



## **RSVP TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM**



**Agency Background:** Nevada Rural Counties Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was formed in 1973 to motivate retired citizens to remain active, contributing members of their communities through volunteer service. RSVP is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) charitable corporation that has been serving the elderly and other citizens in need of assistance throughout Nevada for more than 44 years. Today the organization serves 15 of the 17 counties in Nevada.

**Mission:** RSVP's Mission is to help frail, homebound, and low-income seniors remain independent by providing high quality programs which allow them to stay in their own homes with dignity. Additionally, RSVP coordinates a volunteer network of seniors who use their skills to provide support to community agencies and address community needs through service.

**Independent Living Programs:** RSVP provides nine core independent living programs, including Transportation, to help seniors and others in need remain self-sufficient and in their own homes for as long as possible. Transportation volunteers provide escorted door to door safe transportation; Home Companions provide socialization and emotional support; CARE Law program provides pro bono legal services; Personal Emergency Response Systems through Lifeline and Freedom Alert gives immediate access to emergency services; Veterans VIP program helps veterans access veterans resources and other services including transportation, respite and information on suicide prevention and awareness; Respite Care gives regular breaks and relief to exhausted caregivers; Homemaker Services provide frail seniors with a clean, hygienic environment; Farmer's Market Nutrition Program gives seniors access to fresh fruits and vegetables; and Elder Exercise Programs to help keep seniors fit, active and help prevent falls.

**Transportation Program History:** Rural RSVP has a strong background in volunteer transportation program services which has been a continuous thread of our independent living programs to improve the quality of life and independence of seniors living in Nevada's rural communities.

- In the early 1980's, RSVP received its first vehicle for the Volunteer Transportation Program through a vehicle donation from the Carson City Rotary Club to help area seniors with rides to the doctor. Since this time, in addition to RSVP designated vehicles, volunteers have continued to utilize their own vehicles for the Program.
- RSVP received Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) vehicles in 1999, 2001, 2007 and in 2010 to enhance its capability to serve elders in Carson City and the region. Storey County dedicated a van for RSVP's use in the River District in 2006.
- In 2015 RSVP was awarded a grant from NDOT to acquire a handicapped accessible van for the County of Elko. Additional NDOT grants followed for the acquisition of new vans: in 2016 for Winnemucca and Pahrump; in 2018 for the communities of White Pine, Ely, Lincoln and Caliente.
- In 2017 the organization received a vehicle donation from Carson City Toyota under its Dealer Match Program; and a GMC van from the Humboldt Family Resource Center. Over the years, RSVP has been supported by the Nevada Aging & Disability Services Division (ADSD) with grant funding for match, fuel, maintenance and mileage reimbursement for volunteers. Since 2016, RSVP has secured additional match for vehicles through Foundation resources. RSVP currently has a fleet of 13 vehicles.
- FY 2019 RSVP awaits delivery of three NDOT vans for the communities of Fernley, Hawthorne and Tonopah.

**Community Need:** A serious lack of adequate transportation for transit dependent elders is among Nevada’s unique service delivery challenges and a critical component of the ability of people to maintain their independence as they age. In 2014 Transportation was identified by the NV Commission on Aging Legislative Subcommittee as a key area of importance to support our elders in their quest to remain independent. Furthermore, the Subcommittee noted in its “Information Sheets for Legislators” that one of three unmet needs facing this population is the lack of timely, dependable and affordable transportation in rural communities to get to nearby health care facilities and professionals. These factors are critical deterrents in accessing the lifesaving services that transit dependent seniors need in order to remain living in their homes and self-sufficient. Furthermore, according to the NV Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) State Plan (Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2020), transportation services for seniors to access urban areas are critically important in rural Nevada, because small, remotely located communities do not have an adequate infrastructure to provide the services seniors need to sustain their independent living. The distance between major rural towns averages 100 miles, with distances of up to 180-200 miles in more isolated areas. In this report, ADSD states that the lack of adequate transportation is consistently considered the most critical deficit to be addressed for all Nevadans, but especially older adult Nevadans. This coupled with the fact that nearly 7.5% of elders in our service area are living below poverty, makes the provision of high quality, low cost transportation critical for elder Nevadans.

**Transportation Program Service Delivery:** RSVP’s Transportation Program Volunteers provide escorted door-to-door transportation for frail, homebound, and low-income seniors (60 and older), persons living with a disability (18-59), and veterans, who are no longer able to drive themselves. Services include free critical care trips to medical, dental, and vision appointments; essential shopping and socialization opportunities; and other necessary trips in/outside their respective county. Drivers also serve as companions and share conversations with clients to help reduce their isolation and provide the reassurance that there is someone who cares for them, they are not alone, and they can remain self-sufficient. Volunteer drivers assist clients at the door to and from their home, and accompany clients in picking up their prescriptions, out to lunch or the senior center, and to share conversation. Often, volunteers wait, if necessary, in the doctor’s office or other destination points.

RSVP’s on-call, on-demand transit service requires a call-in advance notice to schedule rides, M-F, between the hours of 8am to 5pm. The process begins when the client telephones the RSVP Transportation Coordinator or rural counties’ Volunteer Field Representatives to schedule rides with one of RSVP’s volunteer drivers. Volunteers provide rides that would otherwise not be available in their area, using their personal vehicles. Volunteer drivers receive on-going training, mileage reimbursements at \$.40 per mile, and are honored each year during RSVP’s Annual Volunteer Recognition Event. Furthermore, RSVP partners with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the NV Dept. of Transportation (NDOT) to offer volunteers the specialized drivers' training to ensure that they are capable of providing transportation services for our clients.

**Transportation Program Cost:** The cost to operate RSVP’s Transportation Program is currently \$311,931 annually, which includes \$137,471 - volunteer driver mileage reimbursements; \$109,727 - program personnel and volunteer stipends; \$45,511 - vehicle maintenance, supplies, fuel and insurance; \$19,222 - administration.

**Community Impact:** In FY 2017/18 RSVP’s Transportation Program served 839 unduplicated clients and 2,468 duplicated clients with 14,676 trips. This low-cost, community-based approach is proven effective in meeting a basic need facing Nevada’s aging population in the isolated, rural and frontier parts of our state. In addition to saving thousands of dollars in unnecessary long-term care costs, the Program helps reduce the risk of isolation, depression, loneliness, and self-neglect among this age group. RSVP’s *free* Transportation service is often the *only* access to transportation that our clients have available to them. They are frequently stranded at home as their eyesight has failed or due to other physical and cognitive impairments which make it impossible for them to drive themselves. Our clients are highly reliant upon RSVP’s Transportation Program as sustained taxi service is far too expensive, and due to the physical demands of public transit systems.

By investing in Rural RSVP’s Transportation Program, you can be part of the solution and help ensure the sustainability and continuity of innovative “low-cost” solutions in mobility management and rural transportation for elders, veterans and adults living with a disability through the retention of volunteer drivers. This program has a demonstrated record of outstanding service and program success, and a significant return on investment.