

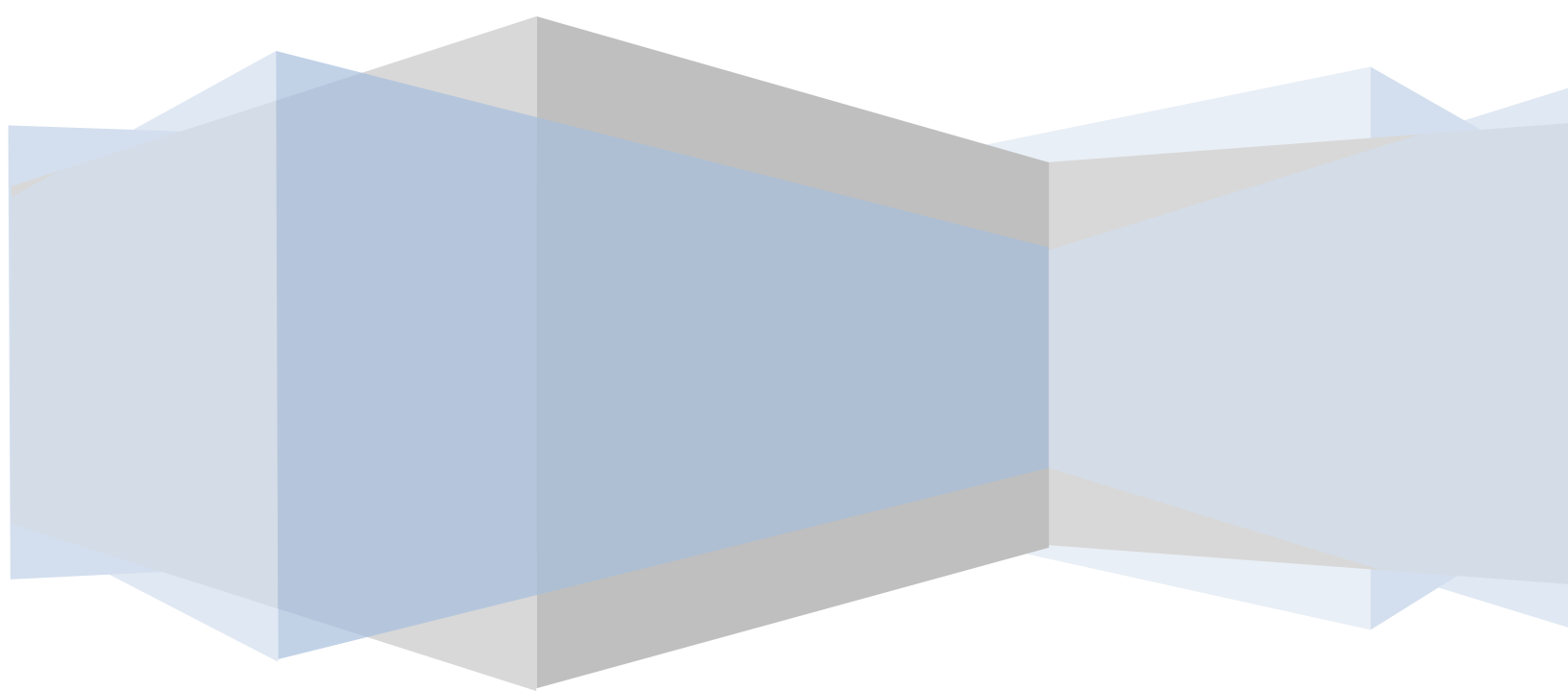
**Southwest Texas Area Regional District**



# **SERVICE OPERATIONS PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**Adopted by Board of Directors – June 5, 2012**

**Revised by Board of Director – December 19, 2013**



# SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## I. GENERAL

### A. Mission

It is the mission of Southwest Area Regional Transit District (SWART) to design implement and maintain an efficient and effective transportation system for residents Dimmit, Edwards, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, Real, Uvalde, and Zavala Counties..

### B. Policy

SWART serves a large diverse population of individuals with varying ages (children, teenagers, adults and elderly), physical challenges, economic and financial status, and ethnic backgrounds.

Southwest Area Regional Transit District shall ensure that no person shall be excluded from the participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity undertaken by SWART, solely by the reason of his/her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

### C. Objectives

The specific objectives of SWART:

1. To provide demand response curb-to-curb and door to door transportation to the residents of its service area.
2. To maintain a trained staff for the operation and control of the system.

## SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### II. ADMINISTRATION

#### A. General

Southwest Area Regional Transit District shall maintain an adequate staff to successfully operate SWART.

#### B. Organization

The General Manager is responsible for the overall management of SWART including the operations and personnel. He/She reports directly to the Board of Directors. The following staff provides assistance with specific daily activities:

##### Administration

General Manager  
Administrative Specialist  
Financial Specialist  
Janitor

##### Operations

Fleet Manager  
Operations Manager  
Trainer  
Scheduler/Dispatcher  
Mechanic I  
Mechanic II  
Driver  
Sub Driver  
Program Clerk

#### C. Employees and Assignments

1. It is the responsibility of the General Manager to organize and monitor the specific daily activities necessary to achieve agency goals. The General Manager directly supervises the Administrative Specialist, Financial Specialist, Billings Specialist/Trainer, and Operations Manager.
2. It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to oversee daily operations, provide public assistance, and maintain statistical data. The Operations Manager shall oversee all operations in the absence of the General Manager. It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to oversee the drivers specifically assigned to their work area or county. The Operations Manager is responsible for supervision of the Dispatching personnel.
3. It is the responsibility of the Administrative Specialist to coordinate training, oversee human resource activities, safety, outreach/marketing, and community activities. Other responsibilities consist of to assist in monitoring of agency activities as required by General Manager, and to provide administrative support to the General Manager. The Administrative Specialist shall oversee all operations in the absence of the General Manager.
4. The Dispatchers, and the Reservationist/schedulers provide clerical support, perform customer in-take, and provide public assistance and information.
5. It is the responsibility of the Drivers to safely operate the District vehicles according to the assigned schedule and to notify the Fleet Manager or their immediate supervisor of vehicles in need of repair.

Attached is the Organizational Chart

## **D. Financial Review Policy**

In order to ensure that someone conducts an independent review of daily financial activities other than the person performing the daily activities, the following policy shall be established for SWART:

1. All purchase requisition shall be reviewed and approved by the General Manager.
2. The General Manager and Administrative Specialist shall review and approve all payment authorizations.
3. The General Manager shall review and monitor monthly expenditure analysis reports provided by Financial Specialist.

