



TransVAC & MedVAC
Community/Public Transit Service

Rider's Guide & Policies

for

Dial-A-Ride Services

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Available in alternative formats upon request.

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About Voluntary Action Center

Originally incorporated in 1974, the Voluntary Action Center began as a volunteer clearinghouse matching volunteers to needs in the community. After becoming aware of a lack of access to goods and services in the community for seniors and persons with disabilities, VAC began providing door-to-door transportation services with one van and several volunteer drivers. VAC provided 7,111 rides in that first year of operation. Today, VAC provides over 200,000 trips annually! In 2009, VAC partnered with Fox Valley Older Adult Services to provide more local transportation services to the residents of Sandwich/Somonauk region.

VAC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of members throughout the community. Our mission is commitment to providing high quality services that address the basic transportation needs of the communities we serve.

Contact Information

<u>Address:</u>	<i>Main Office</i> Voluntary Action Center 1606 Bethany Road Sycamore, IL 60178	<i>Sandwich Office</i> Voluntary Action Center 1406 Suydam Road Sandwich, IL 60548
<u>Administration:</u>	(815) 758-3932	(815) 787-6219
<u>TransVAC:</u>	(815) 758-6641	(815) 787-6219
<u>MedVAC:</u>	(815) 758-0818	(815) 787-6219
<u>Fax:</u>	(815) 758-0202	(815) 786-2696
<u>Website:</u>	http://vacdk.com/	
<u>Facebook:</u>	http://www.facebook.com/VACDeKalb	
<u>Twitter:</u>	https://twitter.com/VAC_DekalbCo	
<u>Email:</u>	info@vacdk.com	

Welcome to VAC's Community/Public Transportation Programs!

VAC is committed to providing quality transportation services for all of our riders.

VAC transit services are community and public transportation programs intended to be safe, reliable, flexible, and financially sustainable, while satisfying the various mobility needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and the general public throughout the community.

VAC provides dial-a-ride services (also known as paratransit, door-to-door, demand-response), which are origin-to-destination transportation to residents or visitors of DeKalb County. These programs are shared-ride programs, meaning that multiple individuals' trips are grouped together in an effort to meet all trip requests and improve efficiency.

The following guidelines are designed to clarify the rights and responsibilities of passengers, drivers, and other employees. They are in place to promote safety, efficiency, and effectiveness in the programs.

It is VAC policy to operate these services in compliance with FTA ADA rules and regulations. For more information, please call (815) 758-3932.

Types of Services

VAC operates two main dial-a-ride programs – the TransVAC and MedVAC programs.

- TransVAC is a shorter distance general public transit service. Riders who use TransVAC are *generally* transported within DeKalb County, especially to and from the DeKalb-Sycamore area. However, TransVAC vehicles do make cross county trips, especially in the Sandwich-Somonauk area of the County.
- MedVAC is a long distance general public medical trip program that transports clients to “out of county” medical appointments, including destinations of Rockford, Rochelle, Chicago, and the surrounding suburbs. However, MedVAC will transport clients to out of county Social Security appointments, including SSA offices in Elgin and Aurora.

VAC serves all municipalities and unincorporated areas of DeKalb County, IL – *space and availability permitting*. VAC does not travel across state lines.

Service Area

Service area for TransVAC includes all of DeKalb County and designated locations outside the County, such as adjacent Kendall County locations out of VAC's Sandwich satellite location.

Service area for MedVAC includes, but not limited to, Rockford, Rochelle, and the surrounding suburbs. MedVAC makes Chicago trips limited to the following pickup/drop-off destinations only:

- Rush Medical Center
- Children's Hospital on Clark Street
- UIC medical facilities
- University of Chicago medical facilities
- Mercy Hospital and Medical Center
- John H. Stroger Hospital
- Northwestern medical facilities
- St. Joseph Hospital
- Howard Brown Health Clinics
- Presence Resurrection Medical Center
- Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, Saint Elizabeth Campus

Reservations for transport to areas of Chicago not listed above may be requested but not expected except in certain circumstances. VAC will only pickup or drop off riders to those places listed above. VAC will ***not*** make trips to any destination unless previously booked and confirmed with dispatch.

