City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 12, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO 43 : EASTER SEALS TAXICAB POCKET GUIDE.

Councilman Ludwig Gaines asked staff to inquire about the cost, if any, of acquiring and distributing Easter Seals Taxicab Pocket Guide for taxi customers and drivers outlining rights and responsibilities of serving customers with disabilities.

Staff found that the Easter Seals Taxicab Pocket Guide brochure is available free of charge through the Easter Seals Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation). A copy of the English version of this brochure is attached. As you can see, its focus is on instructing taxicab drivers on their responsibilities. City staff has ordered these free brochures and will distribute them among the taxicab drivers in the following available languages: English, Spanish and Farsi.

Acknowledgments:

Easter Seals Project ACTION wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their information and support for this project:

- James McLary, McLary Management
- Hal Morgan, Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association
- Nancy Starnes, National Organization on Disability
- Doug Towne, Disability Relations Group

For more information, contact:

Easter Seals

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Easter Seals

Creating solutions, changing lives.

Assistance derived for Easter Seals Project ACTION through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration.

Rights & Responsibilities of Drivers and Customers:

The law protects both customers with disabilities and taxicab drivers, and each has their own set of rights and responsibilities. While these standards ensure safe and fair treatment for customers and drivers, they are also a formula for good service!

DRIVERS MUST:

- Provide transportation to any person with a disability.
- Offer assistance to passengers if requested (not to include actual lifting).
- Serve customers with disabilities traveling alone and only use the assistance of family members, companions, or medical/public safety personnel if the customer requests or agrees to help from such persons.
- Give the same reservation services to customers with disabilities as are available to other customers.
- Not charge customers with disabilities extra fees for necessary assistance. For example, drivers must charge the same amount to stow a wheelchair or other aid device in the trunk, as they would charge for a piece of luggage.
- Not deny service to a customer with a disability solely because the disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience the driver.

CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES MUST:

- Know whether or not they can use a typical taxicab vehicle. Not all taxicabs can accommodate oversized mobility aids.
- Tell drivers if they need help and explain what assistance they need.
- Control their service animals at all times.
- Know their destination.
- Pay their fare.
- Be able to transfer from his or her mobility aid to the passenger compartment of the taxi without the driver's help.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that guarantees everyone an equal opportunity to take part in our society. The ADA defines a person with a disability as someone with a physical or mental impairment that greatly limits one or more major life activities, such as breathing, seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, working, caring for oneself, doing manual tasks, or learning.

Easter Seals

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION IN OUR NATION

Taxicab Pocket Guide

Serving Customers with Disabilities is Smart Business!

Inside, You'll Learn About:

1 Communicating with Customers with Disabilities
2 Communicating with Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
3 Serving Customers with Disabilities
4 Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs
5 Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals
6 Serving Customers With Visual Disabilities

Fifty-four million people in America today live with disabilities. These people have jobs, families, classes, meetings, travel plans, and other activities that keep them on the move, and they need transportation, including taxicabs, to help them get where they're going! Think about it: 54,000,000 fares just waiting to give you their business...

Smart business people make it their goal to meet or exceed customers' expectations. Your customers, including those with disabilities, want and expect good and safe service. If you treat persons with disabilities with courtesy and respect you will gain:

- loyal customers
- repeat business
- referrals & additional business
- increased revenue
- recognition and reward
- personal satisfaction

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Easter Seals **Project ACTION**

It's easy to provide good service to customers with disabilities; just follow these tips on communication and assistance:

1 Communicating with Customers with Disabilities

Proper communication with people with disabilities follows the basic rules of customer service and good manners. It is important to emphasize the person, not the disability, and to use words that accurately portray an individual person or situation. For example, say "person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "wheelchair user." Use "person who is deaf or hard of hearing" rather than "deaf person" or "hearing impaired" and "seniors" or "older adults" in place of "elderly," etc. To be best prepared to communicate with your customers, it's smart to always have a pad of paper and a pen available.

2 Serving Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Face the customer when speaking to them, and don't let object obstruct their view. Speak clearly.
- It is not necessary to raise your voice when speaking to a customer with a hearing impairment. Raising your voice distorts your lip movement and makes lip reading difficult.
- If you are picking up a passenger with a hearing impairment, you cannot blow your horn to let them know of your arrival — you'll need to knock on their door or use their accessible doorbell.
- If you're picking up a customer who is deaf or hard of hearing you or the dispatcher will need to call Relay Services at 711 in order to contact the customer. In your call, give or enter the customer's TTY number and the Relay Services operator will relay the message to the customer.

3 General Guidelines for Serving Customers with Disabilities

- Treat customers with disabilities as you would like to be treated.
- Take the time to identify the customers' needs and determine how best to serve them when you first meet.
- Never make assumptions about your customers' physical or mental abilities.
- Customers with similar disabilities often have different needs to make independent travel possible.
- Ask customers with disabilities if they need assistance. Don't automatically assume they do.
- Do not touch a customer without his/her permission.
- Speak directly to customers with disabilities, not their companions.
- Speak clearly with a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
- If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.
- Smile, listen, and show respect. Be friendly and courteous.
- Talk to customers at their eye level. It may be appropriate to sit when having a long conversation with a person using a wheelchair.
- Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give other customers.
- Solve problems in a professional manner.

4 Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs

- People who use wheelchairs are easy to accommodate — don't pass up the fare!
- Ask the customers how you can assist them. The customers know what works best for them and must be able to manage their transfer to the passenger compartment of the taxi.
- Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and other mobility aids are part of the customer's personal space. Do not hold or lean on them without the customer's permission.
- Wheelchair and other mobility aids are individualized. Do not make assumptions about how they operate or store.
- Whenever possible, mobility aids such as canes and walkers should travel in the customer compartment of the taxicab. Wheelchairs and other large devices can be stored in the trunk.
- Power wheelchairs require an accessible vehicle equipped with a lift, low floor, or a ramp. If your vehicle cannot accommodate a power chair, call your dispatcher to order an accessible vehicle and wait with the customer, if possible. If your company does not own an accessible vehicle, ask the dispatcher how to acquire transportation to meet the customer's needs.

If your company does not own a vehicle that can accommodate a power wheelchair, you as an independent contractor driver may consider buying one — it would be a **smart** business investment!

5 Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals

- Service animals are highly trained and allowed by law to ride in the customer compartments of taxicabs.
- People with various types of disabilities use service animals.
- Dogs are the most common service animals, but other animals may help people with disabilities.
- Some, but not all, service animals wear identification like a tag, vest, or special harness. If you are not sure that the animal is a service animal, ask. Certification or identification is not required for the animal.
- The owner must stay with the service animal and keep it under control at all times.
- Never touch or talk to the service animal — it is working!

6 Serving Customers with Visual Disabilities

- Identify yourself, and use the customer's name if you know it.
- Respond verbally when the customer gives you information, so that he/she will know that you have heard them.
- Ask the customer what type of assistance is needed and how you can best provide it.
- Count the customer's change out loud, as you would for any other customer. Identify the denomination of the bills when you give the customer their change.
- Before you leave the customer, give specific directions to allow the customer to reach their destination. Say "turn right," or "turn left to reach the front door." Ask if further assistance is needed.

Serving Customers with Disabilities is Smart Business