## **D. Board of Directors**

### 1. Definition

The Board of Directors is comprised of eight representatives of the eight county service areas including: Dimmit, Edwards, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, Real, Uvalde, and Zavala Counties.

### 2. Appointment

The selection of the membership of the Board shall, as practically as possible, reflect a cross section of the geographical service area of SWART as defined: Dimmit, Edwards, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, Real, Uvalde, and Zavala Counties. Representatives will be public officials (elective and currently holding office if possible, but appointive if not elective), or their designee. A vacancy occurring on the Board for any reason, shall be filled for the unexpired term only, by the same authority which elected or appointed the person no longer serving in the vacant position.

### 3. Duties

The duties of the Board are:

- a. Authority and responsibility to establish policies, rules, and procedures for Board functions, and to establish major organizational, personnel, fiscal, and programmatic policies, subject to Federal, State, and local government and funding entities rules and regulations, and to ensure compliance with such established policies.
- b. Authority and responsibility for final approval of all program plans, priorities, proposals, and budgets, and the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating programs to ensure compliance with such plans, priorities, proposals, and budgets.
- c. Authority to accept grants and contributions from and to contract with Federal, State, and local entities, and receive and administer funds pursuant to the requirements of those entities, to delegate such contractual authority to the General Manager, and to transfer such funds and delegate program administrative powers to other agencies, subject to funding entities rules and regulations.
- d. Assure and enforce compliance with all grant and contract conditions and requirements.

- e. Authority and responsibility to establish and elect officers of the Board, select members of the Executive Committee, and appoint the General Manager of the organization.

#### 4. Rules of Meeting Conduct

The Board shall establish its own organizational and operational procedures and shall conduct meetings according to “Robert’s Rules of Order.” The chair will be elected in accordance with SWART By-laws.

The SWART Board shall receive staff support from the General Manager and the Administrative Specialist.

## SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### III. OPERATIONS

#### A. General

The following operating Policies and Procedures were established for SWART.

#### B. Hours

SWART shall operate a fleet of vehicles and contracted supplemental vehicles as approved by the SWART Board of Directors. Vehicles shall be operational from 2:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday and on Sunday as needed

Services will not be available on the following Holidays:

New Year's Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Medical Transportation program trips will be provided as approved by the HHSC Medical Transportation on all days except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. SWART will be available to transport Medical Transportation dialysis recipients when the recipient's regular scheduled days are moved to Sunday due to a Holiday. Operation Hours for the delivery of transportation service will be Monday through Saturday to allow for transporting recipients (ambulatory and non-ambulatory) for arrival to appointments for program eligible services and return to authorized destination upon completion of service appointment. Recipient health care appointments may be scheduled as early as 5:30 a.m. and as late as 7:00 p.m.

SWART's office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. (including lunch hours). Offices may be staffed with skeleton crews for all other agency holidays and supervisors are on call 24 hours a day and may be contacted in the event of an operator problem.

#### C. Fare Structure

**Cash:** A fare per each one-way trip shall be charged to all eligible passengers and their escorts with the exception of required personal care attendants, who may travel with an eligible passenger at no cost. Fares are based on a one way trip. This means that each time the vehicle is boarded, the fare must be paid by cash, or check, based on the fare schedule. Drivers cannot make change. All fares must be paid by exact change only. If a customer must be transported to obtain exact change, then they will be charged the fare for that additional trip. Failure to do so will result in no service for that trip and the trip will be reported as a No show.

**Pre-paid Fare Passes/Vouchers:** SWART sells prepaid fare passes/Vouchers. This option allows the customer to pay for trips in advance. When using a prepaid fare ticket, drivers will validate proper fare amount. Tickets are not redeemable for cash. SWART is not responsible for lost or stolen tickets.

#### **Medical Transportation:**

SWART provides transportation services to medical facilities including doctors offices, dentist, hospitals, etc. Medicaid recipients may qualify for Title XIX Medical Transportation services. To determine eligibility, customers must contact 1-877-633-8747.

#### **D. Complimentary Passes/Rides**

Whenever SWART makes an error, that in the judgment of the General Manager or his/her designee greatly inconveniences a passenger, a complimentary pass, or free ride, good for one free ride, may be issued to the passenger. The General Manager or his/her designee will determine the value of the free ride. Circumstances that may warrant the issuance of a complimentary pass include:

- Arrival more than 30 minutes later than the scheduled arrival to destination time;
- Passenger was inadvertently left off the schedule;
- Passenger was stranded on a broken vehicle; or
- Other incidents as approved by the General Manager or his/her designee.

#### **E. Vehicle Use**

SWART's vehicles are owned and operated according to established SWART policy and procedure. Sub-contractors may provide supplemental service.

SWART's vehicles shall be used and maintained according to standards set by SWART. They shall be operated according to traffic laws of the State of Texas and local cities. The vehicles may not be used for purposes other than that prescribed unless approval is obtained from the General Manager prior to such use.

#### **F. Statistical Reporting**

SWART shall collect daily operating data and compile accurate, monthly operating statistics as required by funding sources.

#### **G. Inclement Weather**

If inclement weather exists, SWART may with approval of the General Manager reschedule or cancel service. Employees are to report to work unless otherwise informed by Dispatch or direct supervisor. The dispatch office shall attempt to contact any scheduled passengers at the telephone numbers listed in the agency customer database.

#### **H. Training & Operator Requirements**

##### **Training**

SWART requires each driver to receive special training during their course of employment to ensure well-trained professionals. These include:

- |                                 |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Policies and Procedures         | Drug & Alcohol Abuse Testing Policies |
| Safety Policies/Procedures      | Civil Rights                          |
| Complaint Procedures            | System Security                       |
| Organizational Chart            | Job Descriptions                      |
| Medical Transportation Policies | No-show Policy                        |
| Paperwork Requirements          | Driver Emergency Procedures           |
| Building Quality Service        | Confidentiality                       |
| Passenger Assistance Techniques | Sexual Harassment                     |
| Blood borne Pathogens           | Vehicle Inspections/Operations        |
| Passenger Sensitivity           | Evacuation Procedures                 |
| First-aid and CPR               | Defensive Driving                     |



Mobility Device Transfer & Securement	MTP Clients Rights and Responsibilities
Customer Service	Preventive maintenance
Two Way Radio/Cell Phone Use	Recipient Safety
Adult/Child CPR	

## Operator Requirements

SWART and its sub-contractors employ drivers who meet federal, state, and local government requirements for safe operation of the vehicles they drive.

