

Mass Transit

Mass transportation is essential for many people. Preparation is helpful whether traveling by bus, plane or train with a person with autism. Many families avoid travel because the change in routine can be challenging. Here are some general tips and suggestions for you to use when preparing to travel via mass transportation:

- Prior to leaving home, talk about what to expect from beginning to end. This can include searching the internet together to learn about the specific airport, bus depot, or train station that you will be using (most have made maps and pictures available on their site). Create a schedule of expectations by using pictures and words.
- Role playing is another effective way to pre-teach expectations. Have family members, friends, or neighbors help you transform your living room into a flight gate or train terminal. Act out checking luggage, going through security, taking off your shoes, handing in your ticket, and boarding.
- Call or check out the travel provider(s) website for existing special services that are available. Airlines and train companies offer travel assistance programs for inexperienced travelers. The service can assist in ticket purchase or checking-in counters, security checkpoints, proceeding to the waiting or boarding area, boarding and exiting, stowing and retrieval of luggage. You can also ask about what you can do to help the security experience go more smoothly for the person with autism and officials.
- When traveling, carry an autism person-specific information sheet and, photo ID. This can be in the form of an ID bracelet, card, tag, tattoo, or any other method you prefer. Visit our Safety section for more ideas and information.
- Arrive early and allow extra time for check in and the security process.
- If possible, allow the person to choose his/her own seat.
- Pack distracting items to help pass the time. Crayons, coloring books, personal DVD player, hand-held game(s), laptop, and reading material are all useful, especially if the items are “special” and only available for use during trips.

Most travel providers can make accommodations for any special need or request. Working together with travel provider staff can help the trip go well. Even with good preparation traveling can be stressful for anyone. Remember to stay flexible and be prepared. Happy travels!



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special healthcare needs.

