

SECTION 4

Guidance for Conducting In-Person Interviews and for Obtaining Follow-Up Information from Professionals

Introduction

This section of the workbook contains guidance and information intended to assist transit agencies with conducting in-person interviews, obtaining appropriate additional information from applicants (beyond what is provided in a paper application form), and obtaining additional information through follow-up with named professionals familiar with the applicant's disability and functional abilities. The following materials are included in this section:

- “Guidance for Conducting In-Person Interviews”
- Examples of possible types of additional information that might be appropriate to request from applicants (as part of an interview) or through follow-up contacts with named professionals. This includes the following :
 - “Additional Information – Applicants with Cognitive Disabilities”
 - “Additional Information – Applicants with Psychiatric Disabilities”
 - “Additional Information – Applicants with Vision Disabilities”
 - “Additional Information – Applicants with Seizure Disorders”
 - “Additional Information – Applicants with Physical Disabilities”
- Examples of forms that can be used to summarize and document information obtained through interviews or follow-up contact with named professionals. This includes:
 - “Interview Summary Form”
 - “Professional Verification Contact Form for Applicants with Cognitive Disabilities
 - “Professional Verification Contact Form for Applicants with Psychiatric Disabilities
 - “Professional Verification Contact Form for Applicants with Vision Disabilities
 - “Professional Verification Contact Form for Applicants with Seizure Disorders
 - “Professional Verification Contact Form for Applicants with Physical Disabilities
- “Guidelines for Professional Reports to ACCESS” – This is a document prepared by ACCESS Transportation Systems, Inc. of Pittsburgh, PA that is used to educate professionals in the community about the kinds of information needed in the eligibility process. It is faxed to professionals when follow-up calls are made.

Guidance for Conducting In-Person Interviews

Welcome and Preparation of Applicant File

When the applicant arrives for the interview, the receptionist should welcome them and ask if they have brought a completed application form. Also ask if they have brought additional documentation of their disability (if required or suggested as part of the process). Ask for the application form. If additional documentation was brought, ask if the documentation can be kept by the transit agency with the application or if photocopies are needed. Note that all information collected will be treated with strict confidentiality. Prepare a copy, if necessary, and return the original documentation to the applicant. Prepare a file folder for the applicant.

The folder would be made available to the interviewer so they can spend a few minutes reviewing the completed application and any additional documentation of disability prior to the interview.

Review of Application and Documentation

Check the application form for completeness. Pay particular attention to sections which require the applicant's signature. Also be sure that the "General Information" section has all of the information about the applicant that will be needed. Note any missing information from other parts of the application that will need to be clarified in the interview. If some minor information has not been provided, this can be obtained during the interview. If missing information cannot be obtained as part of the interview (e.g., the application is missing required professional verification of disability), the interview and any subsequent functional assessments deemed necessary should still be conducted, but the application form should be given back to the applicant with instructions to complete the incomplete sections and return the completed form. A copy of the application should be made at the end of the interview and kept on file. The 21 day processing time would then begin at a date following the interview when a completed form is sent back.

Look for indications in the answers to application questions that might point to a misunderstanding of ADA paratransit eligibility and the purpose of ADA paratransit service. Issues that arise often are (1) people applying for eligibility who can use fixed route service but who live in areas where there is no fixed route service; (2) people who can use fixed route service but are applying because they feel unsafe on the fixed route system, and (3) people who indicate they are able to use fixed route service but see paratransit as a more convenient option. If any of these are evident in the way the form is completed, pay particular attention to the first part of the interview where there is an opportunity to explain ADA paratransit eligibility and the services. Note that people who live outside the paratransit service area should still be made eligible if they are functionally unable to use fixed route, but they should be made aware that service is not provided outside the defined service area even if they are determined eligible.

Look at the information provided in the application form and any accompanying documentation to see if the person has a disability that affects a life activity. If verification of disability is required as part of the application form, make sure it is included and adequately documents a qualifying disability. If the process calls for professional verification to be collected on an "as needed" basis, check the professional contact information provided by the applicant. Are appropriate professionals named? Is contact information provided?

To enable verifying information to be collected from professionals, it will be important to ensure that a “Release of Information” form has been provided by the applicant. If such a release is not part of the application form being used, consideration should be given to obtaining such a release as part of the interview.

Look in the application form for inconsistencies in answers and information provided that might indicate that the applicant is unsure of her/his abilities to use fixed route service. Many applicants may have no prior experience using fixed route service (or experience that is not recent). Others may overestimate or underestimate their abilities for various reasons. Often, inconsistencies show up as answers that suggest a lack of skills that appear unrelated to the stated disability (e.g., applicants that state they cannot use fixed route in hot or cold weather, but don’t appear to have disabilities affected by temperature).

Interview - Opening

1. The interviewer should greet the applicant and introduce him/herself.
2. Explain the purpose of the interview - to allow the applicant to explain his/her travel abilities and limitations and need for ADA paratransit service.
3. Explain what will happen - a short interview followed by a physical or cognitive assessment (if needed).
4. Explain that the transit agency provides ADA paratransit service for customers who are unable, because of a disability, to use fixed route service for some or all of their trips. Note that ADA paratransit service is provided only where fixed route buses and operate - not in places where there is no bus. Note that two types of eligibility are granted - unconditional if they cannot make any trips by fixed route and conditional if they can sometimes use fixed route service and other times need paratransit. (*Emphasize key service and/or eligibility issues that are relevant to the way they completed the application form*). Ask if they have any questions about paratransit service or paratransit eligibility. Respond briefly to any questions they have.
5. Explain that the information that they provide about their disability will be kept strictly confidential.

Interview – General Interview Guidance and Approach

The main purpose of the interview is to gain additional information from applicants about their abilities to use fixed route transportation services. The statements in the interview will supplement the written application form and documentation of disability provided by the applicant. First and foremost, the interview should give applicants an opportunity to present issues “in their own words.” Also, it is an opportunity, once applicants have described their travel issues, to ask follow-up questions in order to have a clear understanding of their abilities and needs.

Another important purpose of the interview is to answer any questions that applicants may have about the eligibility process or ADA paratransit service. This will help to avoid misunderstandings about the program.

Following is general guidance on the conduct of interviews that will help to achieve these objectives.

General “Rules” for Interviewing

Get information directly from the applicant whenever possible. Applicants may be accompanied by family members or guardians. Whenever possible and appropriate, ask to interview the applicant alone. In cases where it is clear that applicants cannot speak for themselves, it may be necessary for the accompanying person to be part of the interview. Still, however, direct some questions (as appropriate) to the applicant. In other cases, information from the application may indicate that the applicant can speak for himself or herself. In these cases, note that the interview is with the applicant and tell the guardian/family member that they can wait in the reception area while the interview is conducted. If the guardian/family member insists on being with the applicant throughout the process, allow them to be present. It will then be necessary, though, to reinforce throughout the process that direct input from the applicant is important. Appropriate reminders may be needed as questions are asked.