- All SWART drivers are required to have a minimum Class B commercial driver's license with passenger endorsement. Copies of current driver's license will be maintained. Motor vehicle registration checks are conducted as a condition of employment. Annual MVR's are conducted to ensure operators do not possess more than two moving violations for the previous 12 months. Annual checks also ensure operator records are free from DUI/DWI findings. Operators with a failed driving history shall not be employed.
- Upon employment, all operators (drivers) consent for SWART to conduct criminal background checks. The criminal history background check shall include at a minimum, but not limited to, felony or misdemeanor conviction of an act of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, the elderly or persons with disabilities as defined in Texas Family Code, as amended, Chapter 261 and the Texas Human Resources Code, as amended, Chapter 48; an offense under the Texas Penal Code, as amended, against the person; against the family; against public order or decency; against public health, safety or morals; against property; an offense under Chapter 481 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, as amended, (Texas Controlled Substances Act).
- SWART shall conduct an Internet Computerized Criminal History file (CCH) background check and a National and State Sex Offender Registry check, prior to an individual transporting any passenger under SWART contracts. This will include SWART personnel and any sub-contractor or sub-contractor employee who directly works in providing transportation services to passengers and clients. This information shall be maintained on file for review by authorized funding source representatives.
- SWART shall check for felony and misdemeanor convictions for the seven years prior to the hire date and annually thereafter. Individuals with any criminal conviction that falls within the aforementioned categories shall not be allowed to participate in providing services unless authorized by funding sources.
- Employees, subcontractor, and subcontractor employees who provide transportation for passengers and/or clients shall notify SWART in writing immediately of criminal convictions (felony or misdemeanor) and or pending felony charges or placement on a Registry as a perpetrator. SWART will report information to funding source (as required) within 10 business days for determination if the CCH finding or reported incident will disqualify an operator from providing services under appropriate contract.
- SWART shall require each new employee, sub-contractor, or sub-contractor employee who provides transportation services and who has not resided or lived in Texas to sign a waiver attesting to the fact they have never been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor referenced in above paragraph or identified as a perpetrator. If they have been convicted, the nature and conviction date of the felony or misdemeanor must be disclosed. Annual MVR and criminal history checks will be conducted.

- Operator records are maintained which reflects each operator's history of all moving citations and violations from any state. Operators are required to report all accidents and violations on or off duty. Annual record checks of all drivers are completed utilizing a certified service. All employees are required to report any suspension or revocation of their driver's license immediately to their supervisor. Employees must carry their current state driver's license at all times when operating a motor vehicle. Employees with suspended or revoked licenses will not be allowed to operate agency owned vehicles.
- SWART also conducts personal references and reserves the right to contact former employers. Request for DOT drug and alcohol testing information forms are also submitted to previous employers when applicants indicate they have worked for a DOT funded agency in the past. These references are used to verify whether drug/alcohol violations occurred in past employment.
- All "safety sensitive" staff (including drivers), as defined by the Federal Transit Administration, participate in an approved drug and alcohol testing program. The testing program includes drug testing as a condition of employment and drug and alcohol testing on a random basis at the FTA annual minimum random testing rates as set forth in the Federal Register as per 49 CFR Part 655.45(b) for drug and alcohol for all covered employees. Testing can also be conducted for reasonable cause, as follow-up to an accident, and for return to duty (if applicable). The testing program is supported by an alcohol and drug misuse prevention policy that specifies prohibited conduct, a drug-free workplace policy, and training and information on the effects of drug and alcohol use. SWART has a zero tolerance policy. SWART's current drug and alcohol testing program meets compliance with federal regulations 49 CFR Part 40 and Part 655.
- SWART operators are trained on all applicable Texas safety restraint laws at initial orientation. The agency has a written policy which states that all passengers must observe all the Texas safety-belt laws and any other applicable laws for SWART's business operations. All personnel are trained in this provision and instructed to notify supervisor or dispatcher immediately if they encounter a problem regarding passenger conduct.
- As part of the orientation process, all SWART personnel are trained on the importance of reporting fraud or program abuse, sexual harassment, physical or verbal abuse as alleged by recipients or attendants during trips authorized by -HHSC. Staff is instructed to immediately report incidents and concerns to the General Manager, the Administrative Specialist, or their immediate supervisor. If SWART Management believes that the safety of the driver, recipient(s) or others is in jeopardy or if a recipient appears to be dangerous to themselves or others, SWART shall notify the appropriate law enforcement authorities and to appropriate funding source.
- Operators are trained in the consideration of client comfort and making rest stops as needed. The District seeks to employ individuals who are people oriented, sensitive, and responsive to individual situations. On-going training and technical assistance is provided during quarterly staff trainings. The District does do periodic in-vehicle monitoring, mobility device securement monitoring, and employee performance evaluations on all operators. The District also has an incident report and follow up procedures for clients, Medicaid providers, and the general public to use regarding complaints. SWART makes every effort to design schedules to allow for passenger breaks, including meals and restroom use, as needed. In addition, all SWART staff participates in Passenger Assistance Techniques training on an annual basis. This training includes mobility device transfer, mobility device tie down procedures, and client safety/courtesy. Operators are required to exit the vehicle, to open and close vehicle

doors when passengers enter or exit the vehicle and provide any necessary passenger assistance, including, but not limited to, fastening of safety restraints, and securing mobility devices to ensure that recipients enter and exit vehicles safely. Failure to properly secure mobility device is cause for termination.

- SWART has a certified American Red Cross instructor on staff to provide training on CPR and First Aid. SWART supervisors have participated in the Passenger Assistant Safety Sensitive training and are available to conduct one-on-one training as required. Orientation of operators instructs them to interact in a professional manner. This includes, at a minimum, protecting passenger confidentiality, avoiding offensive language or topics, maintaining an appropriate professional relationship and treating passengers with respect. All training is documented and maintained by the Support Services Manager. Training modules for orientation and quarterly trainings are maintained in employee training folders.
- Operators do not, solicit, or receive any gift, money, tips, or other compensation from recipients or attendants under any circumstance. They are instructed to report such offers to the General Manager or appropriate supervisor so that appropriate funding source staff may be notified for follow up with recipient.
- Operators look and listen for trains at all unguarded railroad crossings. Stop at railroad crossings at all times. If a train is visible, wait until train has passed or come to a complete stop before proceeding over the tracks. At no time should a SWART vehicle stop on or within 15 feet of railroad tracks. Stop at least 15 feet from the tracks.
- Operators shall ensure that alternate/backup vehicles are in safe, operating condition.
- In case of hazardous conditions that could affect the safety of passengers who are being transported, such as ice or water build up, natural gas line breaks, or emergency road closings, drivers are responsible for selecting alternative routes and notifying their supervisor. Alternative routes must comply as much as possible with the requirements of this section.

