



Nondriving: Strategies for Preparing Children and Youth

by: **L. Penny Rosenblum, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Practice • The University of Arizona • rosenblu@u.arizona.edu

November 2011



In the United States and other industrialized countries most individuals operate their own car to get from place to place. Though some may walk, use public transit, or carpool, the vast majority travel via personal car. For youth and adults who are nondrivers, living in a car dependent society presents challenges. Beginning at an early age families and professionals can assist children in learning skills to allow them to be independent and successful nondrivers.

Here are a few ideas families and professionals can implement:

- As children travel in cars, drivers can verbalize about traffic, turns, intersections, etc. Describing what is happening during travel is important for all children, regardless of the amount of usable vision the children do or do not have.
- For children who have some usable vision, encourage them to look for landmarks during travel, (“Tell me when you see the sign for McDonald’s so I know where to turn into the parking lot.”).
- Encourage children who have been prescribed low vision devices (e.g., handheld monocular telescope, magnifier) to use low vision devices during travel. For example, have the child to use the monocular telescope to read the building number or street sign) or the magnifier to look at a building map to locate where a specific office is. Children with low vision should have a clinical low vision evaluation so that they can be provided the correct low vision devices and other tools that will allow

them to maximize their visual potential.

- When walking, both indoors and outdoors, have children take responsibility for “leading” you to locations. If you’re always “taking” children, this will promote “dependence” on others during travel, rather than fostering “independence” in future travel.



- Involve children in planning “routes” to accomplish familiar tasks. Ask children to determine what errands should be run first, second, and third. For example, the grocery store would be best left to last due to perishable items.

- Periodically take children on public transit or by taxi to familiar locations (e.g., mall, grocery store, park) so that they learn from a young age that there are multiple ways to reach a destination.

- Promote the development of phone skills. Beginning in late elementary school, encourage children to call to get information (e.g., the schedule for a train, directions to a new location) and to record this information (e.g., write it down, put it into braille, speak it into an audio recorder).

- Ensure that children understand the variety of information that can be gained from maps. Describe what you are using a map to learn, the types of maps you use etc. Provide opportunities for children to use a map (visual or tactual) or the internet (e.g., Mapquest, Google Maps) to assist in the planning of routes.

- Encourage children to interact with cab drivers, bus drivers, train conductors, etc. Have them pay for transit, ask questions about specific locations, schedules etc.

- Explain the costs of transportation. Help children develop an understanding of all the costs associated with driving (e.g., cost of gas, car insurance, maintenance, car payment), taking public transit (e.g., monthly pass, daily pass), taxis (e.g., rate per mile, tip) etc.

- As children reach the legal age of driving, consider setting up a travel bank account. For example, if the family paid or will pay for transportation costs of other siblings (e.g., down payment on a car, insurance payment, maintenance of the car), the same amount of money can be allocated into a bank account the nondriver can utilize for hiring drivers, taxis, public transit etc.

- Provide opportunities for young people to speak with others who are nondrivers for a variety of reasons (e.g., too nervous to drive, environmentally conscious, can't afford a car) so that children understand that they are not the only nondrivers out there.
- For children with low vision who believe they have enough vision to drive, arrange a time to take them to the Department of Motor Vehicles to take the eye exam. Some young people need to hear from DMV that they can't drive. (Doing this is not appropriate for every young potential nondriver.)
- Ensure that all children with visual impairments have the opportunity to receive an orientation and mobility (O&M) assessment and instruction when appropriate. At different ages children will learn different O&M skills, so it is important to revisit the need for O&M annually, if not more frequently.

Finding Wheels

In 2000 Dr. Anne Corn and Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum authored a curriculum titled Finding Wheels. This curriculum is designed to assist youth with visual impairments to learn how to be successful nondrivers.

Corn, A. L., & Rosenblum, L. P. (2000). Finding wheels: A curriculum for non-drivers with visual impairments to gain control of their transportation needs. Austin, TX: PRO-ED. (www.proedinc.com)

The curriculum is divided into ten units. These are the objectives for each unit:

Unit 1: Understanding Visual Impairment and Its Implications for Nondriving

- Name and describe their visual impairment.
- Describe the functional implications of their visual impairment for travel.
- Describe their visual needs to others during travel.
- Identify reasons why persons with and without disabilities do not drive.
- Share (to the extent to which they are comfortable) the experiences and feelings associated with being told they cannot obtain a driver's license.
- Identify potential personal reactions to nondriving that affect decisions concerning levels of independence and activity.

Unit 2: Facilitating Changing Directions: On the Road to Independent Wheels

- Describe the sequence of independent travel for sighted children and adolescents.

- Describe different rites of passage for adolescents in technologically oriented societies and how they participate in these rites of passage.
- Identify destinations where they believe they are capable of traveling and share this information with families.
- Discuss how nondrivers access transportation and how these methods influence their lifestyles.
- Describe how nondrivers with different lifestyles structure their lives to access transportation.



