraged. Demand response trips are trips scheduled on the day of service. There are very few opportunities for this type of trip.

Non-Emergency Medical (Stretcher) Service:

The name(s) and address(s) of the passenger(s) to be transported are placed with the CTC at least two hours before the required time of travel.

DESOTO COUNTY PASSENGER FARE POLICY

The Local Coordinating Board of Desoto County approved the Passenger Fare Policy on May 29, 2002.

The policy covers all non-sponsored passengers. Rates are:

- Local in-county trips - \$1.50 each way
- Out of county trips up to 25 miles \$6.00 round trip
- Out of county trips up to 50 miles \$8.00 round trip
- Out of county trips over 50 miles \$11.00 round trip

- On the go in, or first trip from home to a destination, passengers required to pay a fare will not be transported if they refuse to pay the appropriate fare. On the return trip passengers will be transported even if they refuse to pay. However, they will be required to pay any amount not paid prior to being transported again.
- 10% of passengers should be expected to have difficulty paying any fare and should therefore be exempt. Further, Veolia Transportation Services will be allowed to grant passengers an exempt status.
- Passenger co-pay fares were started in 1998.

The above guidelines were approved by the Local Coordinating Board of Desoto County and were effective July 1, 2002.

General Public Transportation

The Community Transportation System is open to the general public through the receipt of Federal Transit Administration 5311 Operating grant funds. The FTA requires that trips paid for with these funds be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis. The general public may access the system by calling the Community Transportation Coordinator's local access number or toll-free number. Once the funds for the month have been depleted, the general public may only access the system by personally paying the fully allocated cost per trip if there is vehicle seating/capacity for the trip request. Those persons who meet eligibility for trip requests under

the transportation disadvantaged trip eligibility/trip prioritization policy will be processed through that funding source.

Public Awareness of Non-Sponsored Funds

Brochures describing the coordinated transportation system briefly discussing eligibility criteria and the scope of the services provided have been distributed to social service agencies within the designated area. Veolia meets with and will continue to meet with social service agencies' staff and advocacy groups, to ensure that those individuals eligible for service use it.

c. Other Procedures

1. Driver Training

New driver certification and training procedures have been developed by Veolia Transportation Services. All drivers have been issued a System Safety Program Plan Manual. New drivers receive the Manual upon their hiring. They are required to sign for the Manual and a copy of the receipt is enclosed in their permanent record. Drivers are required to read the manual and, as part of an initial training.

Every new driver is required to complete an initial training administered by the carrier. Before entering service, new drivers are required to complete the initial training, review the SSPP manual. In addition to a review of the SSPP Manual, the training includes an introduction to the CTC organizational structure, an outline of the relevant parts of Chapter 427, F.S., instruction about how to read a driver manifest, the basic rules and regulations and preliminary passenger assistance training.

Drivers are also given passenger assistance and defensive driver training provided by the carrier during their first 30 days of employment. Passenger assistance training is vitally important as it instructs the driver in how to offer more appropriate services to disabled passengers and can significantly reduce the number of incidents that occur on vehicles. In addition, it addresses the concerns of the disabled and their advocacy groups. Veolia Transportation Services uses Passenger Assistance Training developed by the University of Wisconsin's Office of Statewide Transportation Program in the provision of training.

Defensive driver training consists of the National Safety Council and University of Wisconsin defensive driver modules and includes specialized training for minibus operators. All drivers in the coordinated system should attend the annual training provided by the Community Transportation Coordinator and every two years thereafter or provide a carrier training equal or better that what is provided by Veolia. The training must be approved by Veolia. Drivers must also have a good driving record with no more than five points in the last two years. Drivers are required to receive the following training:

1. Defensive Driving
2. Passenger Assistance/Sensitivity

All passenger assistance and defensive driving training is conducted by the Community Transportation Coordinator or the carrier having trained staff. Written tests for these courses have been developed. Failure to pass the written tests disqualifies a driver from operating a system vehicle until a passing grade is achieved.

For safety reasons, drivers may not take passengers in wheelchairs or stretchers up or down more than one step. All passengers must be secured with seat belts or wheelchair tie-downs as appropriate. Three and four wheeled scooters may be transported, but because they are difficult to secure, once aboard, the passenger is requested to transfer to a regular seat.

2. Emergency, Accident, and Delay Procedures

The CTC, through contractual agreements with carriers and in the System Safety Program Plan (SSPP) establishes policies for the handling of emergencies, accidents, and delays.

Carriers are required to notify the CTC and appropriate emergency personnel immediately if an emergency, accident, or delay occurs. Appropriate emergency personnel can include police, fire, or ambulance. The carrier must solicit appropriate medical or emergency assistance, if an accident or other emergency occurs. The CTC must also be notified of schedule delays. The carrier must also submit a written accident or incident report and management analysis, within 24 hours.

In the event of an accident, the carrier must follow up with a written accident report and management analysis within 24 hours. Drug and alcohol testing is required in the event of bodily injury or property damage in excess of U.S. DOT and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines. To handle delays, each carrier is required to have one back-up vehicle for every six vehicles in service. If delays occur, the CTC may reassign trips to other service providers. If an extended delay results, the passenger will be notified and a satisfactory resolution will be reached.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC, Veolia Transportation Services) and the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission requires the CTC to develop and implement an SSPP. The SSPP Certificate of Compliance, as required by Rule Chapter 14-90, Florida Administrative Code, Equipment and Operational Safety Standards Governing Public Sector Bus Transit Systems and is updated annually. In accordance with this rule, the plan assures compliance with the minimum standards established and includes safety considerations and guidelines for the following:

1. Carrier and Veolia Management
2. Vehicles and Equipment
3. Operational functions
4. Driving requirements
5. Maintenance
6. Equipment for transporting wheelchairs
7. Training

8. Federal, State, and Local regulations, ordinances or laws
9. Private contracted service provider

The Safety System Program Plan (SSPP) outlines driver training requirements and vehicle inspection requirements. Required safety equipment for all vehicles is:

- Seatbelts
- Wheel chair securement systems and restraining devices (lap type body belts)
- Dry chemical fire extinguishers (tagged and inspected annually)
- First aid kits
- Two-way radios or equivalent real-time communications devices
- Three Safety Triangles for disable vehicles.
- Spill kits and cleanup supplies.
- Driver and vehicle signage.

The SSPP limits the number of consecutive hours a driver can work, requires defensive driving and passenger assistance/sensitivity training for all drivers. It further requires all subcontracted service providers be certified before providing service in the coordinated transportation system and requires vehicles to undergo daily pre-trip safety inspections and annual vehicle inspections by a certified mechanic. The SSPP also includes driver and accident policies.

Extensive record keeping by the Community Transportation Coordinator and the individual subcontractors is also required. Records kept include personnel data, operational reports, dispatching logs, driver trip sheets and reports of accidents, incidents, and service delays.

Insurance Requirements:

Carriers under contract to Veolia are required to carry a minimum of \$1,000,000 in single limit auto liability insurance for dedicated vehicles and \$1,000,000 single limit for taxis providing services in the coordinated system. Carriers must also maintain \$1,000,000 in general liability coverage and workmen's compensation insurance at the statutory limits.

3. Transportation Operators and Coordination Contracts

Veolia Transportation Services, the CTC, enters into contracts with transportation operators approved by the Desoto County LCB. Veolia Transportation Services makes no guarantee as to the total number of vehicles, hours, or trips that a transportation operator will receive. These contracts may be negotiated on a yearly basis if the service provided has been adequate and the contract allows for annual rate changes. The CTC, however, is not bound to renewal and may re-bid services at the end of any contract year.

The rate paid to transportation operators is by trip and is covered in the carrier contract.

Each vehicle shall have the following lettering:

“COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION” in royal blue or black block letters two (2) inches in height, on the rear and or both sides of the vehicle. “PHONE 1-800-694-6566” painted in two (2) inch high blue or black block letters directly beneath the COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION sign.

“Operated by (insert carrier name) Transportation” in blue or black block letters, no more than two (2) inches in height on the rear quarter of each of the two long sides of the vehicle.

“Complaints or Comments? Call 1-800-694-6566 or 800-983-2435” shall be painted in one (1) inch high blue or black block letters inside each vehicle above the windshield. The drivers name must be placed inside the vehicle and be visible from the passenger locations.

Each vehicle shall have a vehicle number unique to it, painted in two (2) inch high blue or black block letters upon the side of the vehicle. Each number may have a letter prefix as assigned by Veolia to identify the CARRIER.

The signs may be magnetic but must be displayed when coming or going to a clients pick up as well as when a client is on board.

4. Public Transit Utilization

Mass transit is not available in Desoto County.

5. School Bus Utilization

School buses were utilized in the coordinated system until September 2008.

6. Current Vehicle Inventory

See Attachment “1”

7. System Safety Program Plan Certificate of Compliance

See Attachment “2”.

8. Inter-county Services

Transportation is provided to sponsoring agency-approved destinations outside of the service area. All out of service area trips are to be for morning scheduled appointments only. Clients will be transported to the closest medical facility or medical specialist to their home. Out of service area trips are scheduled for specific days of the week. (Please contact the Community Transportation Coordinator for specific schedules.) Clients will be grouped with other clients

who have appointments at the same or nearby facility, regardless of appointment times. Requests for trips out of the service area must be made by 2:00 p.m. at least three (3) business days (excluding weekends and holidays) prior to the requested trip date.

9. Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Plan

See Attachment “3”.

10. Marketing

Brochures describing the coordinated transportation system briefly discussing eligibility criteria and the scope of the services provided have been distributed to social service agencies within the designated area. Veolia is meeting and will continue to meet with social service agencies’ staff and advocacy groups, to ensure that those individuals eligible for services use it.

Transportation is offered to the general public on a first-come, first-served basis. (Please read Public Transportation section of this service plan for the explanation of how to access service.)