## **I. Service Type**

Demand Response Service. SWART provides a curb-to-curb demand service. Door-to-door service for Medical Transportation Program clients, elderly and disabled passengers will be provided. Request for service must be made at least one business day prior to the desired trip date, and may be scheduled up to 14 days in advance.

## **J. Requesting Service**

Requests for service shall only be accepted by SWART from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Each original and return trip will be recorded separately, and each direction shall be recorded as a one-way trip. The trip shall be scheduled to show the required time to be at destination. Passengers are responsible for calling SWART's toll free phone number when ready for pick-up; to request return trip home or to continue additional scheduled trips.

In order to schedule a trip, one must speak with a scheduler/dispatcher who may require the following in scheduling a trip:

1. Passenger Name
2. Address
3. Phone Number
4. Destination Name
5. Destination Address
6. Expected Arrival Time

## **1. Advance Scheduling**

A request for demand service should be made at least one business day or up to 14 days prior to the desired trip time.

## **2. Same Day Scheduling**

Request for same-day service will be accepted from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The dispatcher will attempt to schedule both the origin and return trip into existing schedules utilizing the following criteria:

- a. The vehicle must have seating/mobility device space available.
- b. The vehicle must be in the near vicinity/location of the origin and destination in order to accommodate the request without disrupting the passengers already scheduled.
- c. Time must be available to allow the trip to be accommodated without disrupting the passengers already scheduled.
- d. The dispatcher may refuse the request for same-day service if it cannot be worked into the existing schedule or it otherwise causes operational problems for SWART

The passenger will be advised, when accepting the same-day, that there may be considerable waiting time for a return vehicle during peak periods. Passenger will be advised that a double fee charge.

## **L. Riding SWART**

SWART is a public transit system, providing rides for many passengers each day. Drivers cannot be at three or four pick-up points at one time and must allow for time to ensure that customer makes it from origin to destination by scheduled appointment time. Therefore, passengers must be ready for pick-up and allow for travel time for transportation to destination. For local scheduled trips, passengers should be ready at least one hour and prior to required arrival time at destination. In the event that a rider will be required to be ready earlier, then Dispatch will contact passengers by telephone as to the approximate pick-up time.

SWART will attempt to drop off passengers no more than 1 hour prior to requested time.

When passenger calls for return pick up, SWART will make every effort to pick them up within 1 hour of their call.

When the driver arrives at the pick-up location, he/she is not required to wait more than five (5) minutes for the public transit passenger and ten (10) minutes for Medical Transportation passenger. Drivers will honk, knock, and ask dispatch to make courtesy calls if phone number is available. Drivers will leave a no-show card at passenger's home if it can be done safely and confidentially. A no-show card will simply notify the passenger that SWART or its appropriate sub-contractor arrived and left the pick up location.

Service may not be rendered if origin or destination location cannot be accessed by the vehicle or if the location does not provide safe passage for the vehicle or safe access to and/or from the vehicle by the passenger. The driver shall attempt to make reasonable accommodations and if not possible then they shall immediately call the Dispatch office for further instruction in such a case. Steep driveways,

deteriorated sidewalks, etc. may result in denial of service.

To increase efficiency, SWART is a “shared-ride” service; passengers must often ride while other passengers are picked up and dropped off.

Drivers may provide door-to-door service, as needed, **but are not permitted to enter a passenger’s home.**

Drivers are not permitted to maneuver a mobility device up or down steps.

Drivers are not permitted to lift passengers.

Drivers are not allowed to enter upon property (fences or porches) unless animals are restrained to avoid possibility of biting.

Drivers have the discretion to assign seats and determine mobility device placement when necessary for the efficiency and/or safety of the operation.

### **M. Rules for Passenger Conduct**

Rules of conduct on SWART Transit Vehicles are the same as the laws governing conduct in public places.

- The driver and all passengers are required to use seat belts. If a passenger refuses to wear his or her seat belt, the driver should call the dispatch office for further instructions.
- Proof of a physician’s statement of a passenger’s inability to wear a seat belt must be shown to waive this requirement.
- Passengers utilizing mobility devices will be required to have their mobility device properly secured with a six point tie down safety restraint system, including shoulder and lap belts. If the passenger is unable to wear a shoulder or lap belt due to medical reason, then they must provide proof of a physician’s statement.
- If a passenger is unable to fit within the seat belt due to size, then an extension will be utilized. If an extension is unavailable at the time of transport, the driver will ask the passenger to sit in the furthest back seat possible for their safety before transporting. They will also notify the Operations Manager so that a seat belt extension can be ordered.

No person shall, while a passenger on any vehicle that is operated by SWART as a public conveyance, do any of the following acts:

1. Smoke or possess any lighted or smoldering pipe, cigar, or cigarettes;
2. Consume any beverages, food, or alcohol (unless medically necessary).
3. Intentionally deface, damage, write upon, or soil any part of the vehicle;
4. Spit, urinate, or defecate in or upon any vehicle;
5. Throw, deposit or place paper, bottles, cans or any other garbage or solid waste in or upon a vehicle;
6. Throw any object of any kind within a vehicle or out any door or window of a vehicle;
7. Play audio or video devices, unless played through headphones so that it is inaudible to other passengers and the driver;

8. Bring any pet or animal on to a vehicle other than a guide dog accompanying a person with a disability, or an animal in a cage or approved standard pet Carrier;
9. Stand or walk around in a vehicle while it is in motion;
10. Possess any explosives or carry any corrosive acid or flammable liquid not in a sealed container;
11. Possess firearms, with the exception of law enforcement officers;
12. Intentionally interfere or conduct any unnecessary conversation with the driver, so that the driver's attention will not be diverted from the safe operation of the vehicle
13. Use profane or abusive language toward the driver or other passenger or act in a hostile or threatening manner while on board the vehicle;
14. Present a significant risk to the health or safety of others;
15. Bring on board any baggage or articles which, due to their size, would restrict free movement of passengers;
16. Bring on board gasoline or a gasoline container or any type of hazardous material. (Respirators and portable oxygen supplies are permitted to be carried and used on board by a person needing them for health reasons)
17. No unauthorized passenger or hitchhikers are permitted into vehicles.
18. Unreasonable Personal Hygiene
19. Conduct any unnecessary conversations of a personal nature that could be viewed as offensive or harassment.
20. Conduct any unnecessary contact with self, driver and/or a passenger that could be viewed as offensive or harassment.

