

# transportation

Without access to reliable transportation, people with mental illness are denied the ability to lead a fulfilling life.



People with mental illnesses require reliable transportation to work, access services, shop, learn, worship, volunteer, and make and socialize with friends, as does everybody. However, too many have unmet transportation needs due to significant barriers that exist in urban, suburban, and rural areas. These barriers can be described as the 5 A's (Adapted from the Beverly Foundation, 2004):

1 . **Affordability.** In addition to their mental disability, many individuals face the disabling effects of poverty. Those who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other income supports often cannot afford to own a car or even to use public transportation regularly.

2 . **Accessibility.** Public transit is becoming more accessible to people with physical disabilities, but many people with mental and other hidden disorders continue to have a difficult time using transit systems. Even specialized transportation programs present difficulties, such as advance scheduling requirements, that limit users' ability to get where they need to go and the freedom to do so as they choose.

3 . **Applicability.** In many communities, programs abound for people with unmet transportation needs, but too often, people with mental health conditions are not eligible. Other programs, for which they are eligible, are available only for limited purposes.

4 . **Availability.** Some communities offer few if any transportation solutions; many rural communities have no public transit. In other communities, public transit schedules greatly limit when and where people can travel.

5 . **Awareness.** Many individuals with mental illness do not know about the transportation opportunities that are available or how to use them.

Policy can have a major impact on transportation for those living with mental illness. We need to push for policies that encourage widespread access to public transit; help communities create solutions to serve older adults, people with disabilities and families of low income; and encourage our State to coordinate human service transportation programs.

---

1. Getting There: Helping People With Mental Illnesses Access Transportation. DHHS Pub. No. (SMA) 3948. Rockville, MD. Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2004.