

# **Americans with Disabilities Act Policy**

*For*

*Big Five Community Services, Inc.  
Southern Oklahoma Rural Transportation System*

Approved By: David Moody

Accepted Date: 2/15/2018

## **I. Goal**

It is the goal of SORTS, through its (demand response) rural public transit service, to design, implement and maintain an efficient and effective transportation system for persons with disabilities. SORTS works to ensure nondiscriminatory transportation in support of the Federal Transit Administration's mission to enhance the social and economic quality of life for all Americans.

## **II. Policy**

It is the policy of SORTS to abide by all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and US Department of Transportation (DOT) implementation regulation found at 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38, as amended; in the delivery of transit services that are open to the public and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and sets specific requirements that transit agencies must follow.

## **III. ADA Requirements**

### **- Equivalent Service**

*SORTS* provides demand response rural public transportation and provides equivalent service to individuals with disabilities, which is consistent with DOT ADA 49 CFR Part 37.77. This transportation will be provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual and will be equivalent to the service provided other individuals with respect to:

- Response time;
- Fares;
- Geographic area of service;
- Hours and days of service;
- Restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose;
- Availability of information and reservations capability;
- Any constraints on capacity or availability;

## **-General Service Requirements**

### **a. Training**

*SORTS* shall ensure that personnel are trained to proficiency, as appropriate to their duties, so that they operate vehicles and equipment safely and properly assist and treat individuals with disabilities who use the service in a respectful and courteous way, with appropriate attention to the differences among individuals with disabilities.

### **b. Service Animals**

The *SORTS* shall permit animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a service animal is defined as “*any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including but not limited to, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.*” 49 CFR Part 37.3

Control of the service animal is the responsibility of the animal’s partner. Any animal out of control will not be transported. If an animal’s behavior creates a hazard or direct threat, the accountability for damages or injuries shall remain with the person responsible for the animal.

Service animals should sit or lie on the floor. Animals should not occupy a passenger seat, and should not block the passenger aisle.

### **c. Transporting of Wheelchairs**

**Wheelchair Definition:** A wheelchair is defined in Section 37.3 as “a mobility aid belonging to any class of three-or more-wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered.”

*SORTS* will accommodate mobility devices. Three or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered, will be accommodated as long as the lift can accommodate the size and weight of the wheelchair and its user and there is space for the wheelchair on the vehicle. Mobility devices will not be transported if they are inconsistent with legitimate safety requirements.

#### **d. Wheelchair Securement**

Section 38.23(d) of the DOT's ADA regulation requires all ADA compliant vehicles to have a two-part securement system: One to secure the mobility device and secondly a seatbelt and shoulder harness for the wheelchair user, complying with all applicable provision of Title 49 Part 571, (such seat belts and should harnesses shall not be used in lieu of a device which secures the wheelchair or mobility aid itself).

The Securement system shall limit the movement of an occupied wheelchair or mobility aid to no more than 2 inches in any direction under normal vehicle operation conditions. 49 CFR Part 38(d)(5)

All wheelchairs must be secured to the floor of the vehicle using the securement equipment.

#### **e. Lift Deployment**

Passengers will be permitted to use a lift or ramp to board or disembark from a vehicle at any designated stop, unless the lift or ramp cannot be deployed, the lift or ramp will be damaged if it is deployed, or temporary conditions preclude the safe use of the stop by all passengers. Standees should stand in the center of the platform facing the direction of travel. If capable, the passenger should hold both handrails when on the platform.

It is recommended that power chairs and scooters be turned to the "OFF" position once on the lift platform and while the lift is in operation.

#### **f. Respirators and/or Portable Oxygen Equipment**

Individuals with disabilities who use portable oxygen devices are allowed to travel with respirators and properly secured portable oxygen supplies. Oxygen supplies must not obstruct the aisle. 49 CFR Part 37.167(h)

### **IV. Passenger Responsibilities**

- a. All passengers must be able to sit in a bus seat or wheelchair in order to be transported.

All passengers on the vehicle are required to wear seat belts to include lap and shoulder belts. Therefore, persons in wheelchairs will also be required to be secured. Persons who, for medical reasons are unable to wear a safety belt, may request exemptions. To apply for this exemption, the person must submit a written application to the Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety requesting an exemption. Written verification

- b. from their physician, attesting to the need for the exemption, must be included. If the request is approved, a special notation will be placed on the person's driver's license to indicate the exemption from the safety belt law.
- c. *SORTS* will deny service to any individual who engages in violent, illegal conduct.
- d. If a passenger's physical condition or conduct is hazardous, or whose behavior is seriously disruptive and/or a direct threat to others, service will be denied.
- e. The passenger will be notified of his/her right to appeal the denial of service and *SORTS* will hear the appeal as soon as reasonably possible.