11. Acceptable Alternatives

One coordination contact has been executed with an agency who has provided fully-allocated cost comparisons between providing their own service and purchasing transportation through the coordinated system. Other agencies are currently using state and federal funds to provide or purchase transportation for their clients without having proven fully-allocated costs and without a coordination contract in place; thereby falling into non-compliance with Rule 41-2.015.

A Coordination contract has been executed with Coastal Behavioral Recovery.

The DeSoto County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board developed a system standard for consideration of coordination contracts and/or requests by sponsoring agencies to provide transportation services to their clients outside of the coordinated system. This process is outlined in the Quality Assurance section of the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP). A copy of this standard may be obtained by contacting Veolia Transportation Services at the numbers listed at the beginning of this service plan.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The DeSoto County LCB utilizes the CTD evaluation workbook to evaluate the CTC. In addition, the following system standards have been developed based on service effectiveness, cost efficiency and effectiveness, vehicle utilization, service availability, reliability, and safety and training.

A. Service Standards

1. Drug and alcohol policy

Commission Standard

Testing for safety sensitive job positions within the coordinated system regarding pre-employment, randomization, post-accident, and reasonable suspicion as required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal transit Administration (FTA).

CTC Policy

All safety sensitive job positions will comply with the pre-employment, randomization, post-accident, and reasonable suspicion testing requirements of the Federal Transit Administration.

2. Driver Identification

Commission Standard

Drivers for paratransit services, including coordination contractors, shall be required to announce and identify themselves by name and company in a manner that is conducive to communications with the specific passenger, upon pickup of each rider, group of riders, or representative, guardian, or associate of the rider, except in situations where the driver regularly transports the rider on a recurring basis. Each driver must have photo identification that is in view of the passenger. Name patches, inscriptions or badges that affix to driver clothing are acceptable. For transit services, the driver photo identification shall be in a conspicuous location in the vehicle.

CTC Policy

Drivers are required to announce and identify themselves by name and company in a manner that is conducive to communications with specific passengers, upon pickup except in situations where the driver regularly transports the rider on a recurring basis. All drivers shall have a name badge displayed at all times when transporting passengers. The drivers name must be displayed inside the vehicle in clear view of all passengers.

3. Adequate Seating

Commission Policy

Adequate seating for paratransit services shall be provided to each rider and escort, child, or personal care attendant, and no more passengers than the registered passenger seating capacity shall be scheduled or transported in a vehicle at any time. For transit services provided by transit vehicles, adequate seating or standing space will be provided to each rider and escort, child, or personal care attendant, and no more passengers than the registered passenger seating or standing capacity shall be scheduled or transported in a vehicle at any time.

CTC Policy

Vehicle seating does not exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity.

4. **Passenger Boarding/Loading Assistance/Transfer**

Commission Standard

The paratransit driver shall provide the passenger with boarding assistance, if necessary or requested, to the seating portion of the vehicle. The boarding assistance shall include opening the vehicle door, fastening the seat belt or utilization of wheelchair securement devices, storage of mobility assistive devices, and closing the vehicle door. In door-through-door paratransit service categories, the driver shall also be required to open and close doors to buildings, except in situations in which assistance in opening/closing building doors would not be safe for passengers remaining on the vehicle. Assisted access must be in a dignified manner. Drivers may not assist wheelchair up or down more than one step, unless it can be performed safely as determined by the passenger, guardian, and driver.

CTC Policy

All drivers will provide the passenger with boarding assistance, if necessary or requested, to the seating portion of the vehicle. Boarding assistance shall include holding hands, or allowing the passenger to hold an arm; opening the vehicle door, fastening the seat belt or utilization of wheelchair securement devices, storage of mobility assistive devices, and closing the vehicle door. Passengers may transfer from their mobility device to regular vehicle seating but only with assistance as outlined above. Under no circumstances shall the driver lift the passenger from their mobility device to regular seating (or vice versa). Drivers may not assist wheelchairs or stretchers up or down more than one step, unless it can be performed safely as determined by the passenger or guardian, and driver.

5. **Smoking, Eating and Drinking Policy**

Commission Standard

Smoking is prohibited in any vehicle. Requirements for drinking and eating on board the vehicle will be addressed in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

No smoking is allowed on any vehicle in the transportation system. Eating and drinking on board the vehicle is not allowed.

6. **Rider Property**

Commission Standard

Passenger property that can be carried by the passenger and/or driver in one trip and can safely be stowed on the vehicle shall be allowed to be transported with the passenger at no additional charge. Additional requirements may be negotiated for carrying and loading rider property beyond this amount. Passenger property does not include wheelchairs, child seats, stretchers, secured oxygen, personal assistive devices, or intravenous devices.

CTC Policy

Passengers shall be allowed to have two pieces of personal property which they can place in their lap or stow under their seat. Passengers must be able to independently carry all items brought onto the vehicle. Passenger property does not include wheelchairs, child seats, stretchers, secured oxygen, personal assistive devices, or intravenous devices.

7. **Child Restraints**

Commission Standard

Use of child restraint devices shall be determined locally as to their responsibility and cost of such device in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

All passengers 8 years and under are required to use a child restraint device unless they are 40+ pounds and or over 4' 9" and can fit properly into a vehicle seat belt. All Florida State child restraint requirements are to be met by the parent or guardian. All state approved device's must be provided by the passenger.

8. **Toll-free Phone Number**

Commission Standard

A local toll-free phone number for complaints or grievances shall be posted inside the vehicle. The local complaint process shall be outlined as a section in the local Service Plan including, advising the dissatisfied person about the Commission's Ombudsman Program as a step within the process as approved by the Local Coordinating Board.

CTC Policy

A local toll free phone number and the state ombudsman number shall be posted inside all vehicles within the coordinated system.

9. **Escorts and Children**

Commission Standard

An escort of a passenger and dependent children are to be transported as locally negotiated and identified in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

Children 17 or younger must be accompanied by an escort.

Passengers unable to care for themselves must be attended to by an attendant. Escorts and attendants must be at least 18 years of age and provided by the passenger. The escort must be able to provide the necessary assistance to the passenger. Escorts are transported at the regular rate.

10. **Vehicle Transfer Points**

Commission Standard

Vehicle transfer points shall provide shelter, security, and safety of passengers.

CTC Policy

Vehicle transfer points shall be located in a safe, secured place that

provides shelter.

11. **Passenger/Trip Data**

Commission Standard

Passenger/trip data base must be maintained or accessible by the Community Transportation Coordinator on each rider being transported within the system.

CTC Policy

For each passenger transported within the coordinated system, the CTC collects the passenger's name, address, telephone number, funding source(s) eligibility, and other special requirements in a database. The passenger must provide the complete destination address, phone number, and times for the appointment and return time.

12. **Pick-up Windows**

Commission Standard

None, requires that a local policy be developed.

CTC Policy for In Service Area Trips:

There is a 30-minute pick up window. The passenger should expect the vehicle to pick them up 15 minutes before, to 15 minutes after their scheduled pick up time. There is a 30 minute arrival window. The passenger should expect the vehicle to drop them off at their destination 15 minutes before to 15 minutes after their scheduled arrival time. The 15 minutes after scheduled arrival time is calculated to allow a passenger to arrive in time for appointments.

CTC Policy for Out of Service Area Trips

Out of service area trips are scheduled on specific days. (Please contact the Community Transportation Coordinator for specific schedules.)

Clients will be transported for morning medical appointments only. Afternoon appointments will only be provided under special circumstances. Clients will be grouped for out of service area trips regardless of appointment times.

13. **On-time Performance**

Commission Standard

None, requires that a local policy be developed.

CTC Policy

The CTC will have an 85% on-time pick up performance standard for all completed trips. The CTC will have an 85% on-time arrival time performance standard for all completed trips.

14. **Advance Reservation Requirements**

Commission Standard

None, requires that a local policy be developed.

CTC Policy

Passengers are generally required to place reservations three (3)

business Days (excluding weekends and holidays) in advance. Exceptions are sometimes made for “urgent” trips and hospital discharges.

15. **No-Show Policy**

Commission Standard

The Community Transportation Coordinator and the Local Coordinating Board shall jointly develop a policy on passenger no shows. Assessing fines to passengers for no shows is acceptable but such policy and process shall be identified in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

Community Transportation clients should notify the Coordinator when they need to cancel a trip as soon as possible. If the client does not cancel at least 24 hours in advance of a scheduled trip, then the client is classified as a no-show. Cancellations at the door will also be considered a no-show. No-shows occur when the rider is not ready, refuses their ride, or is not at home when the driver arrives. If three no-shows accumulate in a 60-day period, a 30-day suspension will result. If another occurrence happens the suspension will be extended to 45 days. After the third infraction of three no-shows, the suspension is for 60 days.

The following local toll-free phone number is accessible for scheduling and canceling trips: 1-800-694-6566

16. **Public Transit Ridership**

Commission Standard

Rule 41-2.012(5)(b) FAC. “...as part of the Coordinator’s performance, the local Coordinating Board shall also set an annual percentage goal increase for the number of trips provided within the system for ridership on public transit, where applicable. In areas where the public transit is not being utilized, the Local Coordinating Board shall set an annual percentage of the number of trips to be provided on public transit.”

CTC Policy

Not applicable.

17. **Out of Service Area Trips**

Commission Standard

Out of service area trips shall be provided when determined locally and approved by the local Coordinating Board, except in instances where local ordinances prohibit such trips.

CTC Policy

Transportation is provided to social service agency clients (sponsored) only. Every effort will be made to schedule medical or other appointments with facilities within the service area, regardless of funding source. When alternative medical facilities are not available, clients shall schedule morning appointments. Out of service area trips are scheduled on specific days. (Please contact the Community

Transportation Coordinator for specific schedules.) Clients will be grouped with other clients who have appointments at the same or different facility, regardless of appointment times.