One leg of a trip must begin or end in DeKalb County. Questions regarding areas we service should be directed to dispatchers.

Traveling Beyond the Service Area

VAC may be able to coordinate with regional transit agencies if a riders wishes to schedule trips beyond our service area. Riders need to contact the service area provider in the area to which they would like to travel to determine procedures and local travel rules. VAC may then be able to coordinate a mutually agreed upon transfer point with these agencies. However, coordination cannot be guaranteed, but VAC will do our best to work with the rider and other transit agencies.

Hours of Operation

VAC operates our programs on the following schedule:

	<u>Main Office</u>	<u>Sandwich Office</u>
TransVAC: M-TH	7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
F	7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
MedVAC: M-F	5:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Trip times may vary depending on space, availability, and the needs of riders.

Holiday Service

Hours of operations during holidays vary. VAC will make every effort of informing riders ahead of time when VAC transportation hours are affected due to holiday schedules. Please check the VAC website, social media websites, postings on the vehicles, or ask your dispatcher.

Inclement Weather Policy

If management determines the weather is so severe it is unsafe to operate, then operations will cease for the day in question. Check your local media sources, including local radio stations, the VAC webpage, or VAC social media websites for information regarding system closures.

Who Can Ride with VAC?

Service is available to the general public. This is a general public transportation service that is especially important for seniors and individuals with disabilities. All riders must first register to ride. For information regarding registering for service, please see the “Registering for Service” section, visit the VAC website, or contact the office at (815) 758-3932.

Registering for Service

All passengers must be registered with VAC before they can ride. We can provide Registration Forms by email, airmail, fax, or they can be printed online from the [VAC website](#). Registration can also be handled by partner agencies or businesses (such as dialysis centers or assisted living facilities), on behalf of the rider.

Scheduling a Ride

After a rider has registered with VAC, reservations can be made by contacting dispatch during the following hours:

Main Office

<u>Service</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u>Phone Numbers</u>
TransVAC:	M-F	7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.	(815) 758-6641
MedVAC:	M-F	8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	(815) 758-0818

Sandwich Office

<u>Service</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u>Phone Numbers</u>
Both:	M-F	8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	(815) 786-9404

TransVAC trips can be reserved one (1) to six (6) business days in advance. There is no advanced limit on booking MedVAC trips. All transportation is based on space and vehicle availability.

Reservations made with 24 hour notice or less may be possible if there is availability but should not be expected. It is always best to call in advance to schedule a ride. When scheduling trips, dispatchers will do their best to accommodate all passengers, but some flexibility is to be expected.

Please keep in mind: *We operate shared ride services. In order to maximize our transportation resources, two or more people may be transported together if origin and/or destination locations are within reasonable times and distances, and a scheduled reservation may be adjusted by the office in order to maintain efficiency or accommodate additional passengers. In addition, requests for specific drivers and or vehicles will not be accepted.*

When calling to schedule a ride, be prepared to provide the following information:

- Name and date of trip.
- **EXACT** addresses of both pickup and destination locations.
- Reservation time(s) you would like to be picked up. (Note: Dispatchers will try to match your requested time as closely as possible, but may not be able to due to prior scheduled rides. Please be flexible as we are trying to accommodate many requests.)
- Name of travel companion/assistant, if applicable.

- Please state if you use a mobility device, or require any additional assistance from the driver.

Have dispatcher confirm the following information:

- Pick-up time(s).
- Pick-up location - exact address.
- Drop off location - exact address.
- Special instructions for the driver – includes requesting assistance.
- Return trip information.
- Cost of trip.

