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<b>Houston EMA/HSDA Ryan White Part A Service Definition</b> <b>Medical Transportation (Van Based)</b> (Revision Date: 03/03/14)	
HRSA Service Category Title: <b>RWGA Only</b>	<b>Medical Transportation</b>
Local Service Category Title:	<b>a. Transportation targeted to Urban</b> <b>b. Transportation targeted to Rural</b>
Budget Type: <b>RWGA Only</b>	<b>Hybrid Fee for Service</b>
Budget Requirements or Restrictions: <b>RWGA Only</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Units assigned to Urban Transportation must only be used to transport clients whose residence is in Harris County.</li> <li>• Units assigned to Rural Transportation may only be used to transport clients who reside in Houston EMA/HSDA counties <u>other than</u> Harris County.</li> <li>• Mileage reimbursed for transportation is based on the documented distance in miles from a client's Trip Origin to Trip Destination as <b>documented by a standard Internet-based mapping program (i.e. Google Maps, Map Quest, Yahoo Maps) approved by RWGA.</b> Agency must print out and file in the client record a trip plan from the appropriate Internet-based mapping program that clearly delineates the mileage between Point of Origin and Destination (and reverse for round trips). This requirement is subject to audit by the County.</li> <li>• Transportation to employment, employment training, school, or other activities not directly related to a client's treatment of HIV disease is <u>not</u> allowable. Clients may not be transported to entertainment or social events under this contract.</li> <li>• Taxi vouchers must be made available for documented emergency purposes and to transport a client to a disability hearing, emergency shelter or for a documented medical emergency.</li> <li>• Contractor must reserve 7% of the total budget for Taxi Vouchers.</li> <li>• Maximum monthly utilization of taxi vouchers cannot exceed 14% of the total amount of funding reserved for Taxi Vouchers.</li> <li>• Emergencies warranting the use of Taxi Vouchers include: van service is unavailable due to breakdown, scheduling conflicts or inclement weather or other unanticipated event. A spreadsheet listing client's 11-digit code, age, date of service, number of trips, and reason for emergency should be kept on-site and available for review during Site Visits.</li> <li>• <b>Contractor must provide RWGA a copy of the agreement between Contractor and a licensed taxi vendor by March 30, 2015.</b></li> <li>• All taxi voucher receipts must have the taxi company's name, the driver's name and/or identification number, number of miles driven, destination (to and from), and exact cost of trip. The Contractor will add the client's 11-digit code to the receipt and include all receipts with the monthly Contractor Expense Report (CER).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A copy of the taxi company’s statement (on company letterhead) must be included with the monthly CER. Supporting documentation of disbursement payments may be requested with the CER.</li> </ul>
<p>HRSA Service Category Definition: <b>RWGA Only</b></p>	<p><b>Medical transportation services</b> include conveyance services provided, directly or through voucher, to a client so that he or she may access health care services.</p>
<p>Local Service Category Definition:</p>	<p>a. Urban Transportation: Contractor will develop and implement a medical transportation program that provides essential transportation services to <b>HRSA-defined Core Services</b> through the use of individual employee or contract drivers with vehicles/vans to Ryan White Program-eligible individuals residing in Harris County. Clients residing outside of Harris County are ineligible for Urban transportation services. Exceptions to this requirement require <u>prior</u> written approval from RWGA.</p> <p>b. Rural Transportation: Contractor will develop and implement a medical transportation program that provides essential transportation services to <b>HRSA-defined Core Services</b> through the use of individual employee or contract drivers with vehicles/vans to Ryan White Program-eligible individuals residing in Houston EMA/HSDA counties other than Harris County. Clients residing in Harris County are ineligible for this transportation program. Exceptions to this requirement require <u>prior</u> written approval from RWGA.</p> <p>Essential transportation is defined as transportation to public and private outpatient medical care and physician services, substance abuse and mental health services, pharmacies and other services where eligible clients receive Ryan White-defined Core Services and/or medical and health-related care services, including clinical trials, essential to their well-being.</p> <p>The Contractor shall ensure that the transportation program provides taxi vouchers to eligible clients only in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To access emergency shelter vouchers or to attend social security disability hearings;</li> <li>• Van service is unavailable due to breakdown or inclement weather;</li> <li>• Client’s medical need requires immediate transport;</li> <li>• Scheduling Conflicts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Contractor must provide clear and specific justification (reason) for the use of taxi vouchers and include the documentation in the client’s file for <u>each</u> incident. RWGA must approve supporting documentation for taxi voucher reimbursements.</b></p> <p>For clients living in the METRO service area, written certification from the client’s principal medical provider (e.g. medical case manager or physician) is required to access van-based transportation, to be renewed every 180 days. <b>Medical Certifications should be maintained on-site by the provider in a single file (listed alphabetically by 11-digit code) and will be monitored at least annually during a Site Visit.</b> It is the</p>

