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Guidelines for FISH Drivers

Communications

- The 211 center will send you an email with the details for a proposed drive. Respond promptly with acceptance, or let them know that you can't take the appointment.
- Within two days, call the client to confirm the details.
 - Introduce yourself like "Hello, this is (your name), I'm a volunteer driver for FISH and I'll be taking you to your medical appointment on (date)."
 - Agree on a pickup time that allows ample time to reach the destination, and any other details relevant to the trip.
 - Determine if anyone else (or animals) will be going along.
 - Make sure that you know exactly where to meet the client - this can be important if they live in a building with multiple entrances.
 - Make sure that the client has your number so that they can reach you.
 - Call the client again the day before the appointment, just as a reminder.
 - For new clients, extra communication can be helpful.
- If for any reason you decide that you are not comfortable carrying the client, contact the 211 center and ask them to arrange for a different driver.
- All FISH rides must be scheduled via the 211 center. Please do not make private arrangements for additional rides with clients.

Privacy

- Keep it confidential. Don't share a rider's name, address, medical appointments, or anything else you learn through volunteering — not with friends, family, neighbors, or on social media. Even well-meaning comments like "I saw so-and-so at the cancer center" can cause real harm.
- Don't ask more than you need to ask. It's natural to make friendly conversation, but let riders share what they want to share. You don't need to know why they're going to an appointment.

Physical Assistance

- Clients must be able to reach your car without assistance. You may help them enter and exit the car.
- If the client is using a walker or wheelchair, you should store it in the car for them and retrieve it as needed. Only transport/folding wheelchairs can be accommodated.

Masks

Masks are optional for both drivers and clients. If the client is wearing a mask, they'd probably appreciate it if you would too.

Seating

- You may invite the client to sit in a front seat, or ask them to sit in the back. If they want to sit in the back, honor their request.
- Young children (who must be accompanied by an adult client) must use the age-appropriate car seat. The client must provide the seat, though you may offer your own, if you happen to have one. Make sure that you know how to install a car seat in your car. Know whether it must be rear-facing (it depends on the child's age or weight). *Some kind of seat is required for all children under age eight:* see the details at <https://dmv.ny.gov/new-york-states-occupant-restraint-law>

Driving and waiting

- If your client does not appear at the pickup point, and cannot be reached by phone, call 211 and speak with the FISH coordinator.
- During the client appointment, you are free to do what you like, if you arranged for the client to call you when they are ready. You must be able to return to their location within ten minutes of their call.
- Make sure that the client has their cell phone with them, and that they know how to find your number in their call history or contact list. In some cases, it can be best to write your name and number on a piece of paper and give it to them. You may also speak to staff at the medical office and ask them to call you when the client is ready.
- You are not permitted to make personal stops for the client, except to pick up prescriptions, if that location is close to your route.

No Tipping

FISH is a volunteer organization and drivers should not expect payment beyond the reimbursement for their mileage.

- Drivers should not accept tips.
- If a tip is offered, respond by thanking the client and saying that drivers are not allowed to accept tips. Encourage a donation at the FISH website.
- If the client insists on leaving a tip, you should forward the amount to FISH as a donation.

Record Keeping and Reimbursement

- Keep track of how many miles you drive for each appointment. Your miles may include the full round trip distance from your home, to the client and the appointment, and back.
- Quarterly, you must submit your driving record, via email, to the coordinator at 211. They will provide a spreadsheet that you should use.
- Reimbursements generally are issued within a month after the end of a quarter.

Your vehicle

- Your vehicle should be clean and well maintained, properly registered and inspected, and insured.
- Do not smoke in your car while carrying a client.
- Using Ithaca Carshare is an option. It requires pre-registration and qualification. The Carshare cost is covered by the program. You will not receive any mileage reimbursement.

Questions?

Feel free to contact the 211 center or a board member.

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