SWART may refuse to transport or may eject any persons violating the provisions contained above. If assistance is required, the driver should contact Dispatch or appropriate member of management.

## **N. Special Circumstances**

### **1. Transportation of Children**

All children who are under eight years of age are required to be restrained in an approved child passenger safety seat unless the child is at least 4 feet, 9 inches in height as State law mandates. The passenger must provide the car seat. Children under 1 year of age should have child safety restraint rear-facing seat. Passengers traveling with infants, as their escorts will be required to provide their own infant Carrier approved for use in vehicles. The passenger will be responsible for placing the infant into the Carrier and securing the Carrier with a safety belt.

The passenger and escort must both be ready at the door when the vehicle arrives. The infant will not be allowed to ride up the lift with a passenger utilizing a mobility

device. The infant's car seat will be secured by a safety belt to the vehicle seat during transport.

The minimum age for a child to travel alone aboard SWART is fifteen (15) years of age. Children under the age of fifteen (15) must have an adult attendant accompany them during transport. The General Manager may grant exceptions. If appointment necessitates that an adult attendant serve as personal care attendant such as medical and dental appointments then the condition will warrant a free ride for attendant.

## 2. Accommodation of Mobility Devices

SWART will accommodate mobility devices, which do not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length when measured two inches above the ground, and do not weight more than 800 pounds when occupied.

Any passenger who utilizes a mobility device shall ensure the brakes on the device are in working order before transportation can be provided. SWART will make every reasonable effort to accommodate various models available to passengers. However, due to the increasing size and weight of such equipment, some limitations will be necessary in order to ensure the safe transport of the mobility device and passengers.

## 3. Personal Care Attendants

SWART allows a personal care attendant to accompany a passenger at no additional charge when such an attendant is required to utilize the SWART service. Passengers are required to supply their own attendants at their own expense. Generally, the following conditions would warrant a fare-free attendant:

**Immobility** – If the passenger is unable to provide self-mobility, or if self-mobility is possible but a great risk of falling or physical injury exists, and the assistance of an attendant would provide mobility or lessen the danger of injury, then the passenger's attendant may accompany the passenger at no cost.

**Disorientation** – If the passenger, due to a visual or mental impairment, is unable to properly orient him/herself and navigate to reach a particular destination, and if the assistance of an attendant would overcome the problem, then the passenger's attendant may accompany the passenger at no cost.

**Non-Comprehension** – If the passenger, due to mental impairment, is unable to adequately perform those mental processes necessary to handle common occurrences or is unable to effectively control his/her own actions, and if the assistance of an attendant would overcome the problem, then the passenger's attendant may accompany the passenger at no cost.

**Communication Impairment** – If the passenger is unable to effectively transmit or receive communications due to sensory or mental problems and if these problems would prevent the passenger from using the service, then the passenger's attendant may accompany the passenger at no cost.

**Other** – Other impaired passengers not included in these general guidelines may also be eligible if, in the opinion of a licensed physician, the passenger would be unable to use SWART without the aid of an attendant. The reasons supporting this opinion should be clearly stated in writing by a physician and submitted to the General Manager. The General Manager has final determination of need for personal care attendants.

Personal care attendants are required to specifically assist the passenger. This assistance includes, but is not limited to, the following duties:

- Assisting the passenger from his/her door to the bus and back again;
- Opening doors;
- Pushing mobility device to and from the vehicle;
- Transfer assistance from mobility device to a seat;
- Carrying packages; and
- Communicating with the driver (if passenger is unable).

If an attendant does not specifically perform some type of assistance for the passenger, then that individual is not considered an escort and is charged the normal fare.

Attendants are not to assist in mobility device boarding or securement; this is the driver's responsibility.

#### 4. Service Animals & Accommodation of Animals

SWART requires all animals to be secured in a pet travel Carrier with the exception of service animals as described below.

It is the policy of SWART to allow service animals to accompany their owner without restraint. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a service animal means any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal that is required to aid the owner and that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a mobility device or retrieving dropped items.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 allows for the imposition of legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for the safe operation of SWART. SWART can generally require use of a secured pet travel Carrier for any animal that in the opinion of the General Manager or his/her designee is a health or safety hazard regardless of the training or function the animal serves for its owner.

#### 5. Carry-On Packages

Passengers shall limit their Carry-on packages to not more than the equivalent of six (6) full brown paper grocery bags and/or plastic bag at one time unless they have an attendant traveling with them to load/unload the packages. Oversized packages will be refused for transport. Packages must be limited to no larger than a brown paper grocery bag. No one package shall weigh more than 20 pounds. Passengers must make other arrangements for delivery of any item larger than specified.

#### 6. Medical Oxygen for personal use

Oxygen will be transported only when medically necessary. It will be in a cylinder maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The manufacturer's instructions and precautions are usually printed on a label attached to the cylinder. Drivers will inspect each cylinder to assure that it is free of cracks or leaks, including around the valve area and pressure relief device. Drivers will also listen for leaks. Leaking, dented, gouged, or pitted cylinders will not be transported. Cylinders will be limited to the extent practicable. Cylinders will be secured to prevent movement and leakage. They will not be placed in aisle or sources of heat or potential sparks. Under



no circumstances should smoking or open flames (cigarette lighter or matches) be permitted in the passenger compartment when medical oxygen is present.