18. **Vehicle Cleanliness**

Commission Standard

Interior of all vehicles shall be free from dirt, grime, oil, trash, torn upholstery, damaged or broken seats, protruding metal or other objects or materials which could soil items placed in the vehicle or provide discomfort for the passenger.

CTC Policy

The interior of all vehicles will be free from dirt, grime, oil, trash, torn upholstery, damaged or broken seats, protruding metal or other objects or materials which could soil items placed in the vehicle or provide discomfort for the passenger.

Vehicle exteriors shall be washed at least once per week in all seasons. Vehicle interiors shall be swept and cleaned up each day and thoroughly cleaned disinfected (scrubbed) at least once per week.

19. **Billing/Invoicing Requirements**

Commission Standard

Billing/invoicing requirements of the Community Transportation Coordinator to subcontractors shall be determined locally by the local Coordinating Board and provided in the local Service Plan. All bills shall be paid to subcontractors within 15 calendar days after receipt of said payment by the Community Transportation Coordinator except in instances where the Community Coordinator is a non-governmental entity.

CTC Policy

The CTC reimburses carriers from funds received from funding agencies on the 1st and 15th of each month. If the CTC, without reasonable cause, fails to make payments to the subcontractors and suppliers within seven (7) working days after the receipt by the CTC of full or partial payment from the CTD, the CTC shall pay to the subcontractors and suppliers a penalty in the amount of one-half of one percent of the amount due, per day, from the expiration of the period allowed herein for payment. (F.S. 2000/ Ch 287/Part 1/287.0585 Late payments by contractors to subcontractors and suppliers; penalty.)

20. **Two-way Communications**

Commission Standard

All vehicles ordered or put into service after adoption of this section of the Rule, and providing service within the coordinated system, shall be equipped with two-way communications in good working order and be audible to the driver at all times to the base. All vehicles that are not equipped with two-way communications shall have two years to be in compliance after May 1, 1996.

CTC Policy

All vehicles have two-way radios or Nextel radios in good working order and are audible to the driver at all times when in the service area.

21. **Electronic Device Policy**

Commission Standard

None

CTC Policy

When driving any motor vehicle on company business, the use of cellular telephones, other personal communications and electronic devices is limited to the following situations:

(a)Carrier Employees: The use of cellular phones and other personal communication and electronic devices while operating a vehicle on company business is prohibited. Cellular phones or other personal communication devices must be powered off at all times except when the vehicle is in park and the engine turned off.

(b)Managers and Road Supervisors: Cellular phones and other communication devices may not be used for any purpose other than for work-related purposes, and then only to the minimum extent necessary to communicate. No personal use of such devices behind the wheel of a vehicle is permitted. When the use of a cell phone or other device presents a risk to safe driving, use of the device is not permitted. Cellular phone use while operating a motor vehicle is prohibited in any jurisdiction that prohibits said use by law.

Drivers are required to reference the full policy regarding the use of electronic devices while operating a vehicle in the system. Failure to comply with this policy may result in termination of employment.

22. **First Aid**

Commission Standard

First Aid policy shall be determined locally and provided in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

Drivers are not required to be trained in First Aid.

23. **Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)**

Commission Standard

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation policy shall be determined locally and provided in the local Service Plan.

CTC Policy

Drivers are required to be trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation techniques.

24. **Driver Criminal Background Screening**

Commission Standard

None. Identified only in the Commission Standards Manual, adopted June 1996.

CTC Policy

All drivers in the coordinated system have a favorable Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) background check.

25. **Accidents**

Commission Standard

None. Identified in the Commission Standards Manual adopted June 1996.

CTC Policy

The standard for accidents will be 1.2, or less, accidents per 100,000 miles for the evaluation period.

26. **Road Calls**

Commission Standard

None. Identified in the Commission Standards Manual adopted June 1996.

CTC Policy

The standard for road calls will be an average of 10,000 miles, or more, between each road call. (e.g., the system-wide total, not each individual vehicle.)

27. **Call Hold Time**

Commission Standard

None. Identified in the Commission Standards Manual adopted June 1996.

CTC Policy

The customer should not be put on hold for more than 3 minutes on average. As a standard, 95% of all incoming calls will be completed within 3 minutes. A report will be prepared to evaluate this standard.

28. **Insurance**

Commission Standard

The Community Transportation Coordinator shall ensure compliance with the minimum liability insurance requirement of \$100,000 per person and \$200,000 per incident, which are comparable to 768.38(5), Florida Statutes, limits, for all transportation services purchased or provided for the transportation disadvantaged. Any liability insurance coverage in excess of \$1 million per incident must be approved by the Commission before it is included in a Memorandum of Agreement.

CTC Policy

All contract carriers must have \$1,000,000 per accident combined single limit for bodily injury liability and property damage liability including liability to passengers. In addition, all contract carriers must have \$1 million comprehensive general liability insurance.

29. **Eligibility**

Commission Standard

It is the intent of the Commission to set forth eligibility requirements for customers of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. At a minimum, each CTC shall use the following criteria to determine eligibility for Transportation Disadvantaged Trust fund (non-sponsored) monies:

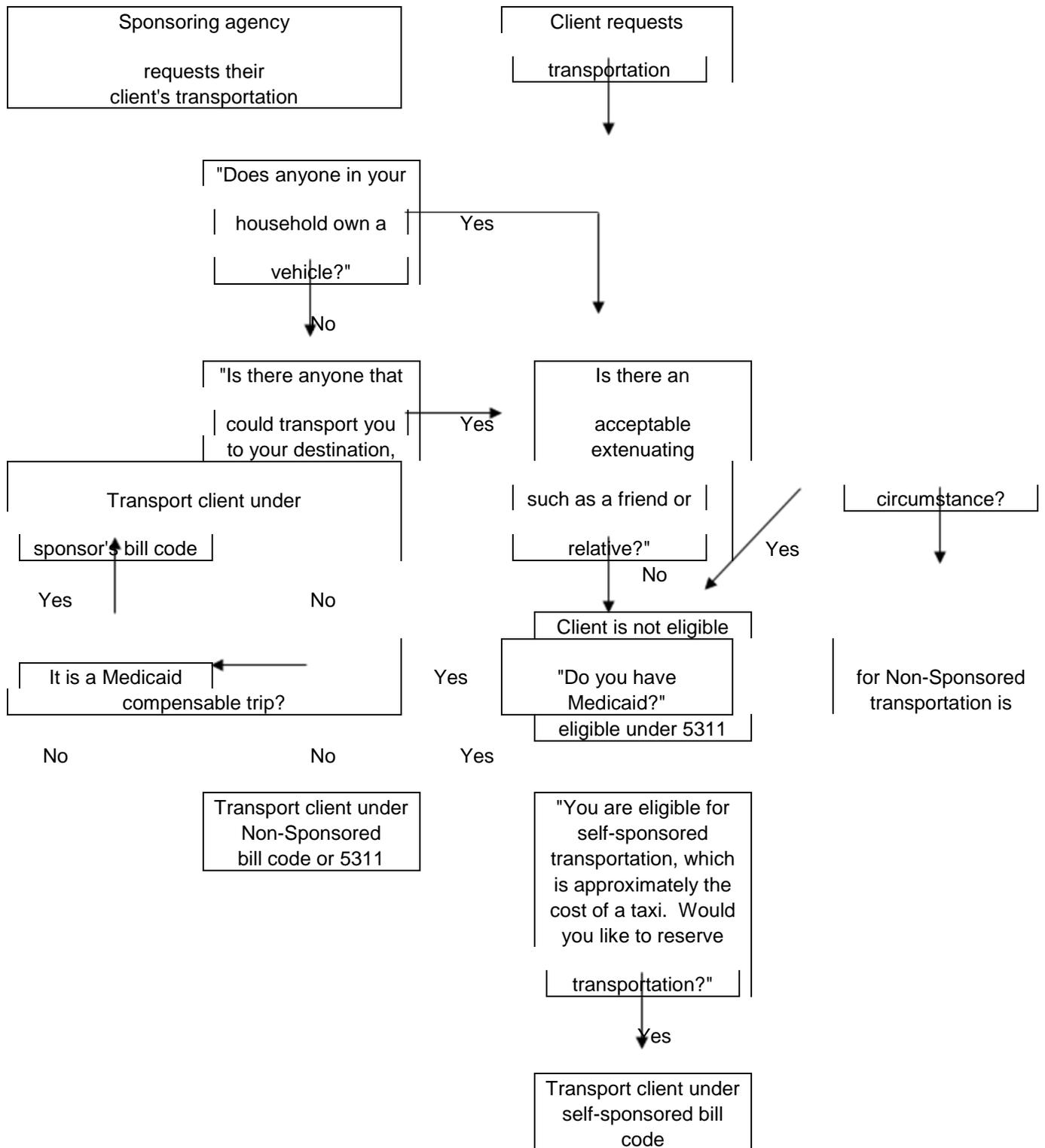
- No other funding available. A customer would not be considered eligible for TDTF when another purchasing agency is responsible for such transportation.
- No other means of transportation is available. As specified by the CTC and the LCB.
- Fixed Route Public Transit. If the fixed route public transit is available the customer must demonstrate why it cannot be used.
- Physical or mental disability. A disability as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- Age. As specified by the CTC and the LCB.
- Individual and Household income status is a specified percent of the poverty level. As specified by the CTC and the LCB.
- No self declarations allowed. The CTC will use an enrollment process that substantiates the individual's ability to meet the criteria listed and any other CTC determined criteria.
- Ability to pay. The CTC and the LCB may establish an ability to pay policy for "non-sponsored" customers using a sliding scale based on the customer's income and/or assets status.