Unit 3: Personal Wheels: Walking and Biking

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of personal methods of travel.
- Solicit information from businesses and other individuals regarding the location of businesses, activities, etc.
- Describe considerations for nondrivers using personal methods of travel.

Unit 4: Public Wheels: Buses, Trains and Subways

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of public methods of travel.
- Solicit information from public transit operators regarding transportation scheduling, costs, routes, and so forth
- Describe considerations for nondrivers using public methods of travel.

Unit 5: Specialized Wheels: Paratransit, Charity Services and Volunteer Services

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of specialized methods of travel.
- Solicit information from specialized transit operators regarding transportation scheduling, costs, routes, and so forth.
- Describe considerations for nondrivers using specialized methods of travel.
- Demonstrate skills in asking for and declining rides.

Unit 6: Hired Wheels: Taxis and Drivers

- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of hired methods of travel.
- Solicit information from operators and drivers regarding transportation scheduling, costs, routes, and so forth.
- Describe considerations for nondrivers using hired methods of travel.
- Demonstrate skills in hiring, scheduling, directing, and firing a driver.

Unit 7: Bioptic Wheels: Low Vision Driving

- Determine whether they meet the unaided and aided visual requirements of their state (or a state in which low vision driving is permitted) to pursue driving with low vision.
- Have knowledge of the clinical low vision evaluation that is needed to determine whether they will meet the aided visual requirements of their state (or a state in which low vision driving is permitted) to pursue driving with low vision.
- Have knowledge of a variety of bioptic telescopic systems (BTS) and how they are used in the process of low vision driving.
- Have an understanding of the visual skills needed for low vision driving.
- Understand some of the differences in driving with low vision and driving with typical vision.
- Understand some of the legal and self-imposed restrictions in driving experienced by low vision drivers.

Unit 8: Funding Wheels: Budgeting, Funding, Exchanging and Reciprocating

- List various sources of funding for transportation including optional reduced fare programs for those with disabilities.
- List several tasks that may be offered in exchange for rides.
- Establish a weekly and monthly transportation budget.
- Evaluate which forms of transportation are most appropriate to purchase in order to meet current and future needs.

Unit 9: Using Wheels Efficiently: Gathering Resources, Route Planning, and Time Management

- Use different resources to plan a route.
- Create a set of directions for personal use.
- Create a set of directions to share with others.
- Calculate the time, distance, and cost for short and long distance trips.
- List several activities that may be done while waiting for late rides in different environments.
- Be assertive and solve problems concerning transportation schedules for arriving at or leaving a destination.

Unit 10: Spinning Wheels: Coping with Nondriving, Interpersonal Relationships and Public Behaviors

- Identify personal challenges and frustrations associated with nondriving experience by adult nondrivers.
- Provide a list of ways to reduce the frustrations associated with nondriving.
- Identify social aspects of being a nondriver experienced by adult nondrivers.

- Complete a self-evaluation to determine what skills they still must develop to maximize independent travel.
- Describe acceptable public behaviors while a passenger in transit.

Corn, A. L., & Rosenblum, L. P. (2000). Finding wheels: A curriculum for non-drivers with visual impairments to gain control of their transportation needs. Austin, TX: PRO-ED. (www.proedinc.com)



Reference List for Nondriving

Corn, A. L. (1990). The challenge of mass transit. In M. M. Usland, W. R. Peck, W. R. Wiener, & A. Stern (Eds.), *Access to mass transit for blind and visually impaired travelers* (pp. 13-18). New York: AFB Press.

Corn, A. L. & Sacks, S. (1994). The impact of non driving on adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 88, 53-68.

Corn, A. L., & Rosenblum, L. P. (2000). Finding wheels: A curriculum for non-drivers with visual impairments to gain control of their transportation needs. Austin, TX: PRO-ED. (www.proedinc.com)

Corn, A .L. & Sacks, S. (1994). The impact of non driving on adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 88, 53-68.

Huss C. & Corn. A. (2004). Low vision driving with bioptics: An overview. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 98(10), 641-653.

Rosenblum, L. P. (2011). Nondriving: Strategies for preparing children and youth. Perkins <http://www.perkins.org/resources/webcasts/>

Rosenblum, L. P., & Corn, A. L. (2003). Families promoting travel skills for their children with visual impairments: It's never too early to start. *RE:view*, 34, 175-180.

Sacks, S. Z. & Rosenblum, L. P. (2006). Adolescents with low vision: Perceptions of driving and nondriving. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 100(4), 212-222.

For more resources, visit www.Perkins.org.

Our on-demand webcasts are presented by experts in the field of visual impairment and deafblindness. View our directory at:
www.Perkins.org/webcasts.