Other things to give consideration when scheduling trips:

- For medical appointments, it is very important to let the dispatcher know if you have an appointment time, as to make sure you arrive on time.
- Allow for at least 15 minutes after the completion of an event for a return reservation. For example, if your shopping trip ends at 5:00 p.m., schedule a 5:15 p.m. or later pickup.
- Confirm a designated location or entrance when being dropped off or picked up. For example: If you are going to Walmart, indicate where you are going, such as the North Entrance (grocery side) or the South Entrance (pharmacy side).
- When shopping **please adhere to our Package Policy**. For more information regarding this policy, please read over that section.

Fares

TransVAC Dial-A-Ride*	FARE
Adult	\$1.00
Senior	\$1.00 or Donation
Disabled	\$1.00
NIU Student	\$1.00
K-12 Students	\$1.00
Children (ages 5 and under)	Free

**Senior is age 60+ and will be asked to consider a suggested donation they feel is appropriate instead of a fare.*

MedVAC Dial-A-Ride	FARE
All riders	Varies*

**Please consult VAC Dispatch.*

Fares must be paid in exact change at the time of each individual pickup. Drivers do not handle cash and cannot make change.

There is no fare for MedVAC at the time of this printing. However, please consider a donation of .50¢ per mile traveled. VAC accepts Medicaid payment for medical trips. To see if you are eligible, or to request further information, please contact the administrative office at (815) 758-3932.

Wheelchairs and Mobility Devices

For the purposes of these policies a wheelchair is defined as a three-or-more wheeled mobility aid device, such as common wheelchairs or scooters, usable indoors, designed for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. Mobility devices can also mean walkers, canes, etc.

VAC will make every attempt to accommodate the rider's wheelchair and/or mobility device. The mobility device must safely fit onto the lift platform and the lift must be able to safely raise the mobility device and its occupant. Service can be refused if the mobility device and its occupant cannot safely utilize the lift to board the vehicle.

Pickup and Return Procedures

Passengers must allow some flexibility in pickup times. The bus can arrive anytime within a window of 10 minutes before or 10 minutes after the scheduled reservation. **Please be ready 10 minutes prior to your scheduled reservation.** Pickup and drop-off locations must have accommodations for the vehicle to park

and remain within the vision of the driver. In addition, the rider must ensure paths to and from the point of pickup and drop-off are properly paved and kept clear of snow, ice, parked cars, debris, or other obstructions. *Because the vehicles are routed prior to pickup times, we may not be able to return if a rider misses their reservation time.*

Once the bus arrives, the driver will honk the horn, knock on the door, or ring the bell for riders. After the driver indicates arrival, he or she will wait three (3) minutes. If the rider does not board the bus within three (3) minutes, the trip is considered a “no show,” and the driver will leave. It is the responsibility of the rider to be ready within the 10-minute window. (Please see No Show Policy below.)

Will Calls

Given the unpredictability of medical appointments, VAC dispatchers may place riders on the Will Call List for return trips. This means that once the medical appointment is completed please call VAC dispatchers, or have the doctor’s office call, to let dispatch know the appointment is over. *We will pick you up as quickly as our schedule allows.* The Will Call List is for medical trips only. To be placed on the Will Call list, arrangements with Dispatch must be made at least 24 hours in advance. For example, passengers cannot call dispatch the day of following an appointment to request a Will Call trip if the trip was not confirmed with VAC Dispatch at least 24 hours in advance. VAC reserves the right to make final determination if a rider will be placed on the Will Call List or if the rider must schedule a return trip. VAC tries to reserve the Will Call List for the most critical medical reservations, otherwise scheduling return trips should be expected.

Driver Assistance

VAC drivers will assist riders, upon request, with boarding and exiting the vehicle and/or to and from the ground level exterior door of the buildings. Drivers are not permitted to enter thresholds of buildings, be it a residence, medical office, shopping center, etc. Exceptions can be made in certain circumstances, so long as threshold isn’t a residence. Requests for assistance must be made at the time the trip is booked. The rider must ensure paths to and from the vehicle are properly paved and kept clear of snow, ice, parked cars, debris, or other obstructions. Drivers are not allowed to lift or carry riders. Riders are expected to carry their own bags and packages, unless they specifically request the driver for assistance.

At that point, the driver will happily assist within reason. Please refer to our Package Policy for more details.