Commission approved 5/22/97

CTC Policy

See Client Eligibility Flow Chart and application on next pages, which is the CTC approved policy for determining eligibility.

Client Eligibility Flow Chart



TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED APPLICATION

Name _____ Date _____

Phone _____ DOB _____

U.S. Citizen _____ Resident Alien _____ Medicaid _____

Mailing Address _____

Street Address _____

Directions to Home _____

Family Information

Number of children under 18 living in home: _____

List all others living in your household:

- _____ DOB _____
- _____ DOB _____
- _____ DOB _____
- _____ DOB _____

Income Information

Client Earnings:

Employed By _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Gross pay _____

Others:

Name _____ Employed By _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Gross Pay _____

Other Household Income:

Social Security: Reg _____ SSI _____ SSD _____

Workman's Comp _____ Unemployment _____

Retirement _____ VA Benefits _____ AFDC _____

Child Support _____ Other _____

Total Gross Family Income per Month _____

Assets:

Automobile _____ Year _____

Medical Information:

Purpose of Transportation _____

Primary Doctor _____ Other Doctor _____

Medical Facility _____

Ambulatory _____ Wheelchair _____

"I affirm that the information provided in this application for transportation is true and correct and understand that making false statements, having others make false statements, or making false statements on behalf of others constitutes fraud and is considered a felony under the laws of the State of Florida."

Signed _____ Date _____

Preparers Signature _____

Summary of Needs:

***** (Please keep front page for your information) *****

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

PROGRAM DEFINITION: Those person who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age or who for other reasons are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, grocery shopping or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at high-risk as defined in state status.

HOW IT WORKS: Persons requiring transportation contact Veolia 1-800-694-6566
Complete an in-take application and mail to the address below or fax to 1-863-382-8469

Veolia Transportation
1103 US Highway 27 S
Sebring FL 33870

These applications are necessary to determine if the individual qualified under the definition of the program. Qualifications are primarily bases on income and ability to obtain transportation, however, other factors are considered. Therefore, each case is based on its own merit.

The information required for the application is clients' photo identification, for all household members and proof any and all household income and assets.

After qualification individuals may then be transported, as necessary, to required destinations with the county for the purposes as provided in the above program definition. Due to funding difficulties, all out-of-county trips must be scheduled for medical purposes only.

*Appointments can be made up to 14 days in advance. All trip arrangements must be made by 2:30 pm the business day prior to the appointment by calling **VEOLIA 1-800-694-6566**.

All trips require the individual to pay a minimal fee for transportation. In County-trips will require a \$1.50 each way charge and out-of-county trips require a flat rate based on the destination. Any destination up to 25 miles is \$6.00. Any destination 25 to 50 miles is \$8.00. Any destination over 50 miles is \$11.00.

This fee must be paid to the driver upon entrance into the vehicle. There can be no exception to this charge.

All individuals being transported must comply with all state laws, (i.e. seat belt laws, etc.) while being transported. No smoking is allowed in any vehicle.

30. **Private Pay Access**
Commission Standard
 None
CTC Policy
 Trip requests from persons who do not meet the definition of transportation disadvantaged but wish to access the system will be scheduled only when vehicle route and seating availability will accommodate the request, and, at the expense of the requesting party. The trips structure shall be the same as provided in the Memorandum of Agreement/Service Plan and approved by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.
31. **VEHICLE AIR CONDITIONING AND HEATING SYSTEM**
Commission Standard
 All vehicles ordered or put into service after the adoption of this section of the rule, and providing service within the coordinated system, shall have working air conditioners and heaters in each vehicle. Vehicles that do not have a working air conditioner or heater will be scheduled for repair or replacement as soon as possible. All vehicles that are not equipped with an air conditioner and/or heater shall have two years to be in compliance after May 1, 1996.
CTC Policy
 All vehicles operating within the coordinated system must have working air conditioning and heating systems. In the event that a vehicle's air conditioning or heating system fails, the vehicle shall be removed from service immediately and not return to service until corrective repairs have been made.
32. **SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS**
Commission Standard
 Service effectiveness standards should be jointly established by the CTC and LCB. These standards should give the LCB information on how effectively the CTC is operating and can include trips/vehicle mile, trips/vehicle hour, and trips/capita. The data for establishing these standards can be found in the CTC's Annual Operating Report.
CTC Policy
 Currently, the LCBs monitor the CTC and providers' effectiveness by analyzing monthly reports which are modeled after Section II of the Annual Operating Report.
33. **Accommodating Mobility Aids and Life Support Systems**
Commission Standard
 None. Requires that a local policy be developed.
CTC Policy
 Riders are permitted to travel with service animals trained to assist them. Service animals include guide dogs used by persons with vision or hearing

impairments and other animals that provide aid to persons with disabilities.

Riders are permitted to travel with respirators, portable oxygen. Travel with this equipment will only be denied if it would violate rules concerning the transportation of hazardous materials (49 CFR Parts 100-199).

In general, the transport of common types of portable life support equipment is not prohibited. Cylinders of oxygen used by passengers for health reasons, for example, are not subject to the Hazardous Materials Regulation.

All life support equipment brought onto a Community Transportation vehicle must be able to be operated and maintained by the passenger or by the passenger's escort and must be able to be secured in the vehicle. The Community Transportation driver will not have any contact with the life support equipment.

34. **COMPLAINTS**

Commission Standard

None

CTC Policy

The standard for complaints will be 2.0 (or less) complaints per 1,000 one-way passenger trips.

35. **PROCESS FOR CONSIDERING COORDINATION CONTRACTS AND/OR REQUESTS TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO CLIENTS OUTSIDE OF THE COORDINATED SYSTEM**

Commission Standard

Rule 41-2.015, and Procedure for Member Department/Purchasing Agency Utilization of Alternative Providers, dated 2/2003

CTC Standard

The following standard was developed prior to the CTD's procedure noted above. The LCB shall use the procedure developed by the CTD and integrate it with the process outlined below.

Agencies requesting consideration of a coordination contract and/or request to provide service to TD funded clients outside of the Coordinated Community Transportation system shall provide the following information to the Community Transportation Coordinator. The LCB shall review all requests and make the final recommendation to the Coordinator.

1. Identify how clients are currently transported.
2. Identify the current cost per trip (one-way) and projected cost per trip (one-way).
3. Identify the type of trip(s) needed for clients, current and planned. (i.e., medical, educational, recreational, etc.). Provide the percentage of each type of trip.
4. Identify current and planned funding that supports the transportation component of the clients support. (Federal, State, Local, Private contributions.)

5. Identify the current number of trips provided. (Daily, weekly, annually.)
6. Identify the number of hours the requested vehicle will operate per day/week.
7. If a coordination contract is entered into with the Coordinator, the requesting agency must adopt the system safety program plan and follow the mandates for driver training and drug and alcohol testing and training. Please explain your agency's substance abuse policy and/or procedure and driver training procedure and how, if at all, it will change under a coordination contract.
8. Identify approximate number of clients who will be served.
9. Provide a list of other vehicles specifically assigned for transport of clients. (include make, model, year, seating capacity, whether it is wheelchair accessible.)
10. Explain why it isn't feasible to purchase/coordinate transportation services for your clients through the Coordinated Community Transportation System.

When the agency is prepared to discuss the details of their request, they should call the Community Transportation Coordinator to arrange a meeting.

B – Local Grievance Procedure/Process

RULES AND PROCEDURES
FOR
FORMAL COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES
FOR DESOTO COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

Section 1. Creation

- 1.1 There is hereby created a formal complaint/grievance procedure for DeSoto County transportation disadvantaged program as specified by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged pursuant to Chapter 427, Florida Statute and Rule 41-2.012, Florida Administrative Code, hereinafter referred to as the Grievance Process. The following rules and procedures shall constitute the grievance process to be utilized in the Coordinated Community Transportation Disadvantaged system in DeSoto County.

Section 2. Definitions

- 2.1 As used in these rules and procedures the following words and terms shall have the meanings assigned therein. Additional program definitions can be found in Chapter 427, Florida Statutes and Rule 41-2, Florida Administrative Code.
- (a) Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC): means a transportation entity recommended by a Metropolitan Planning Organization, or by the appropriate designated official planning agency as provided for in Section 427.015(1), Florida Statutes, in an area outside the purview of a Metropolitan Planning Organization and approved by the Commission, to ensure that coordinated transportation services are provided to serve the transportation disadvantaged population in a designated service area. (The current CTC for DeSoto County is Connex/ATC, located in Sebring.)
 - (b) Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA): means the official body or agency designated by the Commission to fulfill the functions of transportation disadvantaged planning in areas not covered by a metropolitan planning organization. The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall serve as the designated official planning agency in areas covered by such organization. (The Board of County Commissioners is the DOPA for DeSoto County.)
 - (c) Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) (User): means “Those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age or who for other reasons are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent on others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in Section 411.202, Florida Statutes.
 - (d) Agency: means an official, officer, commission, authority, council, committee, department, division, bureau, board, section, or any other unit or entity of the state or of a

city, town, municipality, county, or other local governing body or a private nonprofit entity providing transportation services as all or part of its charter.

- (e)
- (f) Transportation Operator: means one or more public, private for profit or private nonprofit entities engaged by the community transportation coordinator to provide service to transportation disadvantaged persons pursuant to a Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP).
- (g) Service Complaint: means incidents that may occur on a daily basis and are reported to the driver or dispatcher or to other individuals involved with the daily operations, and are resolved within the course of a reasonable time period suitable to the complainant. Local service complaints are driven by the inability of the CTC or transportation operators to meet local service standards established by the CTC and LCB. All service complaints should be recorded and reported by the CTC to the LCB. If the CTC is also an operator, their statistics on service complaints should be included.
- (h) Formal Grievance: A written complaint to document any concerns or an unresolved service complaint regarding the operation or administration of TD services by the transportation operator, CTC, DOPA, or LCB.
- (i) Administrative Hearing Process: Chapter 120, Florida Statute.
- (j) Ombudsman Program: A toll-free telephone number established and administered by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged to enable persons to access information and/or file complaints/grievances regarding transportation services provided under the coordinated effort of the Community Transportation Coordinator.