“Partner” with the Applicant/Understand the Applicant’s Perspective. For there to be a good flow of information, it is important to “partner” with applicants – to give the applicant a certain level of comfort, confidence, and respect for you as the interviewer and for the process as a whole. To develop a successfully interview partnership, always:

- Deal with any extreme emotions before proceeding with the interview. Applicants may express anger with having to participate in an interview or may show a lack of trust in the process. Acknowledge that you understand what the person is expressing and then reinforce the fact that the interview and process is designed to give them an opportunity to make sure that their abilities and needs are fully understood.
- Be respectful of applicants (even if their behavior is inappropriate);
- If the situation arises, acknowledge that the applicant knows more than you do about their situation. Don’t contradict what the person says they can or cannot do by suggesting that perhaps they can do more/less;
- Be honest. Don’t make promises or suggestions about their possible eligibility just to make the applicant more comfortable with the process or outcome.
- Give applicants your full attention. Focus on applicants as they are responding to your questions. Avoid being distracted, “fidgeting,” or otherwise being inattentive. *It is important that the interview process convey to customers that the transit agency is interested in fully hearing and understanding their transportation issues and concerns.*
- Don’t jump to conclusions. Even though you will have advance information from the application form and may have some notion of the issues, give applicants an opportunity to restate their abilities and limitations again “in their own words.”
- Explore each point fully. Make sure you understand each point that the applicant is making. If what they say is not clear, ask them to “Explain” or otherwise elaborate on what they are saying.

Keep the Person in the Process. Applicants must be assured that their point of view is given consideration. The in-person nature of the interview provides an ideal opportunity to ask follow-up questions that address the individual's issues and concerns – something that is not practical or effective in a paper process. Community confidence in the process can be enhanced through the effectiveness and skill of the interviewer. The applicant should leave the interview feeling as though someone was truly listening to his or her issues.

Suggested Types of Questions:

While there may be different approaches to the interview, depending on the issues that come out of the review of the application and documentation provided, generally the interview should begin by asking a general question that will allow the applicant to explain their abilities to travel in the community. Some possible opening questions are:

“Please tell me what happens when you travel outside your home.”

or

“What are your concerns about traveling on city buses?”

Let applicants summarize their travel abilities and limitations in their own way. Responses to a general opening question should begin to identify travel limitations and abilities. As issues are raised, follow-up for more detailed information by asking the applicant to further explain the general issue they may have mentioned. When following-up for more information, avoid leading questions. For example, if an applicant first states something general like: “I don't think I can get to the bus stop and back,” follow-up by asking “Can you tell me more about your concerns about getting to and from bus stops?” rather than saying “You mean if its too far you can't get there?”

Using this type of questioning, try to get more detailed information about each of the issues that applicants may have raised in the application form.

After applicants have presented their major issues, it may be necessary to ask more pointed questions about potential barriers they may have failed to mention. For example, applicants with physical disabilities may mention the need for accessible vehicles and issues when traveling long distances. They may not, however, raise issues related to curb-cuts or environmental barriers (even though it may be likely that they would be affected by such barriers). Many applicants mention the issues they feel are most important but may not understand that, for accurate setting of full conditions of eligibility, all potential barriers need to be identified. Have a mental “checklist” of issues that might apply based on the information in the application, and try to get the applicant to discuss each before the end of the interview.

Avoid asking questions that will likely have a “Yes” or “No” answer. These will not give you much information. Also, avoid beginning questions with “Why?” Why questions often result in answers that rely on judgments or feelings. “What” and “How” questions are more likely to get the applicant to talk about experiences and abilities in more detail.

Avoid questions that are not relevant. While questions like “Are you able to transfer in and out of bed independently?” may give some information about functional ability, they will seem intrusive and irrelevant. Get information with questions related to traveling and using fixed route service.

The following pages provide general guidance on requesting additional information from applicants and professionals for: (1) applicants with cognitive disabilities; (2) applicants with psychiatric disabilities; (3) applicants with vision impairments; and (4) applicants with seizure disorders.

Decisions from the Interview:

A decision should be made, based on the information provided in the application form, other documentation of disability that may be provided, and the interview, whether additional documentation and review procedures are needed. Additional documentation of the specific disability and the effects of the disability on functional ability may be needed from professionals named by the applicant. This will be particularly important if applicants don’t provide such documentation, the disability is not obvious, or there is some question about the likely effects on functional ability of the stated disability. For example, applicants may indicate health problems such as arthritis, heart conditions, stroke, pain, or other general conditions. The question to be resolved is whether these conditions are severe enough to significantly affect travel on fixed route. Similarly applicants may cite “anxiety” or other general psychiatric issues. The question is whether these are severe enough for there to have been a formal diagnosis of a mental illness and if the extent of the condition significantly limits travel on fixed route. Follow-up with professionals can be conducted after the interview.

A decision on whether to ask the applicant to participate in a physical or cognitive functional assessment would also be made immediately following the interview. In general, an in-person functional assessment might be considered if:

- The interviewer is still uncertain about certain stated functional abilities of the applicant;
- A recommendation of “ineligible” is being considered (in such cases, the assessment will help to ensure that such a decision is accurate – before it is made);
- “Conditional” eligibility is being considered and more specific information about exact conditions is needed (e.g., the physical functional assessment might better define the maximum reasonable walking distance, or might better assess the need for an accessible vehicle).

Getting Additional Information From Professionals

In some cases, it may be necessary to contact named professionals for additional information about an applicant’s disability or functional abilities. To enable professionals to be more helpful, provide them with information about ADA paratransit eligibility. The “Guidelines for Professional Reports” document at the end of this section can be used as an example of the type of information that can be provided.

Consider whether the professionals contacted are the right professionals to provide the information being sought. Make sure they are familiar with the applicant and have treated or worked with them recently. Make sure they are the right professional to also provide information about functional ability and not just diagnosis of health condition or disability.

Also note that you should not ask professionals for a summary judgment about a person's ability to use fixed route service or to tell you if they think a person should be ADA paratransit eligible. Instead, collect specific information about the applicants' disability and specific functional abilities that will allow you to then make an accurate determination. Suggestions for the types of follow-up questions that might be asked are provided on the following pages.

Documentation

It is suggested that the interviewer keep notes during the interview. To keep focused on the applicant and their responses, the interviewer should avoid focusing too much on note-taking, completing checklists, etc. Following the interview, additional information and observations collected in the interview should be summarized on the "Interview Summary Form" (provided at the end of this Attachment). This would then be attached to the application form.

It is suggested that persons contacting professionals for verification of disability and additional functional ability information complete a "Professional Verification Contact Form" (also provided at the end of this Attachment) for each contact made. This form would then also be attached to the application form.

Additional Information - Applicants with Cognitive Disabilities

When reviewing eligibility for persons with cognitive disabilities, interviewers and other eligibility review staff might consider obtaining the following information to supplement answers provided to questions in the written application form. This information could be obtained in the interview or through follow-up with professionals familiar with the applicant.

When interviewing applicants who have cognitive disabilities, certain general observations might be made in the greeting and interview process. This includes observations about responsiveness to greetings or directions, verbal skills, agitation, or inappropriate behaviors. Also note if they are distracted during the interview and appear to have difficulty staying focused on the interview.

From applicants:

Inquire about how they currently travel. Are there places that they go on their own? Do they travel outside their home by themselves? If so, where do they go?

Ask if they use telephones. Have they used pay phones to call places when they are traveling?

Do they wear a watch and are they able to tell and/or monitor the passage of time? Ask them to describe what time they leave to make a particular trip (perhaps one indicated in the application or the trip to or from the interview). Or, ask how long it takes them to travel to or from certain indicated destinations.