	<p>Contractor’s responsibility to determine whether a client resides within the METRO service area. Clients who live outside the METRO service area but within Harris County (e.g. Baytown) are not required to provide a written medical certification to access van-based transportation. All clients living in the Metro service area may receive a maximum of 4 non-certified round trips per year (including taxi vouchers). Non-certified trips will be reviewed during the annual Site Visit. Provider must maintain an up-to-date spreadsheet documenting such trips.</p> <p>The Contractor must implement the general transportation program in accordance with the Transportation Standards of Care that include entering all transportation services into the Centralized Patient Care Data Management System (CPCDMS) and providing eligible children with transportation services to Core Services appointments. Only actual mileage (documented per the selected Internet mapping program) transporting eligible clients from Origin to Destination will be reimbursed under this contract. The Contractor must make reasonable effort to ensure that routes are designed in the most efficient manner possible to minimize actual client time in vehicles.</p>
Target Population (age, gender, geographic, race, ethnicity, etc.):	<p>a. Urban Transportation: HIV/AIDS-infected and Ryan White Part A/B eligible affected individuals residing in Harris County.</p> <p>b. Rural Transportation: HIV/AIDS-infected and Ryan White Part A/B eligible affected individuals residing in Fort Bend, Waller, Walker, Montgomery, Austin, Colorado, Liberty, Chambers and Wharton Counties.</p>
Services to be Provided:	<p>To provide Medical Transportation services to access Ryan White Program defined <b>Core Services</b> for eligible individuals. Transportation will include round trips to single destinations and round trips to multiple destinations. Taxi vouchers will be provided to eligible clients only for identified emergency situations. Caregiver must be allowed to accompany the HIV-infected rider. <b>Eligibility for Transportation Services is determined by the client’s County of residence as documented in the CPCDMS.</b></p>
Service Unit Definition(s): <b>RWGA Only</b>	<p>One (1) unit of service = one (1) mile driven with an eligible client as passenger. Client cancellations and/or no-shows are <u>not</u> reimbursable.</p>
Financial Eligibility:	<p>Refer to the RWPC’s approved <i>Financial Eligibility for Houston EMA/HSDA Services</i>.</p>
Client Eligibility:	<p>a. Urban Transportation: Only individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and Ryan White Program eligible HIV-affected individuals residing inside Harris County will be eligible for services.</p> <p>b. Rural Transportation: Only individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and Ryan White Program eligible HIV-affected individuals residing in Houston EMA/HSDA Counties other than Harris County are eligible for Rural Transportation services.</p> <p>Documentation of the client’s eligibility in accordance with approved</p>

	<p>Transportation Standards of Care must be obtained by the Contractor prior to providing services. The Contractor must ensure that eligible clients have a signed consent for transportation services, client rights and responsibilities prior to the commencement of services.</p> <p>Affected significant others may accompany an HIV-infected person as medically necessary (minor children may accompany their caregiver as necessary). Ryan White Part A/B eligible affected individuals may utilize the services under this contract for travel to Core Services when the aforementioned criteria are met and the use of the service is directly related to a person with HIV infection. An example of an eligible transportation encounter by an affected individual is transportation to a Professional Counseling appointment.</p>
Agency Requirements	<p>Proposer must be a Certified Medicaid Transportation Provider. Contractor must furnish such documentation to Harris County upon request from Ryan White Grant Administration prior to March 1<sup>st</sup> annually. Contractor must maintain such certification throughout the term of the contract. Failure to maintain certification as a Medicaid Transportation provider may result in termination of contract.</p> <p>Contractor must provide each client with a written explanation of contractor's scheduling procedures upon initiation of their first transportation service, and annually thereafter. Contractor must provide RWGA with a copy of their scheduling procedures by March 30, 2014, and thereafter within 5 business days of any revisions.</p> <p><b>Contractor must also have the following equipment dedicated to the general transportation program:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A separate phone line from their main number so that clients can access transportation services during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. directly at no cost to the clients. <b>The telephone line must be managed by a live person between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.</b> Telephone calls to an answering machine utilized after 5:00 p.m. must be returned by 9:00 a.m. the following business day.</li> <li>• A fax machine with a dedicated line.</li> <li>• All equipment identified in the Transportation Standards of Care necessary to transport children in vehicles.</li> <li>• Contractor must assure clients eligible for Medicaid transportation are billed to Medicaid. This is subject to audit by the County.</li> </ul> <p>The Contractor is responsible for maintaining documentation to evidence that drivers providing services have a valid Texas Driver's License and have completed a State approved "Safe Driving" course. Contractor must maintain documentation of the automobile liability insurance of each vehicle utilized by the program as required by state law. All vehicles must have a current Texas State Inspection. The minimum acceptable limit of automobile liability insurance is \$300,000.00 combined single limit. Agency must maintain detailed records of mileage driven and names of</p>