## 7. Backing Policy

SWART Operators are instructed to avoid BACKING UP if at all possible. In the event that an operator must back up they should:

- Get to know the vehicle's blind spots. In a medium-sized truck, blind spots can extend up to 16 feet in front and 160 feet behind a vehicle. Drivers need to remember that mirrors can never give the whole picture while backing.
- Think in advance. Drivers should not put themselves into unnecessary backing situations.
- Park defensively. Drivers must choose easy-exit parking spaces that don't crowd neighboring vehicles and park their vehicle in the center of the parking space.
- When parking in an alley. If an alley doesn't permit driving all the way through or room to turn around, a driver should back into it (if local ordinances permit) so that when leaving the vehicle can pull forward into the street.
- Do a walk-around. Walking around a vehicle gives a driver firsthand view of the backing area and any limitations. They can check for children, soft or muddy areas, potholes, tire hazards, and other dangers.
- Know the clearances. When performing a walk-around, drivers can check for obstructions, low-hanging trees and wires, and any other potential clearance-related problems.
- Every backing situation is new and different. Sometimes a driver visits the same location several time a day and should be watchful each visit for changes and any new obstacles.
- Use a spotter. A driver should use another person to help them when backing if possible. The driver and spotter should use hand signals instead of verbal ones and make sure they understand each other's signals. Don't have the spotter walking backwards while giving instructions.
- When driver's spot for themselves, they need to return to the vehicle and start backing within a few seconds after finishing the walk-around. This will allow very little time for people and/or obstacles to change behind the vehicle. Backing without a spotter should only take place after a driver has as much information about the area as possible. A back up alarm can help warn away pedestrians and drivers of other vehicles who may try to enter the area the vehicle is backing into.

## O. Service Suspensions and Terminations

### 1. Cancellations

It is requested that passengers notify the dispatch office of any necessary cancellations at least two (2) hours prior to the scheduled trip. This allows the dispatch office to reassign that time to another passenger whose service request was previously denied. A cancellation is considered "late" if it is made less than two (2) hours prior to the trip (or after 7:00 a.m. for those trips scheduled before 9:00 a.m.)

To encourage proper and timely cancellations, cancellations will be treated as no shows if not called within the time frame listed above.

### 2. No Shows

Southwest Area Regional Transit District has implemented a No Show Policy. A no show is defined as any instance in which a passenger does not keep their scheduled ride and fails to notify the SWART office at least two hours prior to scheduled pick up time. Implementation of this policy has become necessary due to the rapidly increasing number of no shows. We have determined that no show trips affect not only the transit system, but also other customers. Our drivers make every effort to pick up all passengers on a timely basis, and when one of our customers is not there the drivers are required to spend time seeking out the person. This delay has caused our drivers to fall behind their anticipated daily schedules and has caused unnecessary delay for other passengers attempting to get to their scheduled destinations.

If a passenger no-shows from his/her origin, SWART will not return to complete the trip. If a passenger later determines that they need a return trip, then they must call SWART to attempt to schedule. SWART will attempt to return at the earliest time possible, within service hours, depending upon vehicle availability. No guarantees of return are made. The General Manager or his designee reserves the right to authorize a driver to return for a pick up if circumstances warrant.

The No-Show Policy for all Public Transportation customers will be as follows:

- 1) No shows will be charged the oneway leg of the trip.
- 2) Two no-shows within a one month period will result in a letter of notification and the passenger being placed on no-show status.
- 3) A third no-show within a one month period will result in a review of past services provided and a customer's record on no-shows. This review could result in a letter of notification that riding privileges on SWART has been suspended. If determined preventable, no-show will result in suspension of services for 1 week. A second occurrence of three no-shows within a one month period will result in a 2 week suspension. A third occurrence of three no-shows within a one month period will result in a month suspension.
- 4) Medical Transportation no-shows for approved Medicaid customers will be submitted to funding source for reporting purposes.
- 5) Suspension periods cannot be split or otherwise divided or altered without approval by the General Manager.

### **3. Other Suspensions:**

Passengers who in the judgment of the General Manager, demonstrates tendencies toward violent or destructive behavior through threats, verbal and/or physical behavior, shall have their SWART service eligibility terminated.

### **4. Appeals of Suspensions and Terminations**

Passengers may appeal their suspensions or terminations by written notification as outlined in Section IV. Complaint Procedures.

The SWART Board of Directors and the General Manager shall have the discretion to alter the penalty as dictated by circumstances.

**SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**  
**IV. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

As a recipient of Medical Transportation and Public Transportation funds, administered by the Texas Department of Transportation, SWART hereby attests that it will abide by the eligibility guidelines and service priorities, as stipulated and set forth in the Agency's Contracts. In the event of a Public transportation complaint, the complainant should adhere to the complaint procedure that is listed below:

**Complaint Procedure will be as follows:**

In the event of a complaint, the complainant should contact the Administrative office at 830-278-4155 or by mail to 713 East Main Street, Uvalde, Texas 78801.

**Contacts:**

Main Office Operations Manager  
830-278-4155 or 1-800-499-1617

Eagle Pass Operations Manager  
830-758-0008 or 1-800-499-1617

Upon receipt of the complaint, the SWART representative will request written detail of complaint or take an oral statement from the complainant. The complaint should include details regarding the situation: i.e. date, time, driver, problem, etc. All complaints or statements should be signed or if by telephone the actual complainant should be the person that calls. Complaints received by telephone will be investigated and resolved prior to ending the call. A written response will not be required if complainant is satisfied with the resolution. The General Manager will be notified upon receipt of all complaints, and the Administrative Specialist or an assigned staff member will conduct an investigation into written complaints. Upon completion of the investigation, a decision regarding the complaint will be rendered and a written response issued to the complainant no later than ten days after receipt of the complaint. A copy of the complaint and action taken will be forwarded to the funding source offices as required, and a copy will be kept on file at the SWART Administrative office.

In the event, the complainant is not satisfied with the decision and action taken by the Operations Manager, the complainant should notify the General Manager in writing at the below listed address.

Sarah Hidalgo-Cook, General Manager  
Southwest Area Regional Transit District – SWART  
713 East Main Street, Uvalde, Texas 78801  
1(800)499-1617 or 830-278-4155

The General Manager will review all information regarding the complaint and shall have the discretion to form an impartial panel of reviewers to assist him – comprised of: Transit District Board members, or public and private social service representatives. Following a review of the complaint, the General Manager shall inform the complainant of the findings of the review panel or his decision and action to be taken regarding complaint. A decision regarding the complaint will be rendered and a written response issued to the complaint no later than ten days after the General Manager receives the complaint.

### **Additional Medical Transportation Program Complaint Information**

The Operations Manager may also refer Medical Transportation Complaints directly to the HHSC Medical Transportation office at 1-877-633-8747, MTP personnel submit an electronic copy of the complaint via email to the Operations Manager/Service Delivery Coordinator.