If they indicate that they sometimes travel on their own, ask if they have ever gotten lost when traveling alone. If yes, ask them to describe what happened. Ask: "How did you know you were in the wrong place?" Follow-up by asking if they were able to find their way back. Ask: "What did you do to find your way back?"

If they indicate they have never gotten lost, ask what they would do if they were lost.

If they indicated in the application form that they have had training to learn to travel in the community or use fixed route buses, ask for more information about the training. When was the training? Who provided the training? To what places did they learn to go? Since the training, are they now traveling to those places?

To learn about related activities and skills, consider the places to which applicants say they travel (from the application or interview). If applicants indicate that they are working or in a work training program, ask them to describe what they do or what they are being trained to do, and with what level of supervision.

From professionals:

If there are uncertainties or inconsistencies based on the application, additional documentation provided, and the interview, it may be useful to contact one or more professionals identified by the applicant.

When speaking to professionals identified by applicants, first determine:

- In what capacity they know the applicant;

- How long they have known or worked with the applicant;
- When they last saw the applicant.

Get more detailed information about the stated disability and level of cognitive ability of applicants. This might include a general classification of cognitive ability such as mild, moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation, or the professional may offer the specific IQ of the applicant. Dual disabilities should be noted (e.g., mental retardation and psychiatric disabilities).

Ask if the applicant has any specific behavioral problems.

Get confirmation of what applicants may have indicated about their abilities. Ask questions similar to those noted above. Does the person travel alone at times? If so, where? What abilities do they have to follow directions to make a trip? To understand time and follow a schedule to get places on time? To know when they are lost? To get help if they are lost? To recognize and avoid dangers in the community if they were to be traveling on their own? To cross a street safely.

The discussion of skills related to functional abilities to travel may lead to specific information about general abilities and skills. Professionals might express or be asked to indicate general abilities such as applicants':

- Orientation to person, place, and time;
- Judgment and safety skills related to traveling alone;
- Problem solving and insight skills;
- Short and long-term memory;
- Concentration (focus attention);
- Ability seek and act on directions;
- Ability to process information;
- Ability to communicate needs;
- Consistency;
- Behavioral skills.

Consider related physical skills that may affect travel. For example: walking stability (gait, balance), physical stamina (endurance), or seizures.

Verify information about places to which applicants now travel and their typical activities. Verify information about stated travel instruction and skills learned. If applicants have not received travel instruction to date, ask what the professional feels is their potential to benefit from training.

Making a Determination

Based on the information from the application form, additional documentation that might have been provided, the interview, and contact with professional(s), determine if:

- The applicant has a documented or verified disability that affects one or more life activities;
- The extent of the disability affects independent travel;
- There are some trips that the applicant can make on fixed route transit;

- If the applicant has the ability to learn to travel independently to a greater extent than they are currently.

If there is no documented or verified disability or if the extent of disability does not appear to affect independent travel, a recommendation of “NOT ELIGIBLE” might be appropriate. BEFORE APPLICANTS ARE DENIED ELIGIBILITY, THEY SHOULD BE REFERED FOR A FACTS TEST.

If the extend of disability seems to clearly make any independent travel unreasonable, and if it is clear that the person would not benefit from training, a determination of UNCONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY might be appropriate. Participation in the FACTS test might not be necessary.

If it appears that the applicant’s functional ability might permit some independent travel, or if the applicant might benefit from travel instruction, they should be asked to participate in a functional assessment of cognitive ability (such as FACTS).

Possible Additional Questions - Applicants with Psychiatric Disabilities

When reviewing eligibility for persons with psychiatric disabilities, interviewers and other eligibility review staff might consider obtaining the following information to supplement answers provided to questions in the written application form. This information could be obtained in the interview or through follow-up with professionals familiar with the applicant.

When interviewing applicants who have psychiatric disabilities, certain general observations might be made in the greeting and interview process. This includes observations about responsiveness to greetings or directions, verbal skills, agitation, or inappropriate behaviors. Also note if they are distracted during the interview and appear to have difficulty staying focused on the interview.

From applicants:

Ask when they were first diagnosed as having the disability. Ask applicants to describe any current treatment. Be sure the application (or accompanying documentation) identifies the current assisting professional(s) and how to contact them. Be sure the release has been signed so that professional information can be obtained.

Inquire about how they currently travel. Are there places that they go on their own? Do they travel outside their home by themselves? If so, where do they go?

In many instances, specific characteristics of fixed route service which are different from paratransit might impact an applicant's ability to travel by fixed route bus (e.g., crowding at stops/stations or on the bus, being alone in an unfamiliar area). To determine exactly what characteristics of fixed route service might make independent travel unreasonable, ask applicants: "How do you think travel by ADA paratransit will be better for you than travel on fixed route buses? Make sure the applicant has a clear understanding from the introduction part of the interview of ADA paratransit and fixed route service.

Ask what medications the person is currently taking. Ask how they assist the person. Ask if there are any side effects of the medications.

Ask if the disability is the same every day. If not, what is a good day like (what are they able to do)? What is a bad day like? How many good/bad days have they had in the last month? Does anything trigger bad days?

Ask the applicant if they drive a car.

To learn how the disability affects other activities, consider the places to which applicants say they travel (from the application or interview). Ask them about other apparent activities (work, school, shopping) and if they do these things independently. If not, what types of assistance or accommodations have been provided?

From professionals:

If there are uncertainties or inconsistencies based on the application, additional documentation provided, and the interview, it may be useful to contact one or more professionals identified by the applicant.

When speaking to professionals identified by applicants, determine:

- In what capacity they know the applicant;
- How long they have known or worked with the applicant;
- When they last saw or treated the applicant.

Get more detailed information about the stated disability and extent of disability. **ASK FOR THE FORMAL DIAGNOSIS OF DISABILITY (DSM-IV OR OTHER).** Ask for the date of onset. Ask about the applicant's current prognosis.

Ask if any of the following skills are affected by the applicant's disability:

- Judgment
- Problem solving
- Insight
- Coping skills
- Short-term memory
- Long-term memory
- Concentration
- Orientation
- Communication
- Attention to task (distractibility)

If yes, ask the professional to describe the effect and the extent of limitation caused by the disability. Ask how the disability would prevent the applicant from:

- Traveling alone outside the house;
- Leaving the house on time;
- Seeking and acting on directions;
- Finding their way to or from a bus stop;
- Crossing streets;
- Waiting for a bus;
- Boarding the correct bus;
- Riding on the bus or train;
- Transferring to a second bus or exiting at the correct destination;
- Monitoring time;
- Dealing with unexpected situations.

Ask if the applicant currently experiences auditory or visual hallucinations. If yes, ask if the applicant would be likely to experience auditory or visual misperceptions due to these hallucinations.

Ask if the applicant demonstrates inappropriate social behavior (ex., aggressive or overly friendly). If yes, describe.

Ask if training, driver assistance or tools such as ID cards, printed route directions, or other assistance might help.

Ask if the goal of traveling independently (even limited travel in the neighborhood) is within the context of treatment.

Ask if the applicant is taking psychotropic, antidepressant, or other medications prescribed by them or another professional. Ask what medications are being prescribed, the dosage, frequency, and what effects the medication has on the applicant's functional ability. Ask if the applicant would be able to travel independently in the community if they were compliant in taking their medication. Ask if the professional deems the applicant to be compliant in taking their prescribed medication.