	<p>individuals provided with transportation, as well as origin and destination of trips. <b><i>It is the Contractor's responsibility to verify the County in which clients reside in.</i></b></p>
<p>Staff Requirements</p>	<p>A picture identification of each driver must be posted in the vehicle utilized to transport clients. Criminal background checks must be performed on all direct service transportation personnel prior to transporting any clients. Drivers must have annual proof of a safe driving record, which shall include history of tickets, DWI/DUI, or other traffic violations. Conviction on more than three (3) moving violations within the past year will disqualify the driver. Conviction of one (1) DWI/DUI within the past three (3) years will disqualify the driver.</p>
<p>Special Requirements: <b>RWGA Only</b></p>	<p>Individuals who qualify for transportation services through Medicaid are not eligible for these transportation services.</p> <p><b>Contractor must ensure the following criteria are met for all clients transported by Contractor's transportation program:</b></p> <p>Transportation Provider must ensure that clients use transportation services for an appropriate purpose through one of the following three methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow-up hard copy verification between transportation provider and Destination Agency (DA) program confirming use of eligible service(s), or</li> <li>2. Client provides receipt documenting use of eligible services at Destination Agency on the date of transportation, or</li> <li>3. Scheduling of transportation services was made by receiving agency's case manager or transportation coordinator.</li> </ol> <p>The verification/receipt form must at a minimum include all elements listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be on Destination Agency letterhead</li> <li>• Date/Time</li> <li>• CPCDMS client code</li> <li>• Name and signature of Destination Agency staff member who attended to client (e.g. case manager, clinician, physician, nurse)</li> <li>• Destination Agency date stamp to ensure DA issued form.</li> </ul>

***FY 2020 RWPC “How to Best Meet the Need” Decision Process***

<b>Step in Process: Council</b>		Date: <b>06/13/19</b>
Recommendations:	Approved: Y: _____ No: _____ Approved With Changes: _____	If approved with changes list changes below:
1.		
2.		
3.		
<b>Step in Process: Steering Committee</b>		Date: <b>06/06/19</b>
Recommendations:	Approved: Y: _____ No: _____ Approved With Changes: _____	If approved with changes list changes below:
1.		
2.		
3.		
<b>Step in Process: Quality Improvement Committee</b>		Date: <b>05/14/19</b>
Recommendations:	Approved: Y: _____ No: _____ Approved With Changes: _____	If approved with changes list changes below:
1.		
2.		
3.		
<b>Step in Process: HTBMN Workgroup #3</b>		Date: <b>04/24/19</b>
Recommendations:	Financial Eligibility: 400%	
1.		
2.		
3.		

Umair A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.  
Executive Director  
2223 West Loop South  
Houston, Texas 77027  
Tel: (713) 439-6000  
Fax: (713) 439-6080



Brian C. Reed, M.D  
Director,  
Disease Control & Clinical Prevention Division  
2223 West Loop South  
Houston, Texas 77027  
Tel: (713) 439-6000  
Fax: (713) 439-6199

**FY 2017 PERFORMANCE MEASURES HIGHLIGHTS**  
**RYAN WHITE GRANT ADMINISTRATION**  
**HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH (HCPH)**

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*HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.*

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## Highlights from FY 2017 Performance Measures

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Measures in this report are based on the 2017 Houston Ryan White Quality Management Plan, Appendix B. HIV Performance Measures.

### Transportation

- Van-Based Transportation:
  - During FY 2017, 498 (66%) clients accessed primary care after utilizing van transportation services.
  - Among van-based transportation clients, 388 (52%) clients accessed LPAP services at least once during this time period after utilizing van transportation services.
  
