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Applying for Access-A-Ride

WHAT IS ACCESS-A-RIDE?

Access-A-Ride (“AAR”) is offered by the New York City Transit Authority (“NYCTA”) for people who have disabilities that make it very difficult for them to use buses or subways. AAR is a shared-ride service that eligible customers can use by making reservations. Depending on the extent of your disability and whether it is permanent or temporary, your AAR service may be full, conditional, or temporary:

- *Full*: You have complete, unconditional AAR service for a period of 5 years.
- *Conditional*: You may use AAR only under certain conditions. For example, if your disability prevents you from using subway stations without escalators, you would receive AAR service only to a subway station with escalators or a bus station. This is called feeder service.
- *Temporary*: Your AAR services are either full or conditional and will last for however long is decided necessary. Temporary eligibility can range from one month to one year.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR AAR?

You have to call to request an application for AAR. Call 877-337-2017 from NYC area codes or 718-393-4999 from elsewhere. If you are Deaf or hard of hearing, you can use your preferred relay service or the free 711 service relay. You can also go to http://web.mta.info/nyct/paratran/access_application.pdf to get a form. You need to complete the application and, if possible, include documentation with the application. Do not mail the application. You will also need to schedule an in-person assessment with NYCTA, and you will take the application with you to the assessment.

WHAT DOCUMENTS SHOULD I INCLUDE WITH MY APPLICATION?

First, think about how your disability makes it hard for you to use buses or subways. Then start preparing documentation to prove that point. A strong application includes at least one detailed statement from a service provider, medical professional, or other person who knows your disability (see [Tips for Doctors Filling Out Applications for Access-A-Ride Benefits](#)). This statement should explain how your disability or its symptoms prevent you from using buses or subways.

Also include your own personal documentation. Keep a journal to record the impact of travel on your disability, health, energy, stamina, and well-being. Copy it and include it with your application. Travel journals should be specific. If applicable, note your fatigue or anxiety and how much time you needed to rest after walking to the bus or subway station. You should also include a detailed list of any environmental, architectural, or other barriers that make it difficult for you to get to bus or subway stations.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE AN ASSESSMENT?

After you receive your application, you will have to contact NYCTA to schedule round trip transportation to a NYCTA office for an interview and evaluation. The phone number is 877-337-2017 from NYC area codes or 718-393-4999 from elsewhere. You will have to pay the standard transit fares to get there, but a personal care attendant can travel for free. A personal care attendant can be a spouse, relative, friend, or professional attendant. When you call to schedule the assessment, let NYCTA know if a personal care attendant or someone else will be traveling with you and if you need large print, recorded, or Braille materials, or a sign language interpreter. You may bring a friend, family member, advocate, service provider, lawyer, or other person to help you advocate during the interview at the assessment center.

What happens at the assessment?

Bring the completed application to the assessment. NYCTA will reject the application if you mail it. At the assessment, a NYCTA healthcare professional will judge your physical, visual, or cognitive ability. This often includes a physical evaluation during which you are asked to walk up stairs and complete other tasks. Then there is an interview where you have the opportunity to tell the healthcare professional how your disability makes it difficult for you to use buses or subways. Be sure to mention any other problems that result from your disability, such as fatigue, disorientation, or pain. If you have a psychological or cognitive disability, be sure to tell the interviewer how, if at all, it affects your ability to use buses or subways.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ASSESSMENT?

You should receive a letter with the decision in the mail within three weeks. If you are denied AAR or given only conditional services, you can appeal within 60 days. Please see [Access-A-Ride: How to Appeal a Denial or Reduction of Services](#) for more information.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP WITH MY APPLICATION OR AN APPEAL?

You may call MFY Legal Services, Inc. toll free at 877-417-2427 Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. if you have any further questions or need help reviewing letters from your doctor or medical professional.

Adapted from DREDF "ADA Paratransit Eligibility: How to Make Your Case," by Kevin Irvine and Marilyn Golden (July 2003). http://dredf.org/transportation/paratransit_eligibility.html

**DISCLAIMER: This fact sheet gives general information
for NYC residents; it is NOT legal advice.**