Section 3: Objectives

- 3.1 The objective of the grievance process shall be to process, investigate and make recommendations, in a timely manner on formal written complaints/grievances that are not resolved between individual agencies/entities and the customer. It is not the objective of the grievance process to have “adjudicate” or “determinative” powers.
- 3.2 The Community Transportation Coordinator and its service operators and other subcontractors, must post the contact person’s name and telephone number in each vehicle regarding the reporting of complaints.
- 3.3 All documents pertaining to the grievance process will be made available, upon request, in a format accessible to persons with disabilities.
- 3.4 A written copy of the grievance procedure shall be available to anyone upon request.
- 3.5 Apart from this grievance process, aggrieved parties with proper standing, may also have recourse through the Chapter 120, Florida Statutes Administrative Hearing Process, or the judicial court system.

Section 4. Membership

- 4.1 The Grievance Committee shall be composed of a minimum of three (3) members from the Local Coordinating Board in the service area. Members shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the board. The Joint Executive Committee shall consist of a full compliment of representatives of the transportation disadvantaged community and shall mirror the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged mandated Local Coordinating Board membership as outlined in Chapter 427, Florida Statutes.
- 4.2 The Program Manager of the Official Planning Agency, or his/her designee, shall be an advisory member o the Grievance Committee.

Section 5. Terms of Members

- 5.1 The members of the Grievance Committee shall be appointed for a two (2) year term.
- 5.2 A member of the Grievance Committee may be removed for cause by the Local Coordinating Board Chairperson who appointed him/her. Vacancies in the membership of the Grievance Committee shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall only be for the remainder of the unexpired term being filled.
- 5.3 The Grievance Committee shall elect a chairperson and a vice chairperson at the first scheduled meeting of each year. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve for a one (1) year term, but may serve consecutive terms.
- 5.4 A quorum of two (2) voting members shall be present for official action by the Grievance committee. Meetings shall be held at such times as the grievance committee may determine and/or as necessitated by formally filed grievances.

SECTION 6: GRIEVANCE PROCESS

- 6.1 Grievance procedures will be those as specified by the Local Coordinating Board, developed from guidelines of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, and approved by the Local Coordinating Boards in the service area as set forth below. The grievance procedures are for the purpose of fact-finding and not exercising adjudicative powers. Therefore, it should be understood that these procedures are for the purpose of “hearing”, “advising”, and “making recommendations” on issues affecting the service delivery and administration of the transportation disadvantaged program in the service area.
- 6.2 Apart from the grievance procedures outlined below, aggrieved parties with proper standing, may also have recourse through the Chapter 120, Florida Statutes Administrative Hearing Process, the judicial court system, the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, or if they are a Medicaid client, they may request a Medicaid Fair Hearing (see Section 8).
- 6.3 Service Complaints. All service complaints should be recorded and reported by the Community Transportation Coordinator to the Local Coordinating Board. If the Coordinator is also an operator, their statistics on service complaints shall be included. Service complaints may include but are not limited to:
 - Late trips (late pick-up and/or late drop-off)

- No-show by transportation operator
- No-show by client
- Client behavior
- Driver behavior
- Passenger discomfort
- Service denial (refused service to a client without an explanation as to why)
- Other, as deemed appropriate by the Local Coordinating Boards in the service area.

6.4 Formal Grievance. The customer, in their formal complaint, should demonstrate or establish their concerns as clearly as possible. The formal grievance process shall be open to addressing concerns by any person or agency including but not limited to: purchasing agencies, users, potential users, private for-profit operators, private non-profit operators, the Coordinator, the Designated Official Planning Agency, elected officials, drivers. Formal grievances may include but are not limited to:

- Recurring or unresolved service complaints.
- Violations of specific laws governing the provision of TD services (i.e., Chapter 427, F.S., Rule 41-2 FAC and accompanying documents, Sunshine Law, ADA).
- Denial of Service
- Suspension of service
- Unresolved safety issues
- Contract disputes
- Coordination disputes
- Bidding disputes
- Agency compliance
- Conflicts of interest
- Supplanting of funds
- Billing and/or accounting procedures
- Other, as deemed appropriate by the Local Coordinating Boards of the service area.

6.5 All formal grievances filed must be written and contain the following:

- Name and address of the customer
- A statement of the grounds for the grievance and supplemented by supporting documentation, made in a clear and concise manner. This shall include a complete description of efforts taken by the customer to resolve the complaint.
- An explanation of the relief desired by the customer.

If the customer does not supply the above information to substantiate the grievance, no further action will be taken.

6.6 Step One: The customer shall first contact the Coordinator and the entity with which they have the complaint. The customer may also contact the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Ombudsman representative at 1-800-983-2435. (See Section 7 for the Commission Grievance Process). The Coordinator will attempt to mediate and resolve the grievance.

6.7 Step Two: If mediation with the Coordinator is not successful, the Coordinator or customer may file an official complaint with the Program Manager of the Designated Official Planning Agency (Board of County Commissioners) as outlined in Section 6.5 and 6.8.

6.8 Step Three: The Designated Official Planning Agency will make every effort to resolve the grievance by arranging a meeting between the involved parties in an attempt to assist them in reaching an amicable resolution. The meeting shall take place within seven (7) working days of receipt of all evidence regarding the grievance. The Designated Official Planning Agency shall

prepare a report regarding the meeting outcome. The report shall be sent to the customer and the Chair of the Local Coordinating Board within seven (7) working days of the date of the meeting.

- 6.9 Step Four: If the Designated Official Planning Agency is unsuccessful at resolving the grievance through the process outlined in 6.8 above, the customer may request, in writing, that their grievance be heard by the Grievance Committee. This request shall be made within seven (7) working days of receipt of the report prepared as a result of the mediation meeting arranged under Step Three above, and sent to the Program Manager of the Designated Official Planning Agency.
- 6.10 Step Five: **Upon receipt of the written request for the grievance to be heard by the Grievance Committee**, the Program Manager of the Official Planning Agency shall have fifteen (15) working days to contact Grievance Committee members and set a grievance hearing date and location.
- 6.11 The Customer and all parties involved shall be notified of the hearing date and location at least seven (7) working days prior to the hearing date by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- 6.12 Step Six: Upon conclusion of the hearing, the Grievance Committee must submit a written report of the hearing proceedings to the chairperson of the local coordinating board within ten (10) working days. The report must outline the grievance and the Grievance Committee's findings/recommendations.
- 6.13 If the grievance is resolved through the hearing process, steps four through six, the grievance process will end. The final report will be forwarded to the members of the Local Coordinating Board.
- 6.14 If the grievance has not been resolved as outlined in these grievance procedures, the customer may exercise their adjudicative rights, use the Administrative Hearing Process outlined in Chapter 120, Florida Statutes, or request that their grievance be heard by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged through the Ombudsman program established herein **and the Commission's Grievance Process outlined in Section 7.**

Section 7: Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Grievance Process

- 7.1 If the Local Coordinating Board does not resolve the grievance, the customer will be informed of his/her right to file a formal grievance with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The customer may begin this process by contacting the Commission through the established Helpline at 1-800-983-2435 or by mail to: Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, 605 Suwannee Street MS-49, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450 or by email at www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd. Upon request of the customer, the Commission will provide the customer with an accessible copy of the Commission's Grievance Procedures.
- 7.2 If the Commission is unable to resolve the grievance, the customer will be referred to the Office of Administrative Appeals or other legal venues appropriate to the specific nature of the grievance.

All of the steps outlined in Section 6 and Section 7(1)(2) must be attempted in the listed order before a grievance will move to the next step. The customer should be sure to try and have as many details as possible, when filing a complaint, such as date, times, names, vehicle numbers, etc.

There is an Ombudsman Program, provided by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, which is available to anyone who requests assistance in resolving complaints/grievances. The Ombudsman Program may be reached through the toll free Helpline

at 1-800-983-2435 or by email at www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd. By requesting assistance of the Ombudsman Program in resolving complaints, the complaint will still follow, in order, all of the established steps listed in Sections 6 and 7 above. The Ombudsman will document each complaint and upon the request of the customer, file the complaint with the local Coordinator on the customer's behalf, to begin the local complaint process. If the customer has already filed the grievance locally and remains unsatisfied, the Ombudsman will assist the customer with the next step in the complaint or grievance process.

The customer has the right to file a formal grievance with the Office of Administrative Appeals or other venues appropriate to the specific nature of the complaint.

Section 8: Medicaid Fair Hearing Requirements

A. Overview

1. Description

- a. Complaint process – The complaint process is the Commission's and the STP's procedure for addressing Medicaid Beneficiary Complaints, which are expressions of dissatisfaction about any matter other than an Action that are resolved at the Point of Contact rather than through filing a formal Grievance.
- b. Grievance process - The Grievance process is the Commission's and the STP's procedure for addressing Medicaid Beneficiary Grievances, which are expressions of dissatisfaction about any matter other than an Action.
- c. Appeal process - The Appeal process is the Commission's and the STP's procedure for addressing Medicaid Beneficiary Appeals, which are requests for review of an Action.
- d. Medicaid Fair Hearing process – The Medicaid Fair Hearing process is the administrative process which allows a Medicaid Beneficiary to request the State to reconsider an adverse decision made by the Commission or the STP.