- Bus Pass Transportation:
  - During FY 2017, 809 (34%) clients accessed primary care after utilizing bus pass services.
  - Among bus pass clients, 471 (20%) clients accessed LPAP services at least once during this time period after utilizing bus pass services.
  - Among bus pass clients, 1,833 (76%) clients accessed any RW or State service after accessing bus pass services.

Ryan White Part A  
HIV Performance Measures  
FY 2017 Report

**Transportation**  
All Providers

<b>Van-Based Transportation</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>Change</b>
A minimum of 50% of clients will utilize Parts A/B/C/D primary care services after accessing Van Transportation services	493 (69.1%)	498 (66.2%)	<b>-2.9%</b>
35% of clients will utilize Parts A/B LPAP services after accessing Van Transportation services	386 (54.1%)	388 (51.6%)	<b>-2.5%</b>

<b>Bus Pass Transportation</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>Change</b>
A minimum of 50% of clients will utilize Parts A/B/C/D primary care services after accessing Bus Pass services	914 (37.3%)	809 (33.5%)	<b>-3.8%</b>
A minimum of 20% of clients will utilize Parts A/B LPAP services after accessing Bus Pass services	535 (21.8%)	471 (19.5%)	<b>-2.3%</b>
A minimum of 65% of clients will utilize any RW Part A/B/C/D or State Services service after accessing Bus Pass services	1,955 (79.7%)	1,833 (75.8%)	<b>-3.9%</b>

National Public Radio (NPR) - March 1, 2018 9:00 AM ET  
Producer: Emily Sullivan

## **Uber Launches Service To Get People To The Doctor's Office**

Uber wants to get you from your home to your doctor's office — and you won't even need to open the Uber app. The company announced Thursday that it's teaming up with health care organizations to provide transportation for patients going to and from medical appointments.

The rides can be scheduled for patients through doctor's offices, by receptionists or other staffers. And they can be booked for immediate pickup or up to 30 days in advance. That means patients without a smartphone — who wouldn't be able to use Uber otherwise — can become Uber customers.

Instead of operating through an app, Uber Health will send its passengers' ride information through an SMS text message. The company also plans to introduce the option for passengers to receive a call with trip details to their landline instead. Drivers will still use the Uber smartphone app to pick up these passengers.

"Transportation barriers are the greatest for vulnerable populations," says Chris Weber, the general manager of Uber Health. "This service will provide reliable, comfortable transportation for patients."

## **Cities With Uber Have Lower Rates Of Ambulance Usage**

Transportation is, indeed, a barrier to good health care. Affordable access to a vehicle is consistently associated with increased access to medical care, according to a study. Around 3.6 million Americans miss doctor's appointments or delay medical care due to a lack of transportation every year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

To meet the medical privacy standards outlined in the federal HIPAA law, drivers won't know which of their passengers are using Uber Health. Like a typical Uber ride, only a passenger's name, pickup and drop-off addresses will be given to the driver. So Uber drivers won't be able to opt into the health service the same way that they opt into Uber Eats, a food delivery service.

Peter Whorley, who drives a Honda Odyssey minivan for Uber in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., often picks up passengers who need the extra space, including patients traveling to and from doctor's offices.

## **No Car, No Care? Medicaid Transport Program Faces Cuts In Some States**

"I just picked up someone with back surgery the other day," he says. "I like to help people, if they need extra assistance, I personally don't have that problem. But some people might be squeamish, and not want to."

Whorley, who has been driving for Uber for more than two years, is more skeptical about picking up people without smartphones. He thinks location tracking on smartphones is vital to the efficiency of the ride-hailing service. "When you're a good passenger, you should be able to have your phone out to communicate with your driver," he says.

Uber's Weber says that because health care providers will use their best discretion in scheduling the rides, they won't call Ubers for people in need of urgent medical attention. "It's not a replacement to ambulances," he says, but a reliable means of transportation to non-urgent medical services that he hopes will curb missed appointments.

One hundred health care organizations in the U.S., including hospitals, clinics, rehab centers, senior care facilities, home care centers, and physical therapy centers have already used Uber Health's test program. The service will be rolled out to health care organizations gradually.

# What is Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, Patient Access?

*PatientEngagementHIT*

January 30, 2018 - During patient wellness efforts and chronic care management plans, consistent and reliable patient access to care is essential. Non-emergency medical transportation is a core solution to patient care access among populations facing transportation barriers.

Non-emergency medical transportation is a core Medicaid benefit. But as [Medicaid programs come under question](#) in the current healthcare policy climate, it is difficult to understand how these puzzle pieces fit together.

