

Wheelchair-Accessible Minivan Policy for Driver-Training and Operation

Messiah College provides a wheelchair-accessible van for use in transporting students with physical disabilities. The van is configured to allow transport of up to 3 people in wheelchairs when the front passenger seat has been removed. The van is provided to assure safe transportation for individuals with disabilities and their wheelchairs, and to ensure access to and enhance the social and academic experiences of those persons and their friends and classmates. The assurance of safe travel requires that drivers and their passengers be familiar with safe driving and operation of the vehicle and its' restraint system. This policy regulates the use of the van.

A. Driver Training:

The Department of Safety is responsible for providing driver training and familiarization with the ADA/Wheelchair accessible mini van. Drivers are required to participate in this program prior to actually transporting a wheelchair passenger. The program is designed to familiarize drivers and passengers in wheelchairs with the safe operation of the vehicle, which includes instruction on disability-etiquette, vehicle controls, safe driving and parking, entry and egress, and the proper use and care of the Sure-Lok safety restraint system.

1. Persons desiring to drive the ADA/Wheelchair accessible mini van must already be approved to drive college fleet vehicles (cars and mini vans). Wheelchair-users are encouraged to recommend drivers for training.
2. Interested persons should contact the Department of Safety to schedule driver training sessions.
3. Upon successful completion of the driver training program, the individual will be authorized as an approved driver and may transport passengers who use wheelchairs. A certificate of completion for the driver will be awarded to the individual with a copy filed with the Department of Safety.
4. Approved drivers are expected to operate the van safely and legally at all times.

B. Priorities for use of the Van:

The College has provided the van to increase the range of activities that are available and accessible to individuals with disabilities. These are the established priorities for use:

1. Occasional transport of wheelchair-users to medically-related service agencies, including doctor's appointments, physical therapy, and other support services essential to the student's physical well-being. Emergency evacuation of the campus may require pre-emptive use of the van when appropriate.
2. Academic- or student-sponsored activities requiring transport of individuals who use wheelchairs for mobility. This includes primarily local and regional field trips, concerts, and local, sponsored shopping trips and similar activities.
3. Regularly scheduled transport to and from required internships and field-experiences when the student does not have access to reliable alternative transportation.

4. Attendance at local churches. In the event that more than one student requests use for this purpose, students are expected to coordinate their plans and drivers to assure mutually acceptable pickup and drop-off times. Students are expected to adhere carefully to the agreed upon schedule.

In the event of a conflict, the Director of Disability Services is empowered to rule on which person or activity takes precedence.

C. Travel limitations:

The College recognizes the potential convenience of having a closed vehicle with a ramp for transporting equipment and supplies. The van will not be available for such uses, however. In order to assure that individuals with disabilities have access to a fully functioning vehicle, there are certain restrictions on use of the van which will reduce the possibility of damage to the vehicle.

1. The van should generally not be used for itineraries that require overnight stays away from campus. Exceptions may be made for times and events when demand is low and scheduling does not conflict with local use needs.
2. Use of the van is meant to be primarily "local" in nature, meaning no more than one full day for travel is required.
3. Only faculty and staff are allowed to drive the van on local day trips if wheelchair-users are not using it and the Receptionist does not have any other college fleet vehicles available.
4. Faculty who are planning for extended academic trips where an individual with a physical disability is included may request use of the van if there are no planned first-priority needs scheduled for the days requested. In the event of a potential scheduling conflict, the sponsoring department should consider renting a lift-equipped van for the extended trip.

D. Cost:

1. Standard per/mile rates will be charged to departments using the van to transport participating wheelchair-users to and from sponsored activities and academic programs.
2. Student accounts will be charged for personal use, including occasional or regularly scheduled trips away from the Grantham campus.

E. Other limitations:

1. Students needing the van should schedule the equipment at least 2 days in advance whenever possible. In the event of conflicting requests, the first student to request the van will have priority.
2. Drivers who are ticketed for violating traffic laws, or who are reported for doing so may lose their driving privileges, according to standard College policy.
3. Drivers who abuse or damage equipment may be charged for the cost of repairs if negligence is proven.

Policy developed and maintained by the Office of Disability Services in cooperation with the Department of Safety. Approved by Risk Management Council: May 09, 2006