

Personal Care Attendant and Companions on Paratransit

What is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) and a Companion?

A Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is an individual who travels with an ADA eligible rider to assist that person. This may either be an employee of the eligible rider, a relative, a friend, or a care provider. The ADA defines a personal care attendant as someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual meet his or her personal needs. In light of this definition, almost every paratransit eligible rider could be eligible for a PCA. The customer determines the need for a PCA, just as they do their own mobility aid.

Much of the work of a PCA is done outside of the transit trip, such as assisting with grocery shopping or assisting customers with a medical condition upon arrival at work. Often, PCAs provide private, highly personal assistance.

A companion can be anyone--family member, business associate, friend, date, etc. The provider cannot limit the eligible individual's choice of type of companion.

What does the ADA require?

The ADA requires that an ADA eligible person be allowed to travel with a PCA, and that at least one companion be allowed to accompany the ADA eligible person. More companions may travel if space allows.

The transit authority may require that the eligible individual reserve a space for the companion when the individual reserves his or her own ride. This one individual rides even if this means that there is less room for other eligible individuals. Additional individuals beyond the first companion are carried only on a space available basis; that is, they do not displace other ADA paratransit eligible individuals.

To be viewed as "accompanying" the eligible individual, a companion must have the same origin and destination points as the eligible individual. In appropriate circumstances, entities may also wish to provide service to a companion who has either an origin or destination, but not both, with the eligible individual (e.g., the individual's date is dropped off at her own residence on the return trip from a concert).

What fare should be charged a PCA and Companion?

ADA regulations specify that paratransit service must be provided to PCAs at no cost when traveling with an eligible rider. Companions pay the same fare as the ADA eligible customer.

Are transit agencies required to allow PCAs to travel free on fixed route transit?

Transit authorities are encouraged, but not required, to allow PCAs to ride free on fixed-route trips, because the intent of the ADA is non-segregated, barrier-free public transportation with equal access to fixed-route transportation

What additional resources or information is available about Personal Care Attendants?

Easter Seals Project Action Frequently Asked Questions:

http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_faq

Disability Rights and Education Fund (DREDF) Topic Guide on Eligibility for ADA Paratransit:

<http://www.dredf.org/ADAtg/elig.shtml>