How does non-emergency medical transportation differ from state to state? And what are other healthcare entities doing to care for this patient need?

Below, *PatientEngagementHIT.com* answers the key questions surrounding non-emergency medical transportation.

## What is non-emergency medical transportation?

Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) includes transportation services offered to patients and healthcare consumers who face extraordinary barriers getting to their medical appointments.

**READ MORE:** [BCBS, Lyft Forge Deal for Patient Care Access, Transportation](#)

NEMT is widely known to serve Medicaid beneficiaries. Transportation services were established as required Medicaid benefits when the program was established in 1966, according to a CMS [guide book](#).

Those barriers can include not having a valid driver's license, not having a working vehicle in the household, being unable to travel or wait for services alone, or having a physical, cognitive, mental, or developmental limitation.

NEMT services are usually intended for medical appointments or other forms of non-emergent care.

Emergency care is defined as “any event that puts the health and life of a Medicaid beneficiary at serious risk without immediate treatment,” CMS wrote in the guide book.

“Real emergencies occur when the medical needs of a beneficiary are immediate and due to severe symptoms,” the agency continued. “A life-threatening event such as uncontrolled bleeding, heart attack, an automobile accident, or other serious trauma may cause the symptoms”

**READ MORE:** [Public Health Org Aims to Meet Social Determinants of Health](#)

NEMT providers are required to offer transportation both to and from the appointment, utilize the most appropriate form of transportation, and include coverage for all expenses associated with transportation.

## Why do Medicaid, payers cover NEMT?

Transportation is a core social determinant of health, or factor that impacts patient health that is not linked with disease burden or genetic makeup. The social determinants of health account for about 40 percent of patient health, according to a 2017 AHA [report](#), meaning that supporting patient transportation can have a serious impact on patient wellness.

The AHA report noted that 3.6 million individuals – regardless of payer status – do not access medical care because they do not have transportation to appointments. Four percent of children miss medical appointments for that same reason. Additionally, transportation barriers serve as the third leading cause of missing a medical appointment.

[Missed appointments](#) impact both patient health and healthcare revenue cycle. Patients who miss appointments may see their health and wellness deteriorate. As a result, healthcare costs can increase.

Patients who manage a chronic illness, for example, need to attend their regular check-ins with their providers. These check-ins ensure the patient's condition has not worsened and activate any kind of preventive care necessary to reduce the likelihood of a costly medical event. When a patient cannot attend these appointments, they are at risk of getting sicker and costing more healthcare dollars.

## What are Medicaid's NEMT regulations?

**READ MORE:** [What Providers Should Know to Improve Patient Access to Healthcare](#)

As noted, NEMT has been a core Medicaid benefit since the program's birth. However, this benefit can look different from state to state due to Medicaid's program flexibility.

Prior authorization agreements, for example, can differ across the country.

“Many States require coverage of transportation services to be preauthorized before the beneficiaries receive transportation,” CMS explained in its guide book.

“States preauthorize transportation in a variety of ways,” the agency continued. “For example, one State may expect a physician to authorize the need for beneficiary transportation, another State may only want to know that the beneficiary's location drop-off was to a medical appointment, while a third State may expect the medical facility to phone in the medical transportation request before providing services.”

Some states require patients to pay a copayment for the transportation service. This is usually a nominal fee, ranging from \$0.50 to \$3.50, according to a [Kaiser Family Foundation dataset](#).

State Medicaid programs can also limit their NEMT programs through Medicaid 1115

waivers, according to a 2017 *Health Affairs* [post](#) by Michael Adelberg and Marsha Simon, PhD. Massachusetts recently applied for a [1115 waiver](#) to do away with the “assurance” of NEMT for its Medicaid expansion population, the pair offered as an example.

The state proposed to maintain NEMT for opioid treatment patients, which Adelberg and Simon argued highlighted Massachusetts’ recognition that NEMT is useful for patient adherence to medical treatment.

Going forward, HHS says states can practice more flexibility with their NEMT programs. A March 2017 [letter](#) from HHS Secretary Tom Price, MD, and CMS Administrator Seema Verma says states can apply for certain waivers for Medicaid programs such as NEMT.

“States may also consider creating greater alignment between Medicaid’s design and benefit structure with common features of commercial health insurance, to help working age, nonpregnant, non-disabled adults prepare for private coverage,” the pair wrote to state governors.

Healthcare professionals and state Medicaid policymakers will need to assess community needs to better understand the role NEMT plays in patient health.

