



Reliable transportation means better injured worker outcomes

By Melissa McGarry, Director, Product Implementation

For many of us, finding a ride is easier than ever. Services like Uber and Lyft have made it simple to summon transportation with a few taps to our phones. But for injured workers, getting from one place to another often remains daunting.

Those who are recovering from a workplace injury might face difficulty getting around for a brief recovery window or perhaps for much longer. Without timely and reliable transportation, those in need of medical care can miss appointments. This can jeopardize the pace of their recoveries and add up to poorer health outcomes.

That's why it's essential for injured workers to have access to a network of safe and effective reliable transportation options.

Consider what might happen if an injured worker confined to a wheelchair, for example, were forced to arrange her own ride to the doctor's office or transportation to work during a period of transitional duty. Would a private driver's car have adequate trunk space to safely store the wheelchair without damaging it? Would the driver know how to collapse the wheelchair for storage or how to assist the passenger?

The concerns extend beyond the need to safely stow durable medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs or even how to safely help riders. The drivers must also consider the often-unique needs of injured workers. Maybe someone needs a bit more time to get down to the street from an apartment. Or perhaps a person seemingly able-bodied requires a bit of assistance to lift a bag into a vehicle. These scenarios might fall outside what a taxi driver or a gig worker for a ride-hailing company might expect to handle. But for a driver experienced in getting injured workers to and from where they need to go, this is familiar territory.

At Apricus, on an average day, we arrange more than 100 rides for injured workers. These trips are typically for appointments such as doctor visits relating to the injury. But other times, an injured worker might require transportation to and from work during a recovery period. Or perhaps it's to run an essential errand such as going to the grocery store or to the pharmacy.

To meet injured workers' needs, we vet our vendor partners and work with them to be sure they understand the various considerations that might arise when helping injured workers get from point A to point B.

Apricus Offers
Ambulatory
Air Ambulance
Wheelchair
Commercial Airline
Stretcher
Hotel Reservations
Advanced Life Support (ALS)
Basic Life Support (BLS)



Having safe, reliable transportation helps build trust

Injured workers can benefit in perhaps surprising ways when they have access to professional transportation companies experienced in workers' compensation. Often, many services allow injured workers to request drivers with whom they've ridden in the past. This extra comfort, though modest in the overall recovery, can carry outsized impact because we know the foundational role that [trust](#) plays in the trajectory of an injured worker's recovery and in the associated costs.

While much of trust-building in an injury recovery flows from the care of clinicians such as nurses and doctors, there are important elements promoting faith in one's chances of recovery in all aspects of care—even down to a kind word and an extra hand from someone transporting the worker.

Imagine, after a strenuous session exercising under the supervision of a physical therapist, how nice it would be to see a familiar face to take you home from an appointment that marks another step in a perhaps protracted and sometimes dispiriting recovery.

Absent trust and a feeling of others caring for their wellbeing, we know workers suffer poorer outcomes. Small positive inputs to workers' recoveries accumulate, including having reliable, safe, and clean transportation. All of this has taken on added significance amid the pandemic when protocols around mask-wearing and cleaning can mean the difference between contracting COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and avoiding it.

We offer a national network of over 2,600 licensed and credentialed transportation partners

With over 26,500 drivers nationwide

Often transportation can play a significant role in promoting injured workers' wellbeing. In one recent case, a nurse case manager contacted us just before 9 p.m. on a weeknight to say an injured worker was stuck at work with no way to make it home. Our Apricus team jumped into action and within 15 minutes was able to secure a vendor to provide the necessary ride. It's this kind of responsiveness that makes an enormous difference for an injured worker. Getting that call that a ride was on its way no doubt made the injured worker feel relief and a sense of trust that someone—or a team of people—had his back.

When other calls come in, an injured worker often requires more complex transportation. Specialty transportation services can often schedule ambulance, wheelchair, stretcher, basic life support, and advanced life support transportation. Some services also schedule all aspects of medical flights.



Asking questions helps understand injured workers' needs

Given all the choices for conveying injured workers to where they need to go, it's important to make sure injured workers have access to the most appropriate transportation to meet their needs. A series of questions can help uncover what challenges the workers might be facing that would need to be addressed. It should start with the basics:

- What type of transportation is required?
- What date and time does the person need to be picked up?
- What is the location of the pickup?
- What is the destination? If it's a facility, what are the details such as the name, location, and phone number?

From there, you'd want to dig in further. Let's say a man who uses a wheelchair requires transportation and needs assistance to get out of it and into a car. You'll likely want to confirm his height and weight to determine the type of vehicle necessary. Knowing as much as possible about his situation and needs makes it possible to line up the most logical transportation option. Some vendors use a van with a ramp though depending on the person, a wheelchair van with a motorized lift might be required to ensure the injured worker can enter and exit the vehicle safely. Then you'd want to ask logistical questions such as whether there are stairs at the pickup location. And you'd want to know whether the man has his own wheelchair and, if so, whether it's manual or electric.

Naturally, these are only some of the questions that would need to be addressed though even this partial list helps illustrate the complexity of transporting injured workers safely. The battery of questions gets at something deeper that's critical when helping injured workers get around: a culture of safety and continual improvement.

Reputable specialty networks regularly reassess what they're doing and how they're doing it. The same goes for their vendor partners. This self-scrutiny on both sides helps keep meeting the needs of injured workers at the fore. Routinely meeting with vendor partners to obtain status updates, to gather and offer feedback, and to conduct roundtable reviews is also vital to ongoing improvement.

Apricus Scheduling Specialists Facilitate

Safe, reliable services nationwide from start to finish.

Quick and seamless scheduling.

Communication across all parties (adjuster, case manager, providers, injured worker).

Confirmation services were completed as required.



Transportation can help drive healthier outcomes

The importance of transportation to health care outcomes—sometimes an overlooked factor—has been drawing more attention in recent years. One [review](#) of more than two dozen studies on how transportation challenges can affect health care found that 10 to 51 percent of group health patients cited lack of transportation as a barrier to care. The researchers described the findings as significant because a missed appointment means a lost chance for “evaluation and treatment of chronic disease states, changes to treatment regimens, escalation or de-escalation of care.” That, of course, can harm outcomes.

The American Hospital Association [reports](#) that lack of transportation emerges as a barrier to care for far too many patients. The trade group notes these gaps in care not only can hinder a patient’s convalescence but can prove costly in other ways as well: “When a patient is unable to find or afford a ride, costs accrue for patients, caregivers, providers, insurers and taxpayers.” All this comes amid a [shortage](#) of doctors, so a wasted appointment only exacerbates the shortfall between physicians and patients in need.

The research around the pivotal role of transportation in patient outcomes underscores the importance of having access to a network of safe and effective reliable transportation options that are appropriate to meet injured workers’ needs and help move them closer to a strong recovery. When you have an injured worker with transportation needs, contact Apricus and we will provide the necessary support for their recovery.



About Melissa McGarry

Melissa McGarry has been with Coventry & Apricus for more than 10 years and oversees multiple network products including its Outcomes-based Network Program, Exclusive Provider Program, Specialty Networks, Telemedicine Networks and Auto Network. She has more than 30 years’ experience in the health care industry with deep knowledge of networks, network products, utilization management, and behavioral health. Melissa holds a B.A. in Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin and a Master’s in Educational Psychology from the University of North Texas.

About Apricus

Apricus is the combination of two industry-leading specialty networks offering durable medical equipment, diagnostic imaging, physical medicine, home health, transportation and translation and more for the casualty insurance market.

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