Drivers are trained to take a traditional, non-motorized wheelchair up or down one step by themselves. Riders are responsible for providing ramps to manage multiple stairs, or motorized wheelchair devices. Drivers are required to make sure that all wheelchairs are properly secured per VAC requirements.

Please note: Exceeding the manufacturers' lift capacity on agency vehicles can cause damage to VAC equipment and place passengers and staff in danger. VAC will not exceed manufacturers' lift capacities. The maximum capacity for all vehicle lifts includes the passenger, any mobility device, medical equipment, or personal items.

When a rider's needs are beyond the responsibility of the driver, or fundamentally alter an employee's function, or that may cause serious disruptions to service, a travel assistant may be required as a condition to use VAC services. Please see VAC's Travel Assistant Policy below for more details.

Drivers are prohibited from accepting tips from passengers, but passengers are encouraged to contact VAC's Operations Manager to compliment and/or comment on drivers, dispatchers, or anything related to the service they received.

Service Animals

Passengers may travel on all VAC vehicles with a service animal. Service animals include guide dogs, signal dogs, and other animals trained to work or perform tasks for persons with disabilities. If you are traveling with a service animal, be sure to inform your dispatch scheduler when you are scheduling a ride. This ensures the appropriate vehicle is sent, and/or there will be room on the vehicle for you and your service animal, along with other scheduled riders. Drivers cannot make changes for your service animals if you do not make a reservation the day before your ride. Your service animal will not be allowed to ride with you without prior notification. You are responsible to maintain control of your animal while on board the bus. VAC drivers will not be responsible for taking charge of your service animal. VAC does not permit personal pets to ride.

Travel Assistant Policy

VAC permits riders who need extra assistance to ride with one (1) travel assistant. The travel assistant must be identified with VAC and can only ride with a registered rider. The travel assistant may ride at no charge and must have the same pick-up and drop-off locations as the rider he or she is assisting.

Riders traveling with an assistant must reserve space for them when calling to schedule their own ride.

Package Policy

All riders are permitted to carry packages and bags on VAC vehicles. There is no specific limit to the exact number of bags that a rider can bring on the bus, but a rider must be able to keep these items under their personal control. An excessive amount of packages and/or bags will not be permitted. Items cannot take up additional seats or cause safety hazards or an inconvenience to the driver or other riders. Specifics of the policy include:

- A rider may carry on only as many bags as he or she (the rider) can carry on and off the bus in one trip by him or herself. A rider cannot enter and exit the bus multiple times to load packages. Drivers should not be expected to assist in carrying bags on or off the bus unless specifically requested by a passenger with documented disabilities.
- If a rider attempts to board the bus with more bags than what is allowed for according to this policy, the driver has the right to refuse bus service to the rider.
- No full sized grocery carts or other wheeled storage units, such as wagons, are permitted on the bus. Small, personal fold-up pull carts are permitted but must be stored outside of the aisle so not to create a safety hazard.
- No bags or packages are to be left unattended at any time on the vehicle by the rider.
- All bags or packages must be held by the rider or placed on the floor under the seat. At no times are bags or packages allowed to be placed in the aisle way or placed on other seats.

- MedVAC is NOT a shopping transportation program. Packages will not be allowed on MedVAC vehicles. However, trips to and from the pharmacy for medical prescriptions and supplies are allowable.
- The driver has the right to enforce these policies.

Children

When transporting children, all Illinois child safety-seat laws must be followed. To find out more about these laws, please call VAC or visit the Illinois Department of State website. VAC does not provide child safety-seats, nor are VAC drivers allowed to fasten these seats. All riders must provide these seats to ride. Children five (5) years of age and under ride free of charge. Riders who are 12 or older may ride by themselves. Anyone under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

Cancellations

If you need to cancel a ride, you are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, but no less than one (1) hour prior to pick-up time. A ride cancelled with less than one (1) hour notification may be considered a “no show.” For No Show Policy details, see below. If it is determined that a rider cancels scheduled reservations excessively, he or she may be subjected to limited service, as this behavior can be disruptive to other riders and staff.