## **What are other NEMT services, solutions?**

Non-emergency medical transportation is a key program for more than just state Medicaid programs. The service has also been offered via the VA and some private insurers.

Should states take advantage of the flexibility offered from HHS going forward, hospitals may need to step in to fill this care gap for patients, according to the same 2017 AHA report.

“Although hospitals and health systems traditionally have not focused on transportation issues within their purview of care delivery, there is a growing recognition that improving transportation access and support for patients can help improve health outcomes and lower health costs,” AHA noted.

Hospitals can design their own NEMT programs by looking at their community health needs assessments. This will help hospitals determine what kind of solution best suit their populations.

Ridesharing partnerships have been an excellent source for hospitals and other healthcare providers to assist patients in need. Many hospitals are joining forces with companies such as Uber or Lyft to allow patients to hail a ride through the familiar smartphone interface.

These programs have proven financially effective, [reducing transportation costs](#) for various healthcare entities.

As more healthcare organizations answer the call to address the social determinants of health, they must understand how transportation barriers and NEMT impact patient health. Although Medicaid is a significant NEMT provider, gaps in care may still remain. Healthcare professionals must identify those gaps and determine solutions for filling them.

# Need non-emergency medical transportation? These companies are in the driver's seat

*Rachel Z. Arndt*

Because they lack transportation, about 3.6 million patients miss medical appointments every year. So healthcare systems and payers are turning to the same ride-sharing companies that bring on-demand transportation to the masses, but with a twist.

Companies like Circulation and Roundtrip are jumping in the middle, hoping to help providers create hassle-free experiences for patients.

Like Circulation, Roundtrip also partners with Lyft. The company, which recently raised \$1.9 million in seed funding, also offers rides from non-emergency ambulance companies and others. "We offer a single touch point to the full spectrum of medical transportation," said Mark Switaj, founder and CEO of Roundtrip. The service can act either as a stand-alone or as an integration with electronic health records from Epic, Cerner and others.

Circulation and Roundtrip allow patients to book rides directly—Circulation through phone calls, text messages and emails; Roundtrip through an app—but most of the rides are arranged by providers.

"It's sort of a no-brainer when you think about the rationale for adding transportation to a medical benefit or clinical protocol," said Erik Swanson, executive director in EY's health customer practice. "How you pay for it is what matters," he said. "The challenge has always been reimbursement."

With Circulation and others, patients don't pay for rides—payers (mostly Medicaid and Medicare) and sometimes providers do. In Circulation's case, it's mainly providers. "We're definitely seeing what used to just be a market of state Medicaid rides expanding to Medicare, Medicare Advantage and some larger payers," said Robin Heffernan, co-founder and CEO of Circulation. "Folks are starting to think differently about transportation as a real benefit."

But it's hard to find a commercial payer that has broad reimbursement for this kind of transportation. One is the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, which in mid-2017 partnered with Lyft to provide rides to commercially insured patients for certain Blues plans in areas considered "transportation deserts."

In addition to reimbursement, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act is another sticking point, albeit one that's more easily overcome. Uber, Lyft, Circulation, and Roundtrip all abide by the law, making sure their platforms are HIPAA-compliant. Circulation, for instance, has business associate agreements with all of its transportation partners, including Uber and Lyft.



"We try to provide the bare minimum of information to Uber and Lyft," Heffernan said. The company provides only the first name and pickup and drop-off information, she said. "It looks like a ride from any other rider."

Uber worked with an outside firm, Clearwater Compliance, to make sure its HIPAA policies were up to snuff. "This is about the privacy, security and breach notification rules, and it's also about patient safety and patient care," said Bob Chaput, Clearwater's CEO. "It's about safeguarding this very personal sensitive information."

Generally, patients have been receptive to getting rides through Uber, said Dr. Andrew Fine, a physician at Boston Children's Hospital. "I think it's a really exciting concept to think about ways we can use technology to help make the system more efficient," he said. "People are using Uber more and more, so I feel like this is a natural extension of it."

Still, some patients are resistant, particularly those who don't use ride-sharing apps in their day-to-day lives. For these patients, some hospitals still offer taxi vouchers, as they long have.

The next frontier, Swanson said, could be transportation between healthcare facilities, such as between a hospital and a skilled-nursing facility—a trip that today might be done by ambulance. "Increasingly, patients are getting pushed to the home and skilled-nursing facilities with lots of support," Swanson said. "The ability to quickly and safely move folks back to a hospital or a higher-acuity setting is going to be really important."