



January 31, 2020

Pilot Transportation Program Planned for Northern Counties

Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley received Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) funding for a six-month Volunteer Driving pilot program focused on expanding transportation options throughout and across the county lines of Auglaize, Champaign, Darke, Logan, Mercer, and Shelby counties. This pilot requires the CSS collaboration with the Area Agency on Aging, PSA 3, and Logan County RTC Services.

The program is focused on transporting individuals to medical and non-medical appointments and to employment. Priority will be given to older adults and individuals with disabilities as well as low-income populations who do not have access to other options. The program will allow access for individuals who need transportation outside of traditional transit hours and cannot afford the high cost of private providers.

According to Michelle Caserta-Bixler, Mobility Manager at Catholic Social Services –Sidney, one of the program's goals is to eliminate gaps in transportation that exist because of the lack of cross-county and region-to-region transport. The initial phase of implementation will be recruitment and training of approximately ten volunteer drivers who will provide curb-to-curb transportation for passengers who need rides to medical and non-medical destinations. Drivers will use their personal vehicles to transport within their county and adjoining counties, will be expected to safely operate their vehicles according to State of Ohio driving laws, and fill out reporting forms.

Drivers must hold a valid Ohio driver's license with no more than three points accrued, will be thoroughly trained and vetted through required background checks, and must be able to read maps and follow directions. Training will

include eight hours of ODOT Drive training, CPR and First Aid, VIRTUS (Child Protection) training, and Defensive Driving training.

Each driver accepted into the program will be encouraged to volunteer for at least two and no more than eight round-trip assignments per month. Although the position is volunteer, there will be some compensation to account for gas allowances, insurance costs, and vehicle depreciation.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer driver, contact Michelle Caserta-Bixler at Catholic Social Services, 937-575-7115 or email mcaserta@cssmv-sidney.org