

## Using Ridesharing Services in Healthcare

### Question

What are the benefits and risks of using ridesharing services for patients who need nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT)?

### Answer

Transportation is a social determinant of health and a known barrier to patients obtaining necessary healthcare. Every year, millions of patients skip or delay medical care because of transportation issues.<sup>1</sup> Some patients may never schedule appointments, but others may cancel or just not come as scheduled, which creates logistical and financial repercussions for healthcare organizations. In some instances, patients might turn to ambulances for transportation, creating an undue burden on emergency medical services (EMS).<sup>2</sup>

Many factors create transportation barriers, including lack of access to vehicles, lack of insurance coverage, transportation costs, inadequate access to public transportation, poor infrastructure, and more.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, ridesharing services have ventured into the healthcare industry to help fulfill the need for NEMT. These services can help increase access to timely care, reduce costs, facilitate patient transfers, prevent cancellations and “no-shows,” and reduce inappropriate use of EMS.

Although they offer many benefits, ridesharing services also create risk and safety issues. Healthcare organizations must weigh these factors and engage in diligent planning and risk-reduction efforts when working with ridesharing companies. The following strategies can help focus organizations’ planning efforts and risk management initiatives:

- Be aware of federal and state laws and regulations as well as payer requirements that may apply to ridesharing services in the context of health and medical care (e.g., antifraud and abuse laws). Make sure your organization’s ridesharing program complies with these statutes and standards.

- Develop patient selection criteria for using ridesharing services versus traditional medical transportation options. Be aware that patients who require extra assistance due to mobility issues or physical or cognitive impairment likely are not good candidates for this service.
- Conduct due diligence assessment of ridesharing vendors. For example, evaluate:
  - Their hiring and screening processes for drivers, including criminal background checks, sex offender registry review, driving records, insurance coverage, etc.
  - The frequency with which they conduct background checks on drivers
  - Their protocol for responding to complaints about driver behavior or misconduct
  - Their use of technology (e.g., GPS and onboard diagnostics) to monitor and address safety issues, such as speeding and erratic driving
  - Their vehicle standards, such as vehicle age, inspections, registration, cleanliness, and safety features
  - The technical and physical safeguards they have in place to ensure privacy and confidentiality of data as well as their response procedures for data breaches
  - Their protocols for how drivers will handle any medical emergencies that occur while patients are in the vehicle
  - The training they conduct with drivers to ensure high-quality service and rider safety (e.g., communication training, basic first aid, and use of personal protective equipment)
  - Their proof of valid coverage and adequate limits for automobile and cyber liability insurance
- Notify your organization's professional liability insurer about any plans to use ridesharing companies; this will help ensure appropriate coverage from an organizational perspective.
- Use ridesharing companies' health or medical platforms rather than regular business or personal accounts to solicit services. Doing so can help ensure HIPAA compliance and facilitate a more coordinated approach to patients' transportation needs.
- When contracting with ridesharing services, make sure to execute a [business associate agreement](#) that meets the minimum necessary requirements set forth by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Work with your legal counsel to ensure contracts with ridesharing companies are legally sound and clearly specify responsibilities/requirements and who assumes liability if an accident or adverse event occurs.
- Train providers and staff members (e.g., transportation coordinators and other assistance staff) about how the organization is using ridesharing services and its associated policies related to patient selection, privacy, and security. Make sure any staff member who interacts with drivers knows the limits of what information they can divulge.
- Assess patients' satisfaction with ridesharing services. Develop a method for soliciting feedback from patients and a process for addressing any issues or complaints.<sup>4</sup>

## Resources

- [American Academy of Emergency Medicine: The Role of Ridesharing in Emergency Medicine](#)
- [American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology: Discharge After Sedation or Anesthesia on the Day of the Procedure: Patient Transportation With or Without a Responsible Adult](#)
- [American Hospital Association: Social Determinants of Health Series: Transportation and the Role of Hospitals](#)
- [American Journal of Public Health: Economic Benefit of “Modern” Nonemergency Medical Transportation That Utilizes Digital Transportation Networks](#)
- [Carlton Fields: Offering Ridesharing Services to Patients: Uber Risky?](#)
- [Health Affairs: Evaluating a Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Benefit for Accountable Care Organization Members](#)

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> American Hospital Association. (2017, November). *Social determinants of health series: Transportation and the role of hospitals*. Retrieved from [www.aha.org/aharet-guides/2017-11-15-social-determinants-health-series-transportation-and-role-hospitals](http://www.aha.org/aharet-guides/2017-11-15-social-determinants-health-series-transportation-and-role-hospitals)

<sup>2</sup> Dejean, D., Giacomini, M., Welsford, M., Schwartz, L., & Decicca, P. (2016). Inappropriate ambulance use: A qualitative study of paramedics' views. *Healthcare Policy*, 11(3), 67–79.

<sup>3</sup> American Hospital Association, *Social determinants of health series: Transportation and the role of hospitals*.

<sup>4</sup> ECRI. (2018, April 19). *Ask ECRI: Working with rideshare services for resident-requested transport*. Retrieved from <https://members.ecri.org/guidance/ask-ecri-working-with-rideshare-services-for-resident-requested-transport>; ECRI. (2023, June 12). *Ask ECRI: Unaccompanied discharge of patients*. Retrieved from <https://members.ecri.org/guidance/ask-ecri-unaccompanied-discharge-of-patients>; Mallon, E., & Scarola, E. (2016, October 14). Offering ridesharing services to patients: Uber risky? Carlton Fields. Retrieved from [www.carltonfields.com/insights/publications/2016/offering-ridesharing-services-to-patients-uber-ris](http://www.carltonfields.com/insights/publications/2016/offering-ridesharing-services-to-patients-uber-ris); Fox Rothschild. (2018, May 18). *(Ride)sharing is caring*. Retrieved from <https://healthcarelawmatters.foxrothschild.com/2018/05/articles/health-care-providers/medical-practices/ridesharing-is-caring/>

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