



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Please use the Resource Links page on the SNRP website to help you in your research and purchase of mobility vehicles

<http://www.snrproject.com/Resource/Links>

The following websites also contain important information:

United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation – Adult Advisory Council Team:

http://www.umdf.org/site/c.gqLKI0OEKpF/b.5049495/k.62A5/Mobility_Van_Funding.htm

ABLEDATA Funding Resource Center:

<http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?pageid=113573&top=16040&ksectionid=19326>

If there is anything that is not discussed in our newsletters and you would like to see it discussed, or you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at snrproject@hotmail.com

Funding Wheelchair Accessible Vans and Lift Conversions

By Linda Jorgensen

Over the last 6 months we have received a lot of e-mail asking about wheelchair vans, funding programs and where to find both. Unfortunately federal and state budget cuts, in every state, have resulted in decreased funding across the board. No agency or program has gone untouched. As a result many programs have disappeared completely while others have tightened up eligibility and quality requirements for both the consumer and the dealer/installers. States want to ensure they are getting the best return for the few dollars they have and ensure recipients can go for longer periods with the equipment they receive.

National Mobility Dealers Association

Due to recent changes in the economy many states and funding programs now require individuals using government funds to utilize vendors and dealers who meet basic standardized requirements. These standards are set by the National Mobility Dealers Association (NMEDA).

NMEDA is a non-profit trade association of mobility dealers, driver rehabilitation specialists and other professionals dedicated to adhering to stringent safety and quality assurance standards as required by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. **The best sources we have found to locate funding programs has been through NMEDA approved dealers in each state.** With over 600 members nationwide there is at least one, and often many more, NMEDA approved dealers/installers in every state in the US making them easy to find.

NMEDA provides a Quality Assurance Program (QAP) certification which is an internationally recognized accreditation program for the mobility equipment industry. According to NMEDA the QAP program was developed to promote quality, safety, and reliability within the industry. Vocational Rehabilitation Programs along with other funding programs in many states now require a dealer's participation in the program in order to perform work which will be paid for by vocational rehabilitation program funds. The QAP program is the only program of this kind serving the mobility equipment industry.

To find a NMEDA QAP certified dealer in your area simply go to the NMEDA home page found at <http://www.nmeda.org> type your zip code or postal code in the search box and a list of qualified dealers in your area will come up. Start here first.

****Note:** Be sure to check with your state Consumer Protection Agency before choosing a vendor. Work with a vendor who exercises good business practices and has the highest safety record to ensure the safety of your family while driving.

Funding Programs and Sources

There are many other places families can look for assistance. You'll have to do the leg work and contact each one individually but the results will be worth the time invested.

State Medicaid Programs ~ These funds for transportation adaptations are becoming very hard to get. While many state Medicaid programs no longer fund wheelchair conversions there are a few out there that still do. You'll need to contact your local benefits advisor to find out if your state still does. These programs will NOT cover the vehicle, only the cost of adaptive equipment. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Agencies/Assistance Programs ~ Government in your state](#))

Department for Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) ~ Families utilizing funds administered through DSPD programs (generally Medicaid Waiver program funds) may qualify to use some of their yearly budget for wheelchair van conversions. They will NOT pay for the vehicle, only the lift system and adaptive equipment. Ask your case manager. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Agencies/Assistance Programs ~ Government in your state](#))

Independent Living Programs ~ Located in every state these programs offer a limited number of grants on a first-come-first-served basis. Again, these grants are for wheelchair accessible adaptations, most often not the full vehicle. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Independent Living Organizations in your state](#))

Assistive Technology Programs ~ Often overlooked these programs are available for many different types of equipment. Contact your state program for the services they offer. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Assistive Technologies in your state](#))

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs ~ Vocational rehabilitation programs (see also Department of Rehabilitation) assist individuals in gaining independence in the community. Generally for older

(employable age) children and adults these programs assist families and individuals in gaining needed vans and adaptive equipment. Programs are very specific and individuals must qualify through their local programs. Only NMEDA QAP dealers may provide services through these programs. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Agencies/Assistance Programs ~ Government in your state](#))

Private Foundations and Charities ~ These programs are a bit harder to find. Generally located within the local community private foundations and charities can be a great resource. Each foundation or charity has their own focus and specific areas they are willing to address. Many NMEDA dealerships are aware of programs within their local service area and can help individuals locate them. Another excellent resource is the internet. Begin your search using the keywords "Foundation" and "Charity" followed by the names of your city or state and go from there. ([See SNRPs Resource Links under Agencies/Assistance Programs ~ Private, and Charities and Foundations, and Disability Specific under the National heading and in your state](#))

Veteran's Administration (VA) and the Military ~ While the VA is limited to military members only, both active duty and retired Military families may be able to utilize some benefits through the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) for their specific branch of service and TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program ([See SNRPs Resource Links ~ US Military ~ TriCare for program links](#)). Be aware these programs change frequently and with little notice. It is important to contact the proper office for your branch of service for enrollment procedures and current program services and options. Military family members are NOT limited to military programs only and may also enroll in civilian programs near their current duty station. ([See SNRPs Resource Links ~ US Military under your branch of service as well as links for the state in which you currently reside](#))

As with ALL programs persistence and patience are the biggest keys to success! **If you've previously applied for a grant and your situation changes, re-apply!** It is vitally important for families to stay in contact with funding programs and follow the progress of their application. Be polite and check in often. This truly is a case where "the squeaking wheel gets the grease".