2. General Requirements

- a. The Commission and the STP shall have a Grievance System in place that includes a Complaint process, a Grievance process, an Appeal process, and access to the Medicaid Fair Hearing system. The Grievance System shall comply with the requirements set forth in Section 641.511, F.S., if applicable and with all applicable federal and State laws and regulations, including 42 CFR 431.200 and 42 CFR 438, Subpart F, "Grievance System."
- b. The STP must develop and maintain written policies and procedures relating to the Grievance System. Before implementation, the Commission must give the STP written approval of the STP's Grievance System policies and procedures.
- c. The STP shall refer all Medicaid Beneficiaries who are dissatisfied with the STP or its Action to the STP's Grievance/Appeal Coordinator for processing and documentation in accordance with this Contract and established policies and procedures.
- d. The STP shall provide reasonable assistance to Medicaid Beneficiaries in

completing forms and other procedural steps, including, but not limited to, providing interpreter services and toll-free numbers with TTY/TDD and interpreter capability.

- e. The STP shall acknowledge, in writing, the receipt of a Grievance or a request for an Appeal, unless the Medicaid Beneficiary requests an expedited resolution.
- f. The STP shall not allow any of the decision makers on a Grievance or Appeal were involved in any of the previous levels of review or decision-making when deciding any of the following:
 - (1) An Appeal of a denial that is based on lack of Medicaid Necessity; and,
 - (2) A Grievance regarding the denial of an expedited of an Appeal.
- g. The Medicaid Beneficiary, and/or the Medicaid Beneficiary's Representative, shall be allowed an opportunity to examine Medicaid Beneficiary's case file before and during the Grievance or Appeal process, including all Medical Records and any other documents and records.
- h. The Medicaid Beneficiary and/or the Medicaid Beneficiary's representative or the representative of a deceased Medicaid Beneficiary's estate shall be considered as parties to the Grievance. Appeal.
- i. The STP shall maintain, monitor, and review a record/log of all Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals in accordance with the terms of this Contract and to fulfill the reporting requirements as set forth in this Contract.
- j. The STP shall work with the Commission's Grievance/Appeals Coordinator to resolve all grievance related issues.
- k. Notice of Action
 - (1) The STP shall notify the Medicaid Beneficiary, in writing, using language at, or below the fourth (4th) grade reading level, of any Action taken by the STP to deny a Transportation Service request, or limit Transportation Services in an amount, duration, or scope that is less than requested.
 - (2) The STP shall provide notice to the Medicaid Beneficiary as set forth below (see 42 CFR 438.404 (a) and 42 CFR 438.210 (c) and 42 CFR 438.210 (b) and (c)):
 - (a) The Action the Recipient has taken or intends to take;
 - (b) The reason for the Action, customized for the circumstances of the Medicaid Beneficiary;
 - (c) The Medicaid Beneficiary's or the Health Care Professional's (with written permission of the Medicaid Beneficiary) right to file an Appeal:
 - (d) The procedures for filing an Appeal:
 - (e) The circumstances under which expedited resolution is available and how to request it; and,
 - (f) The Medicaid Beneficiary's rights to request that Transportation Services continue pending the resolution of the Appeal, how to request the

continuation of Transportation Services, and the circumstances under which the Medicaid Beneficiary may be required to pay the costs of these services.

- (3) The STP must provide the notice of Action within the following time frames:
- (a) At least ten (10) Calendar Days before the date of the Action or fifteen (15) Calendar Days if the notice is sent by Surface Mail (five [5] Calendar Days if the Recipient suspects Fraud on the part of the Medicaid Beneficiary). See 42 CFR 431.211, 42 CFR 431.213 and 42 CFR 431.214.
 - (b) For denial of the Trip request, at the time of any Action affecting the Trip request.
 - (c) For standard Service Authorization decisions that deny or limit Transportation Services, as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires, but no later than fourteen (14) Calendar Days following receipt of the request for services (see 42 CFR 438.210(d)(1)).
 - (d) If the STP extends the time frame for notification, it must:
 - (i) Give the Medicaid Beneficiary written notice of the reason for the extension and inform the Medicaid Beneficiary of the right to file a Grievance if the Medicaid Beneficiary disagrees with the Recipient's decision to extend the time frame; and
 - (ii) Carry out its determination as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires, but in no case later than the date upon which the fourteen (14) Calendar Day extension period expires (see 42 CFR 438.210(d)(1)).
 - (e) If the STP fails to reach a decision within the time frames described above, the Medicaid Beneficiary can consider such failure on the part of the STP a denial and, therefore, an Action adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary (See 42 CFR 438.210(d)).
 - (f) For expedited Services Authorization decision, within three (3) Business Days (with the possibility of a fourteen (14) Calendar Day extension period expires (see 42 CFR 438.210(d)(2)).

B. The Complaint Process

1. A Medicaid Beneficiary may file a Complaint, or a representative of the Medicaid Beneficiary, acting on behalf of the Medicaid Beneficiary and with the Medicaid Beneficiary's written consent, may file a Complaint.
2. General Duties
 - a. The STP must:
 - (1) Resolve each Complaint within fifteen (15) Business Days from the day the STP received the initial Complaint, be it oral or in writing;
 - (a) The STP may extend the Complaint resolution time frame by up

to ten (10) Business Days if the Medicaid Beneficiary requests an extension, or the Recipient/Subcontractor documents that there is a need for additional information and that the delay is in the Medicaid Beneficiary's best interest.

(b) If the STP request the extension, the Recipient/Subcontractor must give the Medicaid Beneficiary written notice of the reason for the delay.

(2) Notify the Medicaid Beneficiary, in writing, within five (5) Business Days of the resolution of the Complaint if the Medicaid Beneficiary is not satisfied with the STP's resolution. The notice of disposition shall include the results and date of the resolution of the Complaint, and shall include:

(a) A notice of the right to request a Grievance or Appeal, whichever is the most appropriate to the nature of the objection; and,

(b) Information necessary to allow the Medicaid Beneficiary to request a Medicaid Fair Hearing, if appropriate, including the contact information necessary to pursue a Medicaid Fair Hearing (see Medicaid Fair Hearing System Section).

(3) Provide the Commission with a report detailing the total number of Complaints received, pursuant to Reporting Requirements of this Contract; and,

(4) The STP nor any Transportation Providers shall take any punitive action against a physician or other Health Care Provider who files a Complaint on behalf of a Medicaid Beneficiary Complaint.

(b) Filing Requirements

(1) The Medicaid Beneficiary or a representative of the Medicaid Beneficiary, acting on behalf of the Medicaid Beneficiary and with the Medicaid Beneficiary's written consent must file a Complaint within fifteen (15) Calendar Days after the date of occurrence that initiated the Complaint.

(2) The Medicaid Beneficiary or his/her representative may file a Complaint either orally or in writing. The Medicaid Beneficiary or his/her representative may follow up an oral request with a written request, however the timeframe for resolution begins the date the STP receives the oral request.

C. The Grievance Process

1. A Medicaid Beneficiary may file a Grievance, or a representative of the Medicaid Beneficiary, acting on behalf of the Medicaid Beneficiary and with the Medicaid Beneficiary written consent, may file a Grievance.

2. General Duties

- a. The STP must:
 - (1) Resolve each Grievance within ninety (90) Calendar Days from the day the STP received the initial Grievance request. Be it oral or in writing;
 - (2) Notify the Medicaid Beneficiary, in writing, within thirty (30) Calendar Days of the resolution of the Grievance. The notice of the disposition shall include the results and date of the resolution of the Grievance, and for decisions not wholly in the Medicaid Beneficiary's favor, the notice of disposition shall include:
 - (a) Notice of the right to request a Medicaid Fair Hearing, if applicable; and,
 - (b) Information necessary to allow the Medicaid Beneficiary to request a Medicaid Fair Hearing, including the contact information necessary to pursue a Medicaid Fair Hearing (see Medicaid Fair Hearing System Section, below);
 - (3) Provide the Commission with a copy of the written notice of disposition upon request;
 - (4) The STP nor any Transportation Provider shall take any punitive action against a physician or other health provider who files a Grievance on behalf of a Medicaid Beneficiary, or supports a Medicaid Beneficiary's Grievance; and,
 - (5) Provide the Commission with a report detailing the total number of Grievance received, pursuant to the Reporting Requirements Section of this Contract.
- b. The STP may extend the Grievance resolution time frame by up to fourteen (14) Calendar Days if the Medicaid Beneficiary requests an extension, or the STP documents that there is a need for additional information and that the delay is in Medicaid Beneficiary's best interest.
 - (1) If the STP requests the extension, the STP must give the Medicaid Beneficiary written Notice of the reason for the delay
- c. Filing Requirements
 - (1) The Medicaid Beneficiary or provider must file a Grievance within one (1) year after the date of occurrence that initiated the Grievance.
 - (2) The Medicaid Beneficiary or provider may file a Grievance either orally or in writing. The Medicaid Beneficiary may follow up an oral request with a written request, however the timeframe for resolution begins the date the STP receives the oral request.