Ask if there is anything about the use of prescribed medications that might complicate the applicant's use of public transportation. Ask if the applicant's functional ability might be temporarily affected by medication. If so, have the professional explain and indicate an expected duration.

Verify information about places to which applicants now travel and their typical activities. Are there any other life skills that the applicant lacks?

Making a Determination

Based on the information from the application form, additional documentation that might have been provided, the interview, and contact with professional(s), determine if:

- The applicant has a documented or verified disability that affects one or more life activities;
- The extent of the disability affects independent travel;
- There is a difference in the type of service provided by ADA paratransit versus fixed route that would make the applicant able to use ADA paratransit but not use fixed route.
- If there are some conditions under which the applicant could use fixed route transit.

If there is no documented or verified disability or if the extent of disability does not appear to affect independent travel, a recommendation of "NOT ELIGIBLE" might be appropriate.

If there is a documented disability and it does affect travel in general, but travel by fixed route and travel by ADA paratransit would be similarly affected (there is essentially no difference between the modes for the issues presented by the applicant's disability), a recommendation of NOT ELIGIBLE may also be appropriate.

If the extent of disability seems to clearly make any independent travel unreasonable, and if it is clear that the person would not benefit from training or support services that transit might be able to provide, a determination of UNCONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY might be appropriate.

If it appears that some independent travel is possible, they should be considered for CONDITIONAL eligibility. If there is evidence that the applicant's ability may improve in the short-term (less than the term of full eligibility typically granted), TEMPORARY eligibility might be provided.

Possible Additional Questions - Applicants with Vision Disabilities

When reviewing eligibility for persons with visual disabilities, interviewers and other eligibility review staff might consider obtaining the following information to supplement answers provided to questions in the written application form. This information could be obtained in the interview or through follow-up with professionals familiar with the applicant.

As appropriate, check if the applicant has brought a visual acuity statement or other appropriate documentation of the vision impairment. If not, is a professional named from whom such a statement can be obtained?

From applicants:

If not already indicated in the application or documentation provided, ask the applicant to describe the specific visual condition.

Ask how long they have had this condition.

Ask if the condition is considered stable, degenerative, or otherwise changing.

Verify the equipment/aids used (mobility aids may be more specific than indicated in the application). Possible aids include: sighted guide, guide dog, white cane, and optical devices.

Ask applicants if they can walk outdoors alone. If yes, ask where they can travel. Determine, in general, if they can travel:

- Only on their own property?
- To places nearby? (on the same block)
- To places further away? (have them explain)

If they travel outdoors alone, ask if they can cross streets without help. Ask them to explain conditions under which they can or cannot cross streets, for example:

- only quiet streets;
- at intersections that are not too busy;
- at traffic lights.

If the person is partially sighted, ask if they can see steps or curbs.

If applicants are partially sighted, ask if their vision is affected by different lighting condition, such as:

- Bright sunlight;
- Dimly lit or shaded places;
- Night time.

Ask if traveling outside alone is affected by other conditions (consider in particular the impact of environment noise or the inability to distinguish traffic flow patterns).

Ask if applicants have other disabilities that impact their travel (in particular, consider whether applicants have hearing disabilities as well). From observation, note if there are any other physical limitations in gait, pace, or use of other equipment such as a walker or standard cane.

If applicants indicate that they do not travel outside alone, ask if they have ever considered or received mobility instruction. If not, why not. If they have received mobility instruction, ask them to tell you about the outcome, what was learned, etc. Get the name of the instructor or agency for follow-up contact.

Ask applicants if they currently use fixed route transit. If yes, ask them where they go by bus. Determine, in general, if they travel:

- Only to places they are familiar with or have been trained to go;
- To other places as well.

If they travel to places beyond those they are familiar with, ask how they know when/where to get off the bus. Also ask them to explain if they can find their way to other destinations.

If they stopped using fixed route transit, ask them to explain why they stopped using the service.

If they have never used transit, ask if they have considered or received instruction in using buses. If not, why not. If they have received travel training, ask them to tell you about the outcome, what was learned, which routes, etc. Get the name of the instructor or agency for follow-up contact.

From professionals:

If the applicant did not bring documentation of the extent of vision impairment, and if the person is partially sighted, a professional should be contacted for a visual acuity statement. Also, if there are uncertainties or inconsistencies based on the application, additional documentation provided, and the interview, it may be useful to contact one or more professionals identified by the applicant.

Note that specific vision condition information will be obtained from an ophthalmologist (or perhaps from another professional who has a copy of a current visual acuity statement). Information about mobility skills and functional ability would more appropriately be obtained from a mobility instructor or other professional working on a more ongoing basis with the applicant.

When speaking to professionals identified by applicants, first determine:

- In what capacity they know the applicant;
- How long they have known or worked with the applicant;
- When they last saw the applicant.

Ask for the specific eye disease or condition. Ask for date of onset and prognosis (stable, degenerative).

If the applicant is partially sighted, ask the professional to fax a visual acuity statement that can be included in the applicant's file. The visual acuity statement should indicate:

- The visual acuity for each eye;

- The field of vision for each eye;
- The visual acuity with best correction for each eye.

Note: Legal blindness is visual acuity that does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with best correction, or the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle of 20 degrees or less.

If it is possible to contact a professional familiar with the person's mobility skills (e.g., a mobility instructor), ask them to describe the applicant's general mobility skills. Are they able to:

- Travel outside alone? (how far?: on own property, same block, farther?)
- Cross streets without help? (What kind? What types of intersections/controls?)
- See and negotiate curbs and steps?
- Travel to familiar places on their own?
- Find their way to less familiar or unfamiliar destinations?

If applicants are partially sighted, ask what environmental conditions might impact travel outside (bright sunlight, dim lighting, darkness, background noise, etc.).

Verify information about any mobility training or travel training started or completed. Based on such training, clearly identify places, routes that they professional feels that the applicant can travel.

If no training has been received, ask the professional if they think the applicant would benefit from mobility or travel training.

Making a Determination

Based on the information from the application form, additional documentation that might have been provided, the interview, and contact with professional(s), determine:

- If the applicant has a documented vision disability that affects ability to travel independently. (In general, a vision disability classified as legal blindness or more severe).
- If there are some conditions under which the applicant could use fixed route transit.

In general, if the applicant is legally blind or has a more severe vision disability, they should be considered **AT LEAST CONDITIONALLY ELIGIBLE**. The exact conditions of eligibility that should be applied must then be identified. To do this, first consider the applicant's existing, personal mobility skills. Are they able to travel only to familiar, common destinations from stops/stations they know how to get to? Are they able to travel to other locations under certain conditions. What specific environmental barriers would prevent independent travel to places they are not familiar with and are not currently traveling to?

If it is determined that an applicant does not currently have the skills to travel by fixed route, but probably could with instruction, **TEMPORARY, UNCONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY** might be considered and a period of time set which would allow the person to receive instruction. Eligibility would be evaluated at the end of this period. If training is received, the input of the instructor should be considered in the re-evaluation.

Possible Additional Questions - Applicants with Seizure Disorders

When reviewing eligibility for persons with seizure disorders, interviewers and other eligibility review staff might consider obtaining the following information to supplement answers provided to questions in the written application form. This information could be obtained in the interview or through follow-up with professionals familiar with the applicant.