Upon receipt, the General Manager investigates the complaint by speaking with appropriate personnel involved in the incident. The General Manager will then assign an appropriate supervisor to investigate the complaint.

Upon completion General Manager documents the response directly on the MTP Complaint Report and sends the completed report to the local MTP supervisor via electronic mail within 5 work days following receipt of complaint. A hard copy of the complaint (including response) is kept by the service delivery coordinator.

SWART personnel will at no time, follow up on a complaint directly with the complainant.

SWART shall ensure that its staff and its subcontractor's staff shall not retaliate or give the appearance of retaliation against an individual who has submitted a complaint against SWART or submitted a negative comment on the recipient survey.

Subcontractors will be required to abide by the above listed complaint process for MTP filed complaints.

## **SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **V. APPEALS PROCEDURE**

If you do not agree with the determination of a decision made by the Southwest Area Regional Transit District; you have the right to appeal the decision by the following the Appeals Process.

#### **Procedure**

Southwest Area Regional Transit District will provide written notification to a prospective vendor/bidder an award or denial with regards to the purchase of equipment, service, or assistance within 10 days of the adverse determination which shall include written instructions of the appeals process.

The proposed vendor/bidder has a right to appeal the adverse decision. The vendor/bidder must provide notice of the intent to appeal to the Southwest Area Regional Transit District within ten (10) business days the denial notice is received.

#### **Appeals Office**

Southwest Area Regional Transit District  
713 East Main Street  
Uvalde, Texas 78801

#### **Appeals Officer**

Sarah H. Cook  
General Manager  
830-278-4155 or 1-800-499-1617  
scook@paseoswart.org

#### **Appeals Provisions**

The appeal will be heard by an Appeal Committee composed of three (3) District Management Personnel who are familiar with the procurement policy of the agency. The appeal will be heard within ten (10) days of receipt of the written appeal. Vendors/bidders will be allowed to be present at the hearing and will have an equal opportunity to give testimony on their behalf. The Southwest Area Regional Transit District must tape record all appeal hearings. It will require a majority vote to sustain and approve assistance or deny the appeal and provide written notification to the vendor on the results of the appeal by close of business on the following day. After the appeals procedure, SWART must submit recording and documentation to any funding source related to the procurement and there will be no further oral testimony.

If the vendor does not agree with the agency's decision, he/she may appeal in writing to the proper funding agency relating to the procurement. The appeal must be performed within ten (10) days of the adverse determination made by our agency. Hearing Impaired

The agency utilizes Relay Texas to ensure access to a telecommunications system for the deaf (TDD/TTY) to facilitate communication with hard of hearing, hearing impaired and deaf recipients. "Relay Texas", a telecommunication service established for the sensory impaired by the 71<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature in 1989, allows an individual to make and receive calls from anywhere in the United States. The toll free number will be printed on agency pamphlets/literature.

**SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**  
**VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN**  
**NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Minimum Performance Standard</b>	<b>How Performance Is Measured</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Sanction for Non-Compliance</b>
Transportation is provided as authorized.	95% of the transportation is provided on the authorized date and time	SWART will conduct client surveys and on-site visits at any time during the contract period.	Prior authorized MTP Clients are transported to their scheduled health care appointments in a timely manner.	Non-payment when client is not seen by their health-care provider due to contactor-action or inaction.
Complaints are responded to by 5 <sup>th</sup> workday of receipt.	98% of all complaints are documented and responded by the 5 <sup>th</sup> workday of receipt.	SWART will conduct client surveys and on-site visits at any time during the contract period.	All complaints received on transportation services are resolved.	Corrective Action Plan
Claims/Invoice Processing	98% of Claims will be submitted at the minimum weekly.	SWART will review required documentation, driver's logs and submit accurate claim invoices. If necessary processes may be changed to ensure timely processing.	Claims are submitted weekly.	Non-payment if claims exceed TDH approved time for vendor payment.  Payment to be made to MTP within 30 days.
Fleet Management (Vehicles)	95% of the transportation is provided on the authorized date and time utilizing appropriate vehicles.	SWART will conduct client surveys and an on-site fleet review at any time during the contract period to ensure that the fleet has been reliable and adequate to meet the transportation requirements for the service area.	Prior authorized MTP Clients are transported to their scheduled health care appointments in a timely manner.	Non-payment when client is not seen by their health-care provider due to contactor-action or inaction.
Training	100% of all Staff will be trained prior to performing their duties.	SWART will conduct required training prior to beginning of service delivery and will track training via a training log.	Prior authorized MTP Clients are transported to their scheduled health care appointments in a timely manner.	Corrective Action Plan

## **SWART POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **VII. Communication System**

#### **Toll Free System**

SWART currently provides a toll free telephone number that is national wide. The toll free number of 800-499-1617 is available and printed on all Southwest Transit Brochures and Travel Schedules.

#### **Voice Mail**

SWART currently provides a voice mail system through its toll free line or direct line for clientele to report cancellations. A twenty-four (24) hour emergency cell phone contact is also available to clientele though out the region. The General Manager is the emergency contact and is on call twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven days a week. The emergency number of 830-279-1535 is printed on all Southwest Area Regional Transit Brochures and Travel Schedules. This enables clients to contact SWART staff for return trips after business office hours.

#### **LEP Requirements**

SWART will ensure access to a language line to facilitate communication with LEP recipients. All Southwest Transit employees as well as City of Del Rio Employees are bilingual.

#### **TDD/TTY System**

SWART is in the process of ordering a TDD/TTY System through AT&T. Documentation attached. The City of Del Rio currently has a TDD/TTY System in place although it has never been used.

#### **Radio Base System**

SWART utilizes three base radio stations located in the counties of Uvalde, Zavala, and Maverick. Such radios are utilized to communicate between base station and with drivers. The City of Del Rio uses a base radio system as well.

#### **Cellular Telephone System**

SWART provides cell phones to each driver while on route. They are used to communicate with clientele while at their appointments, with the Uvalde Main Office, Medical Transportation Program Staff, and for emergency/safety reasons. The City of Del Rio also uses cell phones for their staff on routes.

#### **SWART Web Site**

SWART provides a web site located at [www.paseoswart.org](http://www.paseoswart.org) for clientele to gather information. An email address of [scook@paseoswart.org](mailto:scook@paseoswart.org) is also available to clientele and is printed on all Southwest Transit Brochures and Travel Schedules. The City of Del Rio's web site is located at [www.cityofdelrio.com](http://www.cityofdelrio.com).