D. The Appeal Process

- 1. A Medicaid Beneficiary may file an Appeal, or a representative of the Medicaid Beneficiary, acting on behalf of the Medicaid Beneficiary and with the Medicaid Beneficiary's written consent, may file an Appeal.
- 2. General Duties

- a. The STP shall:
- (1) Confirm in writing all oral inquiries seeking an Appeal, unless Medicaid Beneficiary or provider requests and expedited resolution;
 - (2) If the resolution is in favor of the Medicaid Beneficiary, provide the services as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires;
 - (3) Provide the Medicaid Beneficiary or provider with a reasonable opportunity to present evidence and allegations of fact or law, in person and/or in writing;
 - (4) Allow the Medicaid Beneficiary, and/or the Medicaid Beneficiary's representative, and opportunity, before and during the Appeal process, to examine the Medicaid Beneficiary case file, including all documents and records;
 - (5) Consider the Medicaid Beneficiary, the Medicaid Beneficiary's representative or the representative of a deceased Medicaid Beneficiary's estate as parties to the Appeal;
 - (6) Continue the Medicaid Beneficiary's Transportation Services if:
 - (a) The Medicaid Beneficiary files the Appeal in a timely manner, meaning on or before the later of the following:
 - (i) Within ten (10) Business Days of the date on the notice of Action (add five [5] Business Days of the notice is sent via Surface Mail); or,
 - (ii) The intended effective date of the STP's proposed Action.
 - (b) The Appeal involves the termination, suspension, or reduction of a previously authorized Transportation Service;
 - (c) The Transportation was for a Medicaid compensable service ordered;
 - (d) The authorization period has not expired; and/or,
 - (e) The Medicaid beneficiary requests extension of Transportation Services.
 - (7) Provide written notice of the resolution of the Appeal, including the results and date of the resolution within two (2) Business Day after the resolution. For decisions not wholly in the Medicaid Beneficiary's favor, the notice of resolution shall include:
 - (a) Notice of the right to request a Medicaid Fair Hearing;
 - (b) Information about how to request a Medicaid Fair

Hearing, including the DCF address necessary for pursuing a Medicaid Fair Hearing, as set forth in Medicaid Fair Hearing System Section, below;

(c) Notice of the right to continue to receive Transportation Services pending a Medicaid Fair Hearing;

(d) Information about how to request the continuation of Transportation Services; and

(e) Notice that if the STP's Action is upheld in a Medicaid Fair Hearing, the Medicaid Beneficiary may be liable for the cost of any continued Transportation Services.

(8) Provide the Commission with a copy a written notice of disposition upon request;

(9) The STP nor any Transportation Providers shall take any punitive action against a physician or other health care provider who files an Appeal on behalf of a Medicaid Beneficiary of supports a Medicaid Beneficiary's Appeal; and,

(10) Provide the Commission with a report detailing the total number of Appeals received, pursuant to Reporting Requirements of this Contract.

b. If the STP continues or reinstates the Medicaid Beneficiary's Transportation Services while the Appeal is pending, the STP must continue providing the Transportation Services until one (1) of the following occurs:

(1) The Medicaid Beneficiary withdraws the Appeal;

(2) Ten (10) Business Days pass from the date of the STP's notice of resolution of the Appeal if the resolution is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary and if the Medicaid Beneficiary has not requested a Medicaid Fair Hearing with continuation of Transportation Services until a Medicaid Fair Hearing decision is reached;

(3) The Medicaid Fair Hearing panel's decision is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary; or,

(4) The authorization to provide services expires, or the Medicaid Beneficiary meets the authorized service limits.

c. If the final resolution of the Appeal is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary, the STP may recover the costs of the services furnished from the Medicaid Beneficiary while the Appeal was pending, to the extent that the STP furnished the services solely because of the requirements of this Section.

d. If the STP did not furnish services while the Appeal was pending and the Appeal panel reverses the STP's decision to deny, limit or delay services, the STP must authorize or provide the disputed services promptly and as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires.

e. If the STP furnished services while the Appeal was pending and the Appeal panel reverses the STP's decision to deny, limit or delay services, the STP must pay for disputed services in accordance with State policy and regulations.

3. Filing Requirements

a. The Medicaid Beneficiary or his/her representative must file an Appeal within thirty (30) Calendar Days of receipt of the notice of the STP's Action.

b. The Medicaid Beneficiary may file an Appeal either orally or in writing. If the filing is oral, the Medicaid Beneficiary must also file a written, signed Appeal within thirty (30) Calendar Days of the oral filing. The STP shall notify the requesting party that it must file the written request within ten (10) Business Days after receipt of the oral request. For oral filings, time frames for resolution of the Appeal begin on the date the STP receives the oral filing.

c. The STP shall resolve each Appeal within State-established time frames not to exceed forty-five (45) Calendar Days from the day the STP received the initial Appeal request, whether oral or in writing.

d. If the resolution is in favor of the Medicaid Beneficiary, the STP shall provide the services as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires.

d. The STP may extend the resolution time frames by up to fourteen (14) Calendar Days if the Medicaid Beneficiary requests an extension, or the STP documents that there is a need for additional information and that the delay is in the Medicaid Beneficiary's best interest.

(1) If the STP requests the extension, the STP must give the Medicaid Beneficiary written notice of the reason for the delay.

(2) The STP must provide written notice of the extension to the Medicaid Beneficiary within five (5) Business Days of determining the need for an extension.

4. Expedited Process

a. The STP shall establish and maintain an expedited review process for Appeals when the STP determines, the Medicaid Beneficiary requests or the provider indicates (in making the request on the Medicaid Beneficiary's behalf or supporting the Medicaid Beneficiary's request) that taking the time for a standard resolution could seriously jeopardize the Medicaid Beneficiary's life, health or ability to attain, maintain or regain maximum function.

b. The Medicaid Beneficiary may file an expedited Appeal either orally or in writing. No additional written follow-up on the part of the Medicaid Beneficiary is required for an oral request for an expedited Appeal.

c. The STP must:

(1) Inform the Medicaid Beneficiary of the limited time available for the Medicaid Beneficiary to present evidence and allegations of fact or law, in person and in writing;

- (2) Resolve each expedited Appeal and provide notice to the Medicaid Beneficiary, as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires, within State established time frames not to exceed seventy-two (72) hours after the Recipient/Subcontractor receives the Appeal request, whether the Appeal was made orally or in writing;
- (3) Provide written notice of the resolution in accordance with the Appeal Process Section, of the expedited Appeal to the Medicaid Beneficiary;
- (4) Make reasonable efforts to provide oral notice of disposition to the Medicaid Beneficiary immediately after the Appeal panel renders a decision; and,
- (5) The STP nor any Transportation Provider shall take any punitive action against a physician or other health care provider who requests an expedited resolution on the Medicaid Beneficiary's behalf or supports a Medicaid Beneficiary's request for expedited resolution of an Appeal.
 - a. If the STP denies a request for an expedited resolution of an Appeal, the STP must:
 - (1) Transfer the Appeal to the standard time frame of no longer than forty-five (45) Calendar Days from the day the Recipient/Subcontractor received the request for Appeal (with a possible fourteen [14] day extension);
 - (2) Make all reasonable efforts to provide immediate oral notification of the Recipient's/Subcontractor's denial for expedited resolution of the Appeal;
 - (3) Provide written notice of the denial of the expedited Appeal within two (2) Calendar Days; and,
 - (4) Fulfill all requirements set forth in the Appeal Process Section above.

E. Medicaid Fair Hearing System

1. As set forth in Rule 65-2.042, FAC, the Recipient's/Subcontractor's Grievance Procedure and Appeal and Grievance processes shall state that the Medicaid Beneficiary has the right to request a Medicaid Fair Hearing, in addition to, and at the same time as, pursuing resolution through the Recipient's/Subcontractor's Grievance and Appeal processes.
 - a. A physician or other health care provider must have a Medicaid Beneficiary's written consent before requesting a Medicaid Fair Hearing on behalf of a Medicaid Beneficiary.
 - b. The parties to a Medicaid Fair Hearing include the STP, as well as the Medicaid Beneficiary, his/her representative or the

representative of a deceased Medicaid Beneficiary's estate.

2. Filing Requirements

- a. The Medicaid Beneficiary may request a Medicaid Fair Hearing within ninety (90) days of the date of the notice of the STP's resolution of the Medicaid Beneficiary's Grievance/Appeal by contacting DCF at:

The Office of Appeal Hearings
1317 Winewood Boulevard, Building 5, Room 203
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

3. General Duties

- a. The STP must:

(1) Continue the Medicaid Beneficiary's Transportation Services while the Medicaid Fair Hearing is pending if:

(a) The Medicaid Beneficiary filed for the Medicaid Fair Hearing in a timely manner, meaning on or before the later of the following:

(i) Within ten (10) Business Days of the date on the notice of Action (add five [5] Business Days if the notice is sent via Surface Mail);

(ii) The intended effective date of the STP's proposed Action.

(b) The Medicaid Fair Hearing involves the termination, suspension, or reduction of a previously authorized course of treatment;

(c) The authorization period has not expired; and/or,

(d) The Medicaid Beneficiary requests extension of Transportation Services.

(2) The STP nor any Transportation Provider shall take any punitive action against a physician, Transportation Provider, or other health care provider who requests a Medicaid Fair Hearing on a Medicaid Beneficiary's behalf or supports a Medicaid Beneficiary's request for a Medicaid Fair Hearing.

b. If the STP continues or reinstates Medicaid Beneficiary Transportation Services while the Medicaid Fair Hearing is pending, the STP must continue said Transportation Services until one (1) of the following occurs:

(1) The Medicaid Beneficiary withdraws the request for a

Medicaid Fair Hearing;

- (2) Ten (10) Business Days pass from the date of the STP's notice of resolution of the Appeal if the resolution is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary and the Medicaid Beneficiary has not requested a Medicaid Fair Hearing with continuation of Transportation Services until a Medicaid Fair Hearing decision is reached (add five [5] Business Days if the Recipient/Subcontractor sends the notice of Action by Surface Mail);
 - (3) The Medicaid Fair Hearing officer renders a decision that is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary; and/or,
 - (4) The Medicaid Beneficiary's authorization expires or the Medicaid Beneficiary reaches his/her authorized service limits.
4. If the final resolution of the Medicaid Fair Hearing is adverse to the Medicaid Beneficiary, the STP may recover the costs of the services furnished while the Medicaid Fair Hearing was pending, to the extent that the STP furnished said services solely because of the requirements of this Section.
 5. If the STP did not furnish services while the Medicaid Fair Hearing was pending, and the Medicaid Fair Hearing resolution reverses the STP's decision to deny, limit or delay services, the STP must authorize or provide the disputed services as quickly as the Medicaid Beneficiary's health condition requires.
 6. If the STP did furnish services while the Medicaid Fair Hearing was pending, and the Medicaid Fair Hearing resolution reverses the STP's decision to deny, limit or delay services, the STP must pay for the disputed services in accordance with State policy and regulations.