Documentation of the type and frequency of seizures experienced should be obtained. If applicants do not bring this documentation to the interview, make sure that the application form identifies a professional that can be contacted. Be sure the release has been signed so that professional information can be obtained.

From applicants:

Ask about the type of seizures experienced.

Ask about the frequency of seizures.

Ask when they were first diagnosed as having this condition. Ask if there has been any change in their condition.

Ask applicants if there are certain things that will trigger seizures, and if so to describe what these are.

Ask applicants to describe what happens when they have a seizure. Note in particular whether the applicant indicates that they have an aura (a warning that they are about to have a seizure) and if they are typically able to prepare themselves and make themselves as safe as possible.

Ask applicants what happens once their seizure has ended. Note in particular if they are severely disoriented. If yes, ask what they typically do to become oriented again.

Ask if the applicant is taking medication to control the seizures. What medication? Has the medication helped to control the seizures or the effects of the seizures?

Ask applicants if they travel outside alone and where they travel. Ask if they are able to cross streets without help.

Ask applicants to explain what characteristics of the paratransit service will benefit them. Ask: "How do you think travel by ADA paratransit will be better for you than travel on fixed route buses?" Make sure the applicant has a clear understanding from the introduction part of the interview of ADA paratransit and fixed route service.

To learn how the disability affects other activities, consider the places to which applicants say they travel (from the application or interview). Ask them about other apparent activities (work, school, shopping) and if they do these things independently. If not, what types of assistance or accommodations have been provided? Are there limitations in any other activities of daily living (such as use of steps, driving, and cooking)?

From professionals:

If the applicant has not brought documentation of their seizure disorder to the interview, contact should be made with a professional. Note: Documentation will ideally be obtained from a neurologist or from another professional that has access to the applicant's disability records.

If there are uncertainties or inconsistencies based on the application, additional documentation provided, and the interview, it may be useful to contact one or more professionals identified by the applicant.

When speaking to professionals identified by applicants, determine:

- In what capacity they know the applicant;
- How long they have known or worked with the applicant;
- When they last saw or treated the applicant.

Ask the professional the type of seizures the applicant experiences. Ask about the frequency of the seizures. Ask about the prognosis.

Ask if the seizures are preceded by an aura.

Ask the professional to describe the applicant's ability to travel alone in the community. When and where can they safely travel?

Ask what advice or limitations on traveling alone in the community have been communicated to the applicant.

Ask if the applicant is permitted to drive.

Ask if the applicant is taking medications prescribed by them or another professional. Ask what medications are being prescribed, the dosage, frequency, and what effects the medication has on the applicant's functional ability. Ask if the applicant would be able to travel independently in the community if they were compliant in taking their medication. Ask if the professional deems the applicant to be compliant in taking their prescribed medication.

Ask if there is anything about the use of prescribed medications that might complicate the applicant's use of public transportation. Ask if the applicant's functional ability might be temporarily affected by medication. If so, have the professional explain and indicate an expected duration.

Verify information about places to which applicants now travel and their typical activities.

Making a Determination

Based on the information from the application form, additional documentation that might have been provided, the interview, and contact with professional(s), determine if:

- The applicant has a documented or verified disability that affects one or more life activities;

- The extent of the disability affects independent travel;
- There is a difference in the type of service provided by ADA paratransit versus fixed route that would make the applicant able to use ADA paratransit but not use fixed route.
- If there are some conditions under which the applicant could use fixed route transit.

In general, it is important to determine if the applicants' concern is riding on the bus (feeling that additional assistance would be available on ADA paratransit), or if the issue is one of safety getting to and from stops/stations. With seizures that are not preceded by an aura, it may not be safe to cross streets or attempt to enter or exit transit stations. Also, depending on the effects and severity of the seizures, applicants may not be able to be safe getting to or from stops/stations after they have experienced a seizure.

In general, applicants should be considered for ADA paratransit eligibility if they have frequent, severe seizures that are not preceded by an aura and are not controlled by medication.

Additional Information - Applicants with Physical Disabilities

When reviewing eligibility for persons with physical disabilities, interviewers and other eligibility review staff might consider obtaining the following information to supplement answers provided to questions in the written application form. This information could be obtained in the interview or through follow-up with professionals familiar with the applicant.

Have a “functional skills checklist” and “potential barriers” checklist in mind. The skills checklist should include the ability to:

- Travel far enough to get anywhere within the defined ADA paratransit service area;
- Travel with enough pace/speed to be able to get places in a reasonable period of time;
- Negotiate slight, moderate, and steep terrain;
- Negotiating paths of travel with significant cross-slopes;
- Travel on uneven or broken surfaces;
- Travel in snow, on icy surfaces, or in rainy/wet conditions;
- Travel outside in very hot weather and high humidity;
- Travel outside in very cold weather;
- Traveling outside in high smog conditions;
- Get on and off sidewalks that don't have curb-cuts;
- Get on and off sidewalks that do have curb-cuts;
- Cross different types of streets safely (in a reasonable amount of time);
- Wait at a bus stop if there is no bench;
- Wait at a bus stop if there is a bench;
- Get on and off buses that do not have lifts or ramps.
- Get on and off buses using a lift or ramp;
- Get to a seat or wheelchair securement location on a bus;
- Maintain seated balance when on the fixed route vehicle;
- Stand on a moving bus holding the handrail if no seats are available;

Also consider the types of mobility aid(s) that applicants indicate they use. As appropriate, determine when applicants use different mobility aids (if more than one is indicated), and if they use these independently or with assistance.

Consider which of the travel skills listed above might be affected by the specific disability or health condition of the applicant, considering the type(s) of mobility aids used. For example, someone with paraplegia who uses a manual wheelchair may have difficulty (depending on their strength and coordination) with traveling long distances, negotiating moderate or steep terrain or cross-slopes, traveling in snowy or icy conditions, negotiating on broken or uneven surfaces, getting on and off sidewalks that do not have curb-cuts (and maybe even negotiating curb-cuts), crossing streets quickly enough to be safe; and getting on and off buses that do not have lifts.

Some persons who use power wheelchairs may not be able to operate their wheelchair for long distances due to issues related to coordination and/or strength. The lack of sidewalks or other safe paths of travel

(which would require travel in busy streets) also may prevent a person who uses a power wheelchair from getting to or from transit stops/stations.

Again, depending on physical abilities, applicants who use crutches, braces, or walkers may have similar issues and may also have problems with:

- Traveling on wet surfaces (heavy rain);
- Standing and balancing on a moving vehicle;
- Standing and waiting at a bus stop;

Persons with health conditions may have difficulty traveling significant distances and may have sensitivities to weather extremes such as severe heat or humidity, cold, or air pollution.

The above generalizations may not always be the case, but the interviewer should try to obtain information about each of these potential issues/barriers. It is important to have these “checklists” of potential issues in mind, because applicants with physical disabilities may often provide information about major issues/barriers, but may neglect to point out every issue that impacts their ability to travel.

As suggested by these examples, it is important to determine the persons physical functional abilities (given the mobility aids they use) to know how they may be able to perform each of the needed skills to use fixed route service. It is also important to determine if abilities vary by day. Persons with certain health conditions (MS, HIV/AIDS, renal failure, etc.) may have certain days when the condition is severe and significantly impacts travel and other days when independent travel by fixed route is possible.

The basic physical abilities that need to be considered include:

- Strength;
- Endurance;
- Coordination;
- Balance;
- Dexterity;
- Range of motion;
- Gait; and
- Speed.

