

As a case manager for people with developmental disabilities, my clients biggest issue is transportation.

- 1) Here in Ottawa, clients who cannot communicate yes/no, are unable to use our public accessible transportation (ParaTranspo) independently – they require an attendant. This proves to be extremely challenging for individuals going to/from a day program. Their parents often have other children or employment and cannot travel with their loved one to the program, then figure out how to get back home/to work, only to repeat the problem later in the afternoon. Some caregivers hire special needs workers for a few hours in the morning, then a few hours in the afternoon to transport with their loved one – however, if that person requires an attendant, their needs are most likely high and they are paying \$25000 a year just for the program – not even including the possible \$15/\$20 an hour for the special needs worker – up to four hours a day (if you can even find someone willing to split up their day!)
- 2) The second major issue is with my clients with an invisible disability – who perhaps lack to confidence or cognitive ability to navigate the public transportation system, yet currently do not qualify for the public accessible transportation. This keeps many of them home, and thus, keeps many caregivers home as well, instead of working or being out in the community. (In Ottawa, this will hopefully be rectified by January 2017)
- 3) Training. A lot of clients are simply scared of the bus. I wish the local transportation agency provided training for people with disabilities to use their services instead of relying on outside resources. Parents/caregivers are already overly occupied with caring for their loved one and may not know how to even use the system themselves. This fear keeps many individuals home. Agencies can certainly provide workers – but at large expense to families (upwards of \$30 an hour). It would be nice if these large, profitable transportation providers could provide at least group training once a month for people who wish to take the bus but lack to confidence, or know how. It would not shock me if they could pack a classroom here in Ottawa every month with people willing to learn. It does not have to be hard. Meet in a classroom. Discuss basics. Go as group onto bus to a destination, transferring at least once. Come back.

Angela Henderson

Case Manager - Adult Services

Service Coordination for People with Developmental Disabilities