Type	Time Frame to File	Provide Transportation Services During Review	Time Frame To Resolve	Extension Time Frame	Time Frame to Send Notification of Resolution	Next Step (if any)
Complaint	Ninety (90) Calendar Days From the Date of the Incident That Precipitated the Complaint	Yes	Fifteen (15) Business Days	Ten (10) Business Days	Five (5) Business Days From the Date of the Complaint	File a Grievance
Grievance	Ninety (90) Calendar Days From the Date of the Action That Precipitated	Yes	Ninety (90) Calendar Days	Fourteen (14) Calendar Days	Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the Date of the Resolution of the Grievance	Medicaid Fair Hearing

8.1 General Plan Duties. The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged will:

- A. Continue the customer's benefits while Medicaid fair hearing is pending if:
1. The Medicaid fair hearing is filed timely, meaning on or before the later of the following:
 - a. Within 10 workdays of the date on the notice of action (add 5 workdays if the notice is sent by U.S. mail); and
 - b. The intended effective date of the plan's proposed action.
 2. The Medicaid fair hearing involves the termination, suspension, or reduction of a previously authorized course of treatment;
 3. The services were ordered by an authorized provider;
 4. The authorization period has not expired, and
 5. The client requests extension of benefits.
- B. Ensure that punitive action is not taken against a provider who requests a Medicaid fair hearing on the customer's behalf or supports a customer request for a Medicaid fair hearing.

If the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged continues or reinstates the clients benefits while the Medicaid fair hearing is pending, the benefits must be continued until one of the following occurs:

1. The client withdraws the request for a Medicaid fair hearing.
2. Ten (10) workdays pass from the date of the Commission's adverse decision and the client has not requested a Medicaid fair hearing with continuation of benefits until a Medicaid fair hearing decision is reached. (Add 5 workdays if the notice is sent by U.S. mail.)
3. A Medicaid fair hearing decision adverse to the client is made.
4. The authorization expires or authorized service limits are met.

The Commission must authorize or provide the disputed services promptly, and as expeditiously as the client's health condition requires, if the services were not furnished while the Medicaid fair hearing was pending and the Medicaid fair hearing officer reverses a decision to deny, limit, or delay services.

The Commission must pay for disputed services, in accordance with state policy and regulations, if the services were furnished while the Medicaid fair hearing was pending and the Medicaid fair hearing officer reverses a decision to deny, limit, or delay services.

Section 9: Notification of Procedures

9.1 The grievance rights of the user shall be posted, and /or made available, in a location that is generally visible to sighted clients and be periodically explained verbally to sight impaired clients. The sign shall be posted in each vehicle, listing the phone number to contact the Community Transportation Coordinator for access to information regarding reporting service complaints or filing a formal grievance.

C. Evaluation Processes

1. CTC Evaluation Process

The DeSoto County Local Coordinating Board evaluates the Community Transportation Coordinator in and of itself, as well as the entire system. Using the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged guidelines, the LCB's evaluate in the areas of 1) Cost; 2) Availability; 3) Competition; and, 4) Standards. In addition, the LCB's evaluate the CTC in regard to goals established in the previous years' evaluation, and the findings from QAPE biennial reviews.

2. CTC Monitoring Procedures of Operators and Coordination Contractors

The CTC is currently contracting with two (2) transportation operators to provide service in the system. The contracts were initially negotiated through a competitive process. Operators are monitored by the CTC, and planning staff and LCB members on occasion, on an annual basis. The CTC monitors operator performance in the areas of:

- Emergency, Accident, and Delay procedures
- Rule Chapter 14-90 Florida Administrative Code
- Carrier and CTC Management
- Vehicles and equipment
- Operational functions
- Driving requirements
- Maintenance
- Equipment for transporting wheelchairs
- Training:
 - defensive driving
 - passenger assistance/sensitivity
 - first aid
 - CPR
- federal, state, and local regulations, ordinances or laws
- Required Safety Equipment
 - seat belts
 - wheelchair locks and restraining devices (lap type body belts)
 - dry chemical fire extinguisher (tagged and inspected annually)
 - first aid kits

The Florida Department of Transportation performs a Safety Compliance Review of the CTC annually. Copies of the review are presented to the LCB's for review.

3. Coordination Contract Evaluation Criteria

PROCESS FOR CONSIDERING COORDINATION CONTRACTS AND/OR REQUESTS TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO CLIENTS OUTSIDE OF THE COORDINATED SYSTEM

Commission Standard

Rule 41-2.015, and Procedure for Member Department/Purchasing
Agency Utilization of Alternative Providers, dated 2/2003

CTC Standard

The following standard was developed prior to the CTD's procedure noted
above. The LCB shall use the procedure developed by the CTD and
integrate it with the process outlined below.

Agencies requesting consideration of a coordination contract and/or
request to provide service to TD funded clients outside of the Coordinated
Community Transportation system shall provide the following information
to the Community Transportation Coordinator. The LCB shall review all
requests and make the final recommendation to the Coordinator.

1. Identify how clients are currently transported.
2. Identify the current cost per trip (one-way) and projected cost per trip (one-way).
3. Identify the type of trip(s) needed for clients, current and planned. (i.e., medical, educational, recreational, etc.). Provide the percentage of each type of trip.
4. Identify current and planned funding that supports the transportation component of the clients support. (Federal, State, Local, Private contributions.)
5. Identify the current number of trips provided. (Daily, weekly, annually.)
6. Identify the number of hours the requested vehicle will operate per day/week.
7. If a coordination contract is entered into with the Coordinator, the requesting agency must adopt the system safety program plan and follow the mandates for driver training and drug and alcohol testing and training. Please explain your agency's substance abuse policy and/or procedure and driver training procedure and how, if at all, it will change under a coordination contract.
8. Identify approximate number of clients who will be served.
9. Provide a list of other vehicles specifically assigned for transport of clients. (include make, model, year, seating capacity, whether it is wheelchair accessible.)
10. Explain why it isn't feasible to purchase/coordinate transportation services for your clients through the Coordinated Community Transportation System.

When the agency is prepared to discuss the details of their request, they should call the Community Transportation Coordinator to arrange a meeting.

4. Planning Agency Evaluation Process

The Planning Agency is formally reviewed by the Commission for the TD's Quality Assurance

and Program Evaluation (QAPE) division. As part of the Planning Agency Performance Review, LCB members and the CTC will be asked their opinion of their planning agency's support in fulfilling their duties. Additionally, records will be reviewed on-site as it relates to the responsibilities of the planning agency staff.

IV. COST/REVENUE ALLOCATION AND RATE STRUCTURE JUSTIFICATION **Existing Services Rates – Attachment “A”**

Evaluation of Existing vs. Future Services.

To determine the extent to which the goals and objectives for transportation service in DeSoto County are being met, and from this evaluation, alternatives may be designed to meet unmet needs or meet existing needs more efficiently.

Current Status of Transportation Services.

Joint School Bus Use. The DeSoto County School Board currently contracts with the Association for Retarded Citizens of DeSoto County. The School Board provides transportation for their clients to and from educational and social programs. Average ridership per trip is forty people. Total number of hours of driver time paid each week is 20 hours. A total of 178 miles is travelled each week, with 44 weeks of operation per year. The School Board does not pay any of the costs of this program. This contract was developed under previous transportation disadvantaged legislation and will be reviewed for cost-effectiveness annually.

Hours of Operation. The operators provide service seven days a week, twenty-four hours per day including holidays.

Advance Notification Time. Trips are reserved with 24-hour (or one day) advance reservations.

Trip rates. A "fare box" system is currently in effect for customers who can afford the fare. A fee of one dollar each-way is charged for all in-county trips and a flat fee of five dollars for all out-of-county trips.

Background of the TD Program

DeSoto County is a rural, low income county without major medical facilities, employment centers, or major service centers. There is one hospital, DeSoto Memorial Hospital. Typically, medical specialist must be found at larger out-of-county medical facilities. Larger employers are DeSoto Correctional Institute, G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital, DeSoto County, and numerous local growers and farmers. There is only one multi-business shopping center, WalMart Shopping Plaza. There is no public transportation services available. All private for-profit providers participate in the brokered transportation system.

Originally a frontier gateway to Southwest Florida, Arcadia has survived the range wars of the area's turbulent early days, the disastrous fire of 1905, the bloom and bust of the 1920's and the state's explosive growth of the 1970's and 1980's. Within the city's 58 block historic district are some of Florida's best examples of early 1900's and "boomtown" architecture. Many of the 374 buildings and homes in the district are virtually unchanged from their original appearance.

Prior to 1970, Arcadia and DeSoto County was provided transportation with the two railroads that came through the county as well as a bus service, with a station in Arcadia and stops at other locations within the county. Passenger trains no longer operate through the county

and no bus system passes through DeSoto County.

DeSoto County has a land surface area of 636 square miles, and an estimated population of 24,582. Sixty percent (60%) of DeSoto County's land is covered by cattle ranches. Estimated 50,000-55,000 head generate \$70 million in annual sales. Citrus is largest industry, producing \$80 million. The County ranks 7th in statewide production of oranges, grapefruit, tangelos, temples, and tangerines. The County is largely rural in nature, with 72.8 percent of the population located outside urban areas. The City of Arcadia (attachment A) is the county seat with an estimated population of 6,687. According to the Center for Urban Transportation Research statistics, forth-six percent of DeSoto County's population qualifies as transportation disadvantaged as defined in Chapter 427, FS.

ATTACHMENT

“A”