When interviewing applicants who have physical disabilities, certain general observations may help to supplement information provided in the application form. Note any problems applicants may have with ambulating or maneuvering mobility aids. Note how quickly applicants are able to ambulate, be seated, rise from a seated position, or handle paperwork.

Also, look for indications of other related disabilities issues such as vision impairments or cognitive disabilities which the applicant may not have indicated in the application form. Such related disabilities may be complicating factors that affect the applicant’s ability to perform necessary skills.

From applicants:

NOTE: Given the wide variety of physical disabilities and health conditions, information provided in the application form, and observations made at the beginning of the interview, select questions below that are applicable and appropriate.

Inquire about how they currently travel. Are there places that they go on their own? Do they travel outside their home by themselves? If so, where do they go?

Ask them to describe their experiences when traveling outside their home.

Ask if they take any medications that may impact their ability to travel independently.

Ask if they have used fixed route buses and what their experiences have been.

If they have not used fixed route buses, ask them to describe what they think would happen if they used fixed route buses.

Ask if there are times when they think it would be possible to use fixed route buses. When? Under what conditions?

Have applicants describe issues with skills/barriers that they might not have mentioned (but which you think may be issues – from the above lists).

From professionals:

If there are uncertainties or inconsistencies in what applicants have indicated and what was observed, or if the applicant indicates a non-obvious, hidden disability or health condition, it may be helpful to follow-up with a professional familiar with the applicant's disability/health condition and functional abilities.

When speaking to professionals identified by applicants, determine:

- In what capacity they know the applicant;
- How long they have known or worked with the applicant;
- When they last saw or treated the applicant.

Inquire about the specific disability/diagnosis, date of onset, and prognosis.

Ask about the extent of the disability/health condition and what limitations the applicant has in daily life activities.

Ask about applicable travel skills identified in the application. If the professional you are getting information from has had the opportunity to observe the applicant performing certain tasks, they she may be able to provide insight on functional abilities to use fixed route services. Ask the professional to define reasonable expectations for each skill (reasonable walking distances, reasonable terrain that can be negotiated, reasonable time that applicant could stand and wait for a bus, etc.).

Ask for the professional's assistance in defining in more detail and environmental issues that may apply (temperature sensitivities – what temperatures would present unsafe or risky conditions for the applicant).

Ask about any medications and their possible effect on travel.

Making a Determination

Based on the information from the application form, additional documentation that might have been provided, the interview, and contact with professional(s), determine if:

- The applicant has a documented or verified disability that affects one or more life activities;
- The extent of the disability affects independent travel;
- If there are some conditions under which the applicant could use fixed route transit.

In general, it is important to determine if applicants are applying because using ADA paratransit is seen as a more convenient and safe option, or if their disability/health conditions “prevent” fixed route travel some or all of the time. Note that “prevented” should be interpreted to mean that it is “not reasonable” to expect the applicant to attempt use of the fixed route system. Prevented should not be interpreted so strictly to mean it is physically impossible.

If there is no documented or verified disability or if the extent of disability does not appear to affect independent travel, a recommendation of “NOT ELIGIBLE” might be appropriate. **BEFORE APPLICANTS ARE DENIED ELIGIBILITY, THEY SHOULD BE REFERED FOR A PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL EVALUATION.**

If the extent of disability seems to clearly make *any* independent travel unreasonable, or if the conditions under which they may be able to use fixed route are very limited, a determination of UNCONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY might be appropriate. Participation in the physical functional assessment might not be necessary.

If it appears that the applicant’s functional ability might permit some independent travel, CONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY might be appropriate and they should be asked to participate in a PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT to more clearly define the exact conditions under which fixed route travel is possible.

If there are inconsistencies in information/observations obtained from the interview and information provided by the applicant or documentation they have brought, it would be appropriate to ask the applicant to participate in a PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT.

Interview Summary Form

Name of Applicant: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Description of Disability/Health Condition(s): _____

Does disability appear to affect the functional ability of the applicant to use fixed route service?

- Yes No Not sure

Based on information in the application form, and information and observations from the interview, does the applicant appear to be able to get to and from fixed route stops throughout the service area?

- Always Sometimes Never Not Sure

Apparent Issues:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance that can be traveled | <input type="checkbox"/> Curb-cuts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terrain/cross-slopes | <input type="checkbox"/> Street crossing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snow/ice | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for bus (no bench) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uneven/broken surfaces | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting for bus (stop not detectable) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat/humidity | <input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinding for infrequent trips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold | <input type="checkbox"/> Wayfinding for any trips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smog | <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks community mobility/safety skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low light/bright light | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Description of Issues: _____

Based on information in the application form, and information and observations from the interview, does the applicant appear to be able board, ride, and disembark from a fixed route vehicle?

- Always Sometimes Never Not Sure

Apparent Issues:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs lift/ramp | <input type="checkbox"/> Balance on moving vehicle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can't maneuver onto/stand on lift | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't recognize infrequent destinations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can't maneuver to securement area | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't recognize any destinations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Description of Issues: _____

Based on information in the application form, and information and observations from the interview, does the applicant appear to be able to understand and “navigate” the fixed route system?

- Always Sometimes Never Not Sure

Apparent Issues:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding/processing information | <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with unexpected situations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memory | <input type="checkbox"/> Transferring between routes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Description of Issues: _____

Recommendations:

Unconditional eligibility

Conditional eligibility

Conditions: _____

Temporary eligibility

Eligibility period: _____ months

Travel training? Yes

No

Not eligible

Professional verification needed

Information needed: _____

Physical functional assessment

Cognitive functional assessment

Interviewer Name: _____

Signature: _____

**Professional Verification Contact Form
for Applicants with Cognitive Disabilities**

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Professional Contacted: _____

Affiliation: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____

Note: Select appropriate questions that provide supplemental information needed for the applicant (as determined from the review of the application form, the interview, and any documentation of disability provided by the applicant).

When speaking to professionals identified by the applicant, first ask:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known or worked with the applicant?

3. When did you last see the applicant?

Get more detailed information about the stated disability and level of cognitive ability of the applicant. This might include a general classification of cognitive ability such as mild, moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation, or the professional may offer the specific IQ of the applicant. Dual disabilities should be noted (e.g., mental retardation and psychiatric disabilities).

4. Comments about the applicant's stated disability and level of cognitive ability:

5. Does the applicant have any specific behavioral problems?

- Yes No

If YES, please describe. _____

Get confirmation of what the applicant may have indicated about his/her abilities.

6. Does the applicant travel alone at times? If so, where?

7. What abilities does the applicant have to follow directions to make a trip?

8. What abilities does the applicant have to understand time and follow a schedule to get places on time?

9. What abilities does the applicant have to know when he/she is lost?

10. What abilities does the applicant have to get help if he/she is lost?

11. What abilities does the applicant have to recognize and avoid dangers in the community if he/she were to be traveling on their own?

12. What ability does the applicant have to cross a street safely?

13. Comments about the applicant's stated ability to travel alone:

The discussion of skills related to functional abilities to travel may lead to specific information about general abilities and skills. Professionals might express or be asked to indicate general abilities such as the applicant's:

14. Orientation to person, place, and time

15. Judgment and safety skills related to traveling alone

16. Problem solving and insight skills

17. Short and long-term memory

18. Concentration (focus attention)

19. Ability to seek and act on directions

20. Ability to process information

21. Ability to communicate needs

22. Consistency

23. Behavioral skills

Consider related physical skills that may affect travel. For example: walking stability (gait, balance), physical stamina (endurance), or seizures.