### **What is Relay Texas and How Does it Work?**

#### **Relay Texas**

Relay Texas provides telephone interpreting service between people who can hear and those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled. Relay Texas agents have computers that enable them to hear the voice user as well as read the signals from the TTY user. The service is available for Texans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There are no restrictions imposed on Relay Texas calls. Confidentiality for relay users and operators is assured by Texas Law.

### **Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TTY)**

A TTY is a typewriter like device with a small display which attaches easily to a standard telephone or can be plugged directly into a telephone jack. Using a TTY, a person who is deaf is able to call another person with a TTY. Deaf persons use a TTY to call Relay Texas to make a call to a hearing person who does not have a TTY.

### **Procedure of TRS**

The Relay Texas Center has over 250 relay agents that can accept calls from both TTY users and non-TTY users (hearing persons who do not have TTY machines) at the same time. Example: you (voice user) call 1-800-735-2988 on your telephone and a relay agent will answer. Give the agent the phone number of the deaf person, and the agent will dial the number. The agent will act as a translator between you and the deaf person. Talk directly to the deaf person and pretend the relay agent is not there. The relay communication is thus carried out by both parties.

### **Cost of the Relay User**

Relay Texas allows you to place local calls at no charge. Long distance calls within Texas are priced at rates lower than the usual rate, if the contracted Carrier is used for billing.

### **Relay Texas Telephone Numbers:**

To use Relay Texas:

Non-TTY Users (hearing persons) 1-800-735-2988

TTY Users (deaf, or speech-impaired) 1-800-735-2989

ASCII Users (deaf, or speech-impaired) 1-800-735-2991

VCO users (hard of hearing), use your own voice 1-877-VCO1RTX

### **Blind or Sight Impaired**

The District has its SWART Policies and Procedures available in Brail, and tape cassettes with SWART brochure information detailed. This information is available upon request by blind or sight impaired passengers.

### **Other Useful Contact Information**

Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

P.O. Box 12904

Austin, Texas 7878

(512)407-3250 – Voice

(512)407-3251 – TTY

Texas Rehabilitation Commission

6400 Hwy 290 E, #201

Austin, Texas 78723

(512)451-9579

1(800)687-2676

Texas Commission for the Blind

4800 N. Lamar Blvd., Suite #340

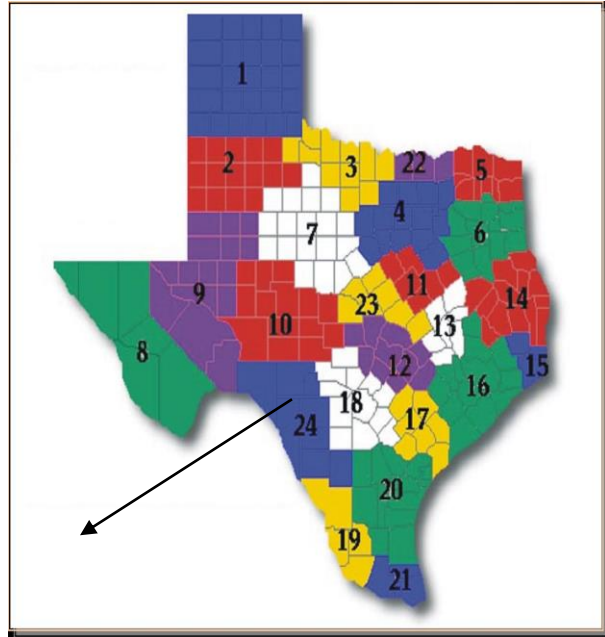
Austin, Texas 78756-3178

1(800)252-5204



## Geographic Area Map

SWART Headquarters – Uvalde, Texas



### Medical Transportation Clients Rights and Responsibilities

The orientation process also includes a review of all Medical Transportation Program requirements. Staff is instructed on ensuring that all recipients are treated with respect and dignity, Medicaid recipient rights and responsibilities stated in 1 Texas Administrative code, chapter 380, and complaint, confidentiality, and no retaliation policies. Annual refresher training is conducted at quarterly scheduled staff trainings. Client Rights and responsibilities are detailed below:

#### Recipient Rights and Responsibilities

An important part of the responsibilities of MTP staff and contractors is the respect for the rights of recipients. These rights extend to all individuals, regardless of marital status, parenthood, disability, color, race, religion, age, gender, ethnicity, or national origin.

These rights and responsibilities pertain to all recipients.

#### You have the right to...

- Request medical transportation services that take into account your medical condition.
- Select a health care provider of your choice and have an attendant travel with you if medically necessary. If the health care provider is located beyond an adjacent county, this requires a referral from the attending physician.
- Be treated with dignity and respect by MTP and contractor staff.
- Be picked up and delivered to your destination in a clean and safe vehicle.
- Privacy and confidentiality in all aspects of services, including your medical records.

- Freedom from physical and verbal abuse from MTP and contractor staff.
- Have all forms you are asked to sign explained to you.
- Have any policy or procedure explained to you and questions answered in a language you understand.
- Register a complaint or offer your comments about the service and treatment you receive and to be told the complete name of the person to whom you may direct your complaint or comment.
- Request an administrative review and/or informal hearing of any decision made regarding your transportation eligibility or services provided or denied.
- Give suggestions or comments or register complaints with your transportation contractor or with the MTP staff about the service that you were or were not provided directly to the Central Office program division.

**Medical Transportation Clients have the responsibility to...**

- Provide to MTP staff serving you the most complete and accurate information possible about your transportation needs and to provide any changes in information which would affect your eligibility.
- Keep all appointments you make or notify MTP as soon as possible or least four (4) hours in advance of your scheduled ride, when you cannot keep your transportation appointment.
- Refrain from verbal and/or physical abuse or sexual harassment toward another client or passenger, contractor's employees, or department employees while requesting or receiving medical transportation services
- Not use authorized medical transportation for purposes other than travel to and from covered health care services
- Do nothing that would endanger the safety of the vehicle and passengers with whom you travel and wear a safety belt at all times.
- Ask questions about your transportation arrangements that you do not understand.

## Service Operations Procedure Manual

I attest that I have received the Service Operations Procedure Manual and that it is my responsibility to review and read the manual in its entirety.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Employee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date