



Transportation Services Passenger Handbook

Tioga Opportunities, Inc.
9 Sheldon Guile Blvd.
Owego, NY 13827

Phone: 607-687-4222

www.tiogaopp.org



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1. History

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. (TOI) is a private, not-for-profit, multi-purpose Community Action Agency that emerged from the Kennedy-Johnson era “War on Poverty” programs of the 1960s. Its initial funding and operational structure was regulated at the Federal level under the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964.

Today, TOI receives a Federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) allocation through the New York State Department of State. These funds are used to carry out its mission consistent with the following national goals:

- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

2. Mission Statement

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. creates partnerships that strengthen communities while empowering individuals and families to achieve independence and enrich their quality of life.

3. Vision Statement

An innovative, evolving organization that promotes strong, inclusive communities and successful, thriving people.

4. Values Statement

We value:

- Equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- The strengths and potential of all people to become actively engaged in improving their quality of life.
- Economic security as a means to the well-being of individuals and families.
- Effective services delivered by caring staff who treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Innovation in response to changing community needs.
- Partnerships that expand our impact.
- Excellence in data-driven planning and goal-setting.

5. Transportation Service Description

The transportation program attempts to provide non-emergency transportation services to people who have no other means of transportation.

The Tioga Opportunities, Inc. (TOI) office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; however, transportation services may be provided outside of TOI office hours. In addition, the office has a voice mail system operating 24 hours per day. Messages left after hours will not be reviewed until the next business day. The office is closed on all federal holidays.

Rides must be requested three (3) business days in advance for medical appointments, social services, shopping, or social activities. Since volunteers are limited and schedules fill up very quickly, a trip request does not guarantee that a ride will be provided.

6. Code of Conduct for Passengers

All participants will conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and consideration. All participants will treat others with respect and will not make derogatory or discriminatory remarks to or about others regarding race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disabilities, marital status, religion, military status, political affiliation, or any other status protected by federal and state law and regulations.

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. is committed to maintaining the highest level of integrity and standards of ethical conduct in all its activities. The performance and professionalism of all employees and volunteers shall be characterized by sincerity, enthusiasm, initiative, and competence.

- a. All participants will conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and consideration.
- b. A volunteer does not receive payment for their time and cannot accept tips or request that meals be paid by passengers.
- c. All participants will not impose religious or political beliefs on others.
- d. TOI is committed to providing an environment that is safe from harassment. Any type of harassment is a violation of federal law under the Equity Act of 2010 and this policy and is illegal.

Confidentiality of Information

It is essential that everyone affiliated with Tioga Opportunities, Inc. (Board members, employees, volunteers, interns, etc.) have a commitment to confidentiality. All volunteers are to respect and hold all information obtained from TOI in the strictest confidence. Volunteers are to protect confidential information and refrain from discussing such with business/professional associates, relatives, and friends.

Physical contact

It is the policy of Tioga Opportunities, Inc. that everyone is expected to use appropriate judgement in physical contact and respect the boundaries that are set by others. Should a situation arise, the offended party must confront the offender at the first sign of inappropriate behavior, identify the offensive behavior, explain that it is inappropriate, and request that the

behavior be stopped. All such situations are to be reported to TOI supervisors. Repeated incidents would result in increased sanctions, up to and including termination of the offender from the program.

In the rare situations when a hug might be given, it is expected that it be given from the side or around the shoulders and not from the front. It is the effect of the words, actions, or behavior upon the “receiver” and not the “giver’s” intention which is important.

7. Responsibilities of a Passenger

- a. While traveling in a Volunteer’s vehicle, all State and Federal laws will be obeyed.
- b. Seatbelts are required by NYS law.
- c. Be prompt so arrival time for scheduled appointments can be met.
- d. When calling the TOI office to schedule transportation services, make sure to let the Transportation Services Specialist know of all requested stops. Volunteer Transporters are given specific instructions as to where they will be going, and unrequested stops will not be permitted. Please be courteous of Volunteer Transporters by scheduling additional stops in advance. This allows us to prepare the Volunteer Transporter of the extra time/stops.
- e. Upon request, Volunteer Transporters may walk with passengers/clients into their appointments and to their doors when returning home. Volunteer Transporters may assist a passenger by lending a guiding arm. Volunteer Transporters will request the help of medical facilities or family when transporting adults who need higher levels of assistance.
- f. Smoking, vaping, or alternative tobacco products will not be permitted throughout the duration of the service.
- g. Distracting Volunteer Transporters while they are driving (i.e. playing loud music, horseplay, or drawing their attention away from the roadway) is prohibited.
- h. Do not offer any tips or gifts.
- i. Call the Transportation Services Specialist within 24 hours of a scheduled ride if the trip is going to be cancelled or rescheduled.
- j. Refer ride requests to the Transportation Services Specialist as trips coordinated between Volunteer Transporters and clients are prohibited.
- k. ***Only non