24. Comments about the applicant's related physical skills:

Verify information about places to which the applicant now travels and his/her typical activities. Verify information about stated travel instruction and skills learned. If the applicant has not received travel instruction to date, ask what the professional feels is his/her potential to benefit from training.

25. Comments about the applicant's typical activities and current travel destinations, previous travel training (if any), and potential to benefit from training:

**Professional Verification Contact Form
for Applicants with Psychiatric Disabilities**

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Professional Contacted: _____

Affiliation: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____

Note: Select appropriate questions that provide supplemental information needed for the applicant (as determined from the review of the application form, the interview, and any documentation of disability provided by the applicant).

When speaking to professionals identified by the applicant, first ask:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known or worked with the applicant?

3. When did you last see or treat the applicant?

Ask the professional for more detailed information about the stated disability and the extent of the disability.

4. What is the formal diagnosis of the applicant's disability (DSM-IV or other)?

5. What was the date of onset?

6. What is the prognosis?

7. Is the applicant taking any psychotropic, antidepressant or other medication(s) prescribed by you?

- Yes No

Comments: _____

8. If YES, please list the type, frequency, dose, and any comments about how the medication(s) may complicate the individual's independent mobility in the community.

Medication Type	Dosage	Effect on Functional Ability (if any)

9. If the applicant takes his/her medication compliantly, will he/she be able to travel independently in the community?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

10. Do you deem the applicant to be compliant in taking prescribed medication?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

11. Is there anything about the use of medication that would complicate the applicant's use of public transportation?

Yes No NA

If YES, please explain.

12. Has the applicant's functional ability decreased *temporarily* due to adjustment to medication?

Yes No NA

13. If YES, please explain, and note the expected duration of the decrease in functional ability.

NA

14. Does the applicant currently experience either auditory or visual hallucinations?

Yes No

Comments: _____

15. If YES, would he/she be likely to experience auditory or visual misperceptions due to hallucinations?

Yes No NA

Comments: _____

16. Are any of the following skills affected by the applicant's disability? If YES, please explain, describing the effect and the extent of limitation caused by the disability. Is the applicant able to:

	Yes	No	Some-times	Comments
Travel alone outside the house				
Leave the house on time				
Seek and act on directions				
Find way to/from bus stop				
Cross streets				
Wait for a bus				
Board the correct bus				
Ride on the bus				
Exit at the correct destination				
Transfer to a second bus				
Monitor time				
Deal with unexpected situations				

Comments: _____

17. Are any of the following affected by his/her disability? If YES, please explain.

	Yes	No	Some- times	Comments
Judgment				
Problem solving				
Insight (recognizing a problem)				
Coping skills				
Short-term memory				
Long-term memory				
Concentration				
Orientation				
Communication				
Attention to task (distractability)				

Comments: _____

18. Would training, driver assistance, or tools such as ID cards, printed route directions, etc., help to minimize the effects noted above?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

19. Is the goal of traveling independently (even limited travel in the neighborhood) within the context of treatment?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

20. Would the use of alternative transportation (ADA paratransit service) conflict with the goals of therapy, such as confidence building?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

21. Would alternative transportation interfere with the applicant's therapy or improvement?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

22. Does the applicant demonstrate inappropriate social behavior (for example, is he/she aggressive or overly friendly)? If YES, please describe.

- Yes No

Comments: _____

Verify information about places to which the applicant now travels and his/her typical activities (mentioned in the application form or interview).

23. Comments regarding current travel and activities:

24. Does the individual drive a car?

- Yes No

Comments:

25. Are there any other life skills that the individual lacks that would be an indication of his/her inability to travel on a fixed route bus? If YES, please describe.

- Yes No

Comments:

26. Is there any additional information regarding this individual that you believe affects his/her functional ability to use regular fixed route bus service, or any special circumstances that you believe should be considered?

**Professional Verification Contact Form
for Applicants with Vision Disabilities**

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Professional Contacted: _____

Affiliation: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____

Note: Select appropriate questions that provide supplemental information needed for the applicant (as determined from the review of the application form, the interview, and any documentation of disability provided by the applicant).

When speaking to professionals identified by the applicant, first ask:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known or worked with the applicant?

3. When did you last see the applicant?

Ask the professional for more detailed information about the specific eye disease or condition. If the applicant is partially sighted, ask the professional to fax a visual acuity statement that can be included in the applicant's file. The visual acuity statement should indicate:

- *The visual acuity for each eye*
- *The field of vision for each eye*
- *The visual acuity with best correction for each eye*

4. What is the formal diagnosis of the applicant's eye disease or condition?

5. What was the date of onset?

6. What is the prognosis? Is the condition stable, degenerative, or otherwise changing?

If it is possible to contact a professional familiar with the person's mobility skills (e.g., a mobility instructor), ask them to describe the applicant's general mobility skills:

7. Is the individual able to walk outdoors alone?

- Sometimes Often Never

Comments: _____

8. If SOMETIMES or OFTEN, where can he/she travel?

- | | |
|---|--|
| Only on his/her own property | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| To places nearby (for example, on the same block) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| To places farther away | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

If YES to places farther away, please explain.

9. If the applicant is able to travel outdoors alone, is he/she able to cross streets without help?

- | | |
|---|--|
| At quiet streets with very little traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| At traffic lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| At very busy intersections | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| NA | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments: _____

If the person is partially sighted:

10. Is he/she able to see steps or curbs?

- Sometimes Often Never NA

Comments: _____

If the person is partially sighted:

11. Is his/her vision affected by different lighting conditions?

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bright sunlight | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Dimly lit or shaded places | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Night time | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| NA | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Comments: _____

12. Is the applicant's ability to travel outside alone affected by other conditions (*consider in particular the impact of environment noise or the inability to distinguish traffic flow patterns*)? If so, please describe.

- NA

Verify information about any mobility training or travel training started or completed. Based on such training, clearly identify places, routes that the professional feels that the applicant can travel.

13. Comments about the applicant's previous mobility or travel training, if any, routes the applicant can use, and destinations to which he/she can travel.

If the applicant has not received mobility or travel training:

14. Do you believe that the applicant would benefit from mobility instruction or travel training? Please explain.

**Professional Verification Contact Form
for Applicants with Seizure Disorders**

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Professional Contacted: _____

Affiliation: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____

Note: Select appropriate questions that provide supplemental information needed for the applicant (as determined from the review of the application form, the interview, and any documentation of disability provided by the applicant).

When speaking to professionals identified by the applicant, first ask:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known or worked with the applicant?

3. When did you last see or treat the applicant?

Ask the professional for more detailed information about the type of seizures the applicant experiences.