#### **V. Driver Responsibilities**

- a. Drivers are responsible for loading and unloading passengers
- b. Drivers are not permitted to enter a passenger's home under any circumstance.
- c. Drivers are not permitted to maneuver a wheelchair device up or down more than one step. This rule is provided for the safety of the passenger and the driver.
- d. Drivers are not permitted to lift passengers.
- e. Drivers will help passengers take lightweight items off the vehicle and set them on the curb. If additional assistance is required, this assistance may be rendered on a case-by-case basis.

#### **VI. Personal Care Attendants and Companions**

- a. Personal care attendant (PCA's) are not required. If a PCA accompanies a passenger, the PCA will ride free of charge.
- b. A companion (e.g., friend or family member) is not considered a personal care attendant unless the eligible individual regularly makes use of a personal care attendant and the companion is actually acting in that capacity.

During the reservation process, an individual must indicate whether he/she travels with a personal care attendant. If someone does not indicate the use

- c. of an attendant, then any individual accompanying him/her would be regarded as a companion.

## **VII. Effective Communication**

- a. *SORTS* is committed to providing information about its services, policies and procedures to the public in accessible formats for persons with disabilities.
- b. *SORTS* shall provide a TTY number (or make use of an operator-assisted RELAY service) so that persons with hearing or speech impairments may communicate with and receive information from *SORTS* Staff.

## **VIII. Reasonable Modification (49 CFR Parts 27 and 37)**

A reasonable modification is a change to a policy, practice, or procedure that allows disabled individuals to have equal access to programs, services and activities. *SORTS* will make reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures when necessary to ensure access to transit services for qualified individuals with disabilities, unless:

- Granting the accommodation would fundamentally alter the nature of the public transportation service.
- Making the accommodation would create a direct threat to the health or safety of other passengers.
- The individual with a disability is able to fully use *SORTS*'s service without the accommodation being made
- Where granting the request would cause an undue financial and administrative burden.

### **- Requesting Reasonable Modifications**

*SORTS* will provide information on how to make requests for reasonable modifications. This information will be readily available and easily accessible to the public through *SORTS* website and policy guidelines. Requests for accommodation can be submitted directly to *SORTS*, in writing, and sent to our main office: Request should be sent to Big Five Community Service, Inc., 1502 North 1st Ave., Durant Oklahoma, 74701, Att: *SORTS*. Questions should or information should be made by phone by calling 580-924-5331 (ask for Tanya).

### **- Processing/Granting/Denying Modification Requests**

*SORTS* will process reasonable modification requests in a timely manner and no less than 30 days. As soon as a determination regarding reasonable accommodation has been made, that decision will be promptly communicated to the individual. In the event that a request for reasonable accommodation will be denied, *SORTS* will communicate the denial to the individual requesting modification.

## **IX. Public Involvement**

*SORTS* is committed to providing on-going mechanisms in accessible formats to involve the public in decisions regarding its accessible services, proposed fare increases, policies and procedures, and other similar topics.

## **X. Complaint Procedure**

Any person who believes she or he has been discriminated against, or who has a concern, may file a formal complaint. *SORTS* provides information on how to file a complaint on their web site and by calling their main office at 580-924-5331. Information on complaint process will be part of all published material concerning *SORTS*. Complaints can be submitted to *SORTS* in writing. When a complaint is received, documentation is kept concerning the nature, date and time of the complaint. Every complaint will be investigated within 10 days of receipt. After *SORTS* investigates the complaint, a decision will be rendered *SORTS* will respond in writing.

If the complainant disagrees with the finding of *SORTS*, an opportunity to appeal the decision may be pursued. An appeal should be filed within 21 days of the initial decision by *SORTS*. The appeal must be filed in writing and must provide detailed information on appeal and merits of appeal, sent to our main office.

In the event of an appeal, the investigating official will then follow a process that will include: Interviewing individuals with relevant information and accepting relevant information. The complainant will have the ability to present additional information. A decision will be made by a member of the H R department, *SORTS* Director (or designee) and reviewed by Executive Director. Petitioner will be notified of decision within 30 days after review has been completed.

**XI. Designated Employee**

*SORTS* designated official responsible for processing reasonable modification requests and handling complaints is:

Name, Title of Individual-Allen Leaird, Director

Transit System Name – Southern Oklahoma Rural Transportation System (SORTS)

Address – 1502 N. 1st Ave., Durant, OK 74701

Phone Number – 580-924-5331