TransVAC in Sycamore takes cancellations M-F from 6:00 a.m. to 6:45 a.m. and again from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

MedVAC in Sycamore takes cancellations M-F from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. If you need to cancel a MedVAC trip prior to 8:30 a.m., please call TransVAC dispatch, who will handle your cancellation request.

TransVAC and MedVAC in Sandwich take cancellations M-F from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

No Show / Late Cancellation Policy

VAC understands that because TransVAC and MedVAC require trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. VAC also understands that riders may sometimes

miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely manner for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips, or failing to cancel trips in a timely manner, is disruptive to our operations and other riders, and can lead to suspension of service for a rider who consistently exhibits this behavior. The following information explains VAC's no-show policy.

Definition: No-Shows, Pickup Window, and Late Cancellation

No-show: A no-show occurs when a rider fails to appear to board the vehicle for a scheduled trip. This presumes the vehicle arrives at the scheduled pickup location within the pickup window and the driver waits at least three (3) minutes.

Pickup Window: The pickup window is defined as 10 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to 10 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. Riders must be ready to board a vehicle that arrives within the pickup window. The driver will wait for a maximum of three (3) minutes within the pickup window for the rider to appear.

Late Cancellation: A late cancellation is defined as either: (a) a cancellation made less than one (1) hour before the scheduled pickup time or, (b) as a cancellation made at the door or a refusal to board a vehicle that has arrived within the pickup window.

Definition: No-Shows Due to Operator Error or to Circumstances Beyond a Rider's Control

VAC does not count as no-shows or late cancellations any missed trips due to our error, such as, but not limited to:

- Trips placed on the schedule in error
- Pickups scheduled at the wrong pickup location
- Bus operators arriving and departing before the pickup window begins
- Bus operators arriving late (after the end of the pickup window)
- Bus operators arriving within the pickup window, but departing without waiting the required three (3) minutes

VAC does not count as no-shows or late cancellations situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken, such as, but not limited to:

- Medical emergency
- Family emergency
- Sudden illness or change in condition
- Appointment that runs unexpectedly late without sufficient notice
- Inability for rider to get call through to dispatch due to heavy call volume or system disruption/failure

Riders should contact the TransVAC/MedVAC dispatch center when experiencing no-shows or late cancellations due to circumstances beyond their control.

Policy for Handling Subsequent Trips Following No-shows

When a rider is a no-show for one (1) trip, all subsequent trips on that day will be cancelled unless the rider specifically calls to confirm requiring the trips. Riders are encouraged to call dispatch to clarify the nature of the no-show and to confirm the need for any additionally scheduled trips.

Suspension Policies for a Pattern or Practice of Excessive No-shows and Late Cancellations

VAC reviews all recorded no-shows and late cancellations to ensure accuracy before recording them in a rider's account.

If a rider has three (3) no shows or late cancellations in a 30 day period, he or she will be placed on the Restricted List. The rider may still use VAC transportation programs but will be required to call at least one (1) hour in advance to notify dispatch that the scheduled reservation is still needed.

While on Restriction if the rider records another no show or fails to call one (1) hour prior to the pickup time, the rider will be put on Suspension and will not be allowed to use TransVAC or MedVAC for 30 days.

All restriction and suspension notices will be made verbally (if possible) and in writing and will include a copy of this policy, information on disputing no-shows, or late cancellations, and how to appeal suspensions.

Policy for Disputing Specific No-Shows or Late Cancellations

Riders wishing to dispute specific no-shows or late cancellations must do so within 10 business days of receiving notification. Riders should contact VAC's Operations Manager, or if unavailable, his or her designee, at (815) 758-3932, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to explain the circumstance, and request the removal of the no-show or late cancellation.

Policy for Appealing Restrictions or Suspensions

Riders wishing to appeal restrictions or suspensions under this policy have the right to file an appeal request, which must be in writing by letter or via email to VAC's V.P. of Operations, DeKalb Region. Please check VAC's website for contact information, or ask by calling (815) 758-3932.