4. Please describe what the applicant experiences during and after a seizure.

5. How often do seizures occur?

6. What is the prognosis?

7. Are the seizures preceded by an aura?

- Yes No Sometimes

8. If YES or SOMETIMES, does the applicant usually have time to prepare and make him or herself as safe as possible?

9. Are there certain things that will trigger the applicant's seizures?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

10. If YES, please describe these triggers.

- NA

11. Please describe the applicant's ability to travel alone in the community. When and where can he/she safely travel?

12. What advice or limitations on traveling alone in the community have been communicated to the applicant?

13. Is the applicant permitted to drive?

- Yes No

Comments: _____

14. Is the applicant taking any medication(s) prescribed by you or another professional?

- Yes No

Comments: _____

15. If YES, please list the type, frequency, dose, and any comments about how the medication(s) may complicate the individual's independent mobility in the community.

Medication Type	Dosage	Effect on Functional Ability (if any)

15. If the applicant takes his/her medication compliantly, will he/she be able to travel independently in the community?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

17. Do you deem the applicant to be compliant in taking prescribed medication?

- Yes No NA

Comments: _____

18. Is there anything about the use of medication that would complicate the individual's use of public transportation?

- Yes No NA

If YES, please explain.

19. Has the applicant's functional ability decreased *temporarily* due to adjustment to medication?

- Yes No NA

20. If YES, please explain, and note the expected duration of the decrease in functional ability.

Verify information about places to which the applicant now travels and his/her typical activities.

21. Comments about the applicant's typical activities and current travel destinations.

**Professional Verification Contact Form
for Applicants with Physical Disabilities**

Name of Applicant: _____

Name of Professional Contacted: _____

Affiliation: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Contact: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____

Note: Select appropriate questions that provide supplemental information needed for the applicant (as determined from the review of the application form, the interview, and any documentation of disability provided by the applicant).

When speaking to professionals identified by the applicant, first ask:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known or worked with the applicant?

3. When did you last see or treat the applicant?

Ask the professional for more detailed information about the stated disability, date of onset and prognosis.

4. What is the formal diagnosis of the applicant's disability?

5. What was the date of onset?

6. What is the prognosis?

Ask about the extend of the disability/health condition and what limitations the applicant has in daily life activities.

7. How does the applicant's disability/health condition affect daily life activities?

Ask about applicable travel skills identified in the application. Ask the professional to define reasonable expectations for each skill (reasonable walking distances, reasonable terrain that can be negotiated, reasonable time that applicant could stand and wait for a bus, etc.).

Required Travel Skills	Reasonable Expectations
Walking distance to/from stops.	
Stepping on/off curbs and crossing streets.	
Negotiating hills/steep terrain.	
Standing time at bus stop.	
Boarding lift and non-lift buses.	
Other: _____	

Ask for the professional’s assistance in defining in more detail any environmental issues that may apply (temperature sensitivities – what temperatures would present unsafe or risky conditions for the applicant).

Environmental Issue	Unsafe/Risky Conditions
Extreme heat/humidity.	
Extreme cold.	
Ice and/or snow.	
Poor air quality.	
Other: _____	

Ask about any medications and their possible effect on travel.

Medication Type	Dosage	Effect on Functional Ability (if any)

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL REPORTS TO ACCESS

If your patient has requested eligibility for ACCESS ADA transportation service, s/he may contact you for additional information. Because of your professional relationship with this applicant, you are uniquely qualified to help clarify his or her **functional abilities and limitations**.

Port Authority and ACCESS Service

Port Authority provides many accessibility features that make it possible for people with different types of disabilities to ride on its buses and light rail vehicles. These include: lifts and ramps (there is no need to walk up or down the steps of a bus); tie-downs and passenger restraints for people using wheelchairs, which are secured upon request by the driver; stop calling by drivers and automatic Enunciators; large print and Braille route and bus identification signs; priority seating at the front of buses for people with disabilities; and the availability of bus schedules in large print, Brailled and taped format.

ACCESS is a paratransit service that provides discounted door-to-door transportation on a shared-ride basis to eligible individuals with disabilities who cannot use public, fixed-route (bus or light rail) transportation at all, or under certain circumstances. ACCESS is offered by the Port Authority as part of their family of public transportation services, but only eligible individuals receive the 90% fare subsidy provided by Port Authority.

General guidelines

The basis for ACCESS ADA eligibility is the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Eligibility is based on:

- **Functional ability** to independently perform the tasks necessary for bus use including: getting to or from the bus stop, getting on the bus, riding the bus and understanding how to navigate the system in a variety of environments. A diagnosis by itself does not qualify an individual for ACCESS.
- Whether the individual is **prevented** from performing these tasks (as opposed to the task being more inconvenient or difficult)
- Whether the individual can perform these tasks **all of time, only under some circumstances**, or if the disability would **always prevent** the individual from performing these tasks. ACCESS eligibility is unique to the individual's personal functional ability and reflects ability to use the bus only in some circumstances (ex., could use the bus if it were not more than two level blocks to the bus stop, and there were no snow or ice present.)

Information you will provide

Please document specific diagnoses and prognoses of your patient's disabilities in the form of a letter. They will not be accepted on a prescription blank.

You may expand further, in as much detail as you can provide, how this individual's physical, sensory, cognitive or emotional problems may impact his/her ability to travel on a bus. Please relate your comments to the specific tasks necessary to board, ride and navigate the Port Authority system by describing how each condition limits his/her functional ability in these specific areas.

If the synergistic reaction among this person's various disabilities may further limit his or her functional ability, please describe in as much detail as possible.

Attached you will find a list of specific points which can serve as a guide for your report to ACCESS. You should address any of them, which are applicable to your patient/client.

Other services in the community

Your patient may be eligible for other discounted or free services from ACCESS through the sponsorship of another agency.

Individuals with disabilities who are **Medical Assistance Recipients** may be eligible for free Port Authority or ACCESS service from the Allegheny County Office of Community Services Medical Assistance Transportation Program. For information, call 350-4476.

Individuals aged **60 and over** may be eligible for discounted transportation to appointment through the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging's Older Persons' Transportation (OPT) program. For more information, call 562-5385.

For more information

If you have any questions regarding ACCESS, please call Eileen Caputo or Holly Dick at ACCESS (412) 562-5353. Thank you for your cooperation.

Required Information

- **Specific diagnosis and prognosis** of **all** of your patient's disabling conditions. Identify for which of them you are currently treating him/her.
- **Specific measurements:**
 - **For the visually impaired:** visual acuity measurements and visual field readings for both eyes
 - **For the cognitively impaired:** I.Q. scores and Adaptive Behavior scores
- **Date of onset**
- **Prognosis** if the individual has a progressive disease or condition, or if he/she is expected to improve or recover. Provide the best estimate of the rate at which this is expected to occur, and if therapy is part of the treatment plan.

Additional Information

If you would like to elaborate, this may serve as a guideline

Mobility Impairments

- Can the individual walk?
- Under what conditions can s/he walk?
- Under what conditions can s/he not walk?
- What mobility aids does this person use?
- How long has s/he been using this device?
- How far can s/he walk/push/travel independently using mobility aids?
- How do weather conditions (rain, ice, snow) affect his/her mobility?
- How are balance and endurance affected?

Neurological Impairments or Head Injuries

- Is judgment or behavioral inhibition impaired, and to what extent?

Seizures

- What type of seizures?
- What is the frequency?
- Are they preceded by an aura?
- Are they controlled by medication?

Emotional and/or Behavioral Problems

- Is judgment impaired?
- Does the individual experience disabling anxiety, auditory or visual hallucinations, delusions, etc.

General Information

- Would this person need the help of an assistant or companion in order to ride the bus?
- How do temperature fluctuations affect his/her functioning?