



## Independent Contract Station Service Procedures

SUBJECT: SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES

DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2007

Some AAA members may have special needs relating to a driver or a passenger with a disability.

The purpose of this communication is to draw to the attention of the entire independent contract station network, contact centers, Auto Guardian and all others involved in providing emergency road service to members and to seek both your sensitivity and assistance in providing emergency road service to members with physical or mental disabilities.

The service vehicle driver should evaluate the situation, and based on member safety and service needs and the service vehicle driver's own knowledge of the environment, provide transportation from the service scene or towing destination as appropriate. In some circumstances, when a member's vehicle experiences a breakdown a long distance from his or her home, it may be necessary to call upon specialized transportation services such as transport vehicles with wheelchair lifts. In these cases, the service technician should stand by until appropriate transportation arrives. Dispatch has listings of companies in certain locations which provide transportation services for persons with disabilities. The contract station will be compensated by CSAA for time at the scene.

For the most part, service vehicles used to provide roadside assistance today are larger and higher off the ground than those of years past. Simply getting in or out of these vehicles may be difficult for some members, particularly for elderly persons and individuals with mobility disabilities (such as wheelchair or scooter users). Remedying this issue demonstrates your concern and sensitivity for your customers and may actually prevent costly insurance claims should a member or other customer be injured getting in or out of your vehicle.

### A. Assistance for Those Who Can Get In and Out of the Service Vehicle

Many members with limited mobility may be able to get in and out of the service vehicle with some assistance. To make it easier for such members to enter and exit the service vehicle, tow trucks and flatbed trucks should be equipped with footholds and grab handles. Additionally, as another gesture of courtesy and concern for all members, we ask that each tow truck and/or flatbed vehicle be equipped with a portable step stool (OSHA compliant) for members to use.

Every service vehicle driver should offer assistance to members getting in or out of the service vehicles; however direct physical assistance should not take place unless specifically requested by the member. As an alternative to direct physical assistance, it is

recommended that the driver place the step stool into position and ask, “May I assist you?” The member may, or may not, accept the offer. Regardless, the driver should remain at the passenger door until the member is safely situated in the passenger seat.

Upon arrival at a member’s towing destination, to prevent the possibility of a member falling while exiting the vehicle, drivers should make the statement, “Please wait for me to open the door for you.” The step stool should once again be placed into position and the driver should offer his/her assistance while waiting at the door.

B. Assistance for Those Who Cannot Get In and Out of the Service Vehicle

Some members with more significant mobility disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs or scooters, may not be able to enter and exit the service vehicle even with the assistance described above. CSAA is committed to ensure that such members are provided with alternative accessible transportation services where necessary and appropriate.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act – ADA**

Recognizing the unique needs of our members has been a key factor in ensuring the delivery of quality service. As we are all aware, these needs can often times extend beyond just the servicing of the vehicle. When an accommodation is made for a member as a result of a member’s disability, you are aligned with CSAA’s Values of Member’s First, Adaptability, Diversity and Excellence in addition to complying with the law – specifically Title III of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

The ADA provides that:

**“no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of goods, services, facility, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation, by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation.”**

#### **Overview**

The ADA’s definition of “disability” encompasses a wide range of individuals and may include those with:

- high blood pressure
- hearing impairment
- mental disorder
- learning disabilities
- musculoskeletal disorder
- AIDS
- visual impairment
- rehabilitated substance abusers
- speech disorders
- cosmetic disfigurements
- epilepsy

Note: **Please be aware that not all disabilities may be visually apparent.**

As part of CSAA's commitment to ensuring compliance with Title III of the ADA, it is essential that members with disabilities are not excluded or denied services afforded other members.

In some situations this may mean that it will be necessary to extend additional services to these members such as arranging for special accessible transportation from the scene of a vehicle breakdown for a member who uses a wheelchair or scooter. In other situations, this may mean taking extra effort to communicate with a member who has difficulty hearing or speaking. All alternatives should be explored in an effort to provide parity and equal quality service. A member will not be charged for transportation within the range covered by their membership as described below.

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Members**

Hearing impaired members can call CSAA using a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (800) 464-0889. When providing ERS to a member with a hearing impairment, note-writing can be a very effective means of communication.

### **Specially Equipped Vehicles**

Automobiles and vans designed and equipped for wheelchair access and/or driver hand controls qualify for towing service. If a contract station is unable to provide service, another contract station may be asked to respond to the call for service.

The service vehicle driver should also check with the contact center to determine if there are any nearby repair facilities certified to repair specially equipped vehicles in the event the vehicle became disabled because specialized equipment had failed.

Some modifications may affect towing. Where safe and appropriate, it may be useful to discuss the vehicle modifications with the CSAA member before transporting the vehicle.

### **Member With a Disability Call Processing**

To meet the special needs of our members with disabilities, and our commitment to CSAA's Values of Member's First, Adaptability, Diversity and Excellence, the following are some guidelines to use when a member with a disability is in need of emergency road service.

### **Transporting Members – At the Breakdown Site**

All callers for ERS should be asked if they need any special assistance. When receiving calls where members indicate they have a mobility disability, ask if accessible transportation will be required. If the member indicates that he or she does need transportation by a lift equipped vehicle, the service provider and contact center will make their reasonable best efforts to arrange such transportation.

Also, situations may arise where members may have difficulty in removing themselves from their own vehicle without assistance. If necessary, a second service technician may be dispatched to assist. To ensure that a member is never left stranded at a breakdown site, several transportation options should be considered when the vehicle is inoperable.

It may be possible for a member with limited mobility to ride in the tow truck, with the service driver's assistance. If this is not feasible, arranging for accessible secondary transportation may be necessary. Where available, CSAA has attempted to identify secondary transportation services that have lift equipped vehicles to transport a member in a wheelchair or scooter.

Another option is for the member to remain in his or her own vehicle during the tow. This option should be considered if accessible secondary transportation is not readily available. The member's preference among available transportation options will be accommodated where feasible and safe. As with all ERS calls, safety must be considered at all times.

### **Transporting Members – At the Towing Destination**

Transportation home from an open or closed repair garage should usually be handled by the contract station service driver. However, if extenuating circumstances are present, using an accessible secondary transportation service may be necessary.

In any situation where an able-bodied member would not have to pay for transportation, CSAA will not charge a member with a disability, even if they elect to use an accessible secondary transportation service. Such alternative accessible transportation will be at CSAA's cost within our ERS guidelines.

### **Service, Guide, and Companion Dogs**

Service dogs, guide dogs and companion dogs are types of dogs specially trained to assist persons with disabilities. By law, Service, Guide, and Companion Dogs are allowed to go anywhere their owner goes. For ERS, this means the dogs can ride along with the member in the tow truck cab. Any business/person who interferes with or obstructs the use of these specially-trained dogs is subject to penalties under the law.

### **Members First - Courteous Service**

This procedure is not only polite and safe, but demonstrates "courtesy, sympathy, and understanding": all attributes leading to Total Member Satisfaction with the Service Vehicle Driver.

Thank you for your cooperation in resolving this sensitive issue. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please feel free to contact your Regional Manager or management at any of the contact centers.