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Survey Shows Delayed Medical Visits Before Volunteer Service

7 in 10 said they thought resulting delays or missed appointments have affected their health

Riverside, CA – June 12, 2018 – Riders in the nationally known TRIP volunteer driver program have reported medical positive implications from reliable and usable transportation.

Ninety-one percent of the 472 TRIP Volunteer Driver Program riders completing the March 2018 rider survey reported that TRIP assistance has helped them deal with their health issues more effectively.

In order to be enrolled in the TRIP Program in Riverside County California applicants must be unable to drive, not have family able to assist them with transportation and be unable to use bus or van services. The top reasons that survey respondents indicated inability to use public services were that it was physically impossible, that services were not accessible, that out of service area travel was needed, and that the cost of public services was not affordable.

On average the program's volunteer drivers had helped each rider access health care more than 4 times during the month prior to the survey. In response to the question of how they would get to medical services without TRIP, the variety of responses included beg, could not go, cancel my appointments, and most often do not know.

This year and every year TRIP helps hundreds and hundreds of people make critical trips that they could not have made in any other way but, according to the program general manager Ivet Woolridge. She says that this year's survey data indicates that TRIP service has reduced the need for clients to access emergency room service by sixteen percent. Woolridge adds that the real importance of TRIP is that it helps create a lasting support network for people who are alone and isolated.

The program was designed using focus groups of mobility challenged people in the Coachella Valley more than twenty years ago. Focus groups were conducted by the Riverside County Office on Aging and the Riverside County Transportation Commission. Focus group participants told what they wanted in a consumer friendly service. They said they wanted easy and convenient transportation in automobiles, escorts who would come to their homes, accompany them to appointments, travel whenever needed without advance scheduling, and they wanted the rides to be free.

TRIP incorporated all of these ideas in innovative ways. Riders are able to recruit their own volunteer drivers from among friends and neighbors. If riders have a problem getting volunteers, TRIP staff coaches them on effective ways to ask people around them who they may have overlooked. Enrolled riders receive mileage reimbursement payments to give to their volunteer drivers. This makes it easier for riders to recruit their own drivers in a straightforward business relationship and helps to cement that relationship so that friendship and bonding is able to develop.

The TRIP Program of the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership has been quietly helping thousands of Riverside County residents without other personal transportation alternatives since 1993. During that time more than 2 million escorted rides have been provided. According to Woolridge, the average cost to ILP of a one-way trip last year was \$5.83, which she says is far less that these trips could have been provided by public services.

The Independent Living Partnership is assisting other organizations in California and other states establish TRIP services. The latest start-up is the Northwest Project of the Drew Lewis Foundation in Springfield Missouri.

Read more about the TRIP for Riverside County at ILPconnect.org.

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