Riders must submit written appeal requests within 10 business days of receiving suspension letters. Riders who miss the appeal request deadline will be suspended from TransVAC or MedVAC on the date listed on the suspension notice. Management reserves the right to all final suspension decisions.

Passenger Guidelines

It is the goal of VAC to operate safe, reliable, flexible, and financially sustainable transportation programs, while satisfying the various mobility needs of the community. Passengers are asked to observe the following guidelines. Failure to do so may result in limited or denied service:

- All passengers must be capable of remaining seated while vehicle is in motion.
- All mobility devices are required to be secured by the vehicle operator with proper securement devices. A ride will not be denied to a person with a mobility device due to driver's inability to secure the device.
- Passengers cannot demand change in the schedule once on the bus, or request to be picked up first or last. All changes to the schedule must be made with the dispatcher PRIOR to pickup.
- Vehicle operators will not wait more than three (3) minutes for passengers to board.
- Physical or verbal abuse of the driver, or other passengers (example: shoving, hitting, cursing, excessively loud conversation, etc.) will not be tolerated.

- Personal hygiene which is consistently offensive to a majority of the passengers will be discussed with the passenger privately, and may be cause for further action.

ABSOLUTELY NO:

- Eating
- Drinking (only bottled water is allowed)
- Smoking
- Standing
- Taking non-prescription drugs
- Riding while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Use of tobacco products
- Possession of weapons
- Transportation of any hazardous substance (acids, gasoline, oil, fluids, etc.)
- Improper dress (example: no shirt, no shoes, etc.)
- Damaging or disfiguring the vehicles (exterior or interior)
- Removing any items from the vehicle not belonging to the passenger (example: fares, donations, groceries, blankets, fire extinguisher, supplies, tools, etc.)

Riders who engage in violent, disruptive, or illegal conduct will be refused service. A rider whose behavior threatens or has threatened the safety of VAC personnel or other riders may be denied service. Riders who engage in violent, threatening, or illegal behavior may lose the privilege of riding with TransVAC or MedVAC.

Subscription Service

Subscription Service is not required by the ADA. However, in an effort to best meet our riders' needs, VAC offers limited Subscription Service for riders who require repetitive trips from the same origin and to the same destination at the same time over an extended period of time. Subscription Service riders do not need to call to reserve each of their repeat trips. Subscription Service is for trips to work, work training, education-specialized medical care, or other repetitive travel needs. In order to qualify for a Subscription trip, the same ride must be taken at the same time at least twice a week and demonstrated over a two week period of time.

Because the availability of Subscription Service is limited, some riders may be placed on a waiting list. Other restrictions may also apply. All subscription rides are automatically cancelled on the holidays listed in the section “Holiday Service.” Customers who wish to ride on these days must book a demand trip the day before with the appropriate area carrier.

Subscription Service trips requiring changes should be cancelled and demand trips should be requested. To cancel a specific trip that is a part of Subscription Service, customers must call the dispatch office. Riders should take care to only cancel one specific trip and not cancel their Subscription Service entirely. **Failure to cancel trips appropriately and/or excessive cancellations may result in dismissal from the Subscription Service program.** Subscription Service may be placed on hold to accommodate vacations, hospital stays, and other limited periods of time when service will not be needed. Subscription Service is not meant to hold a time slot for trips made only occasionally.

Reasonable Modification to Policies, Practices, and Procedures

VAC is committed to providing safe, reliable, courteous, accessible, and user-friendly services to its riders. To ensure equality and fairness, VAC is committed to making reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. For more information on our reasonable modification procedures, including requesting a reasonable modification or appeal process, please see contact VAC’s ADA Officer at (815) 758-3932 or info@vacdk.com.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns

Your input is important to us. If you have questions, comments, or concerns regarding our services or your ride, please contact VAC’s operations manager, or his or her designee, at (815) 758-3932. Safety, courtesy, and on-time performance are expected of our employees, and we need to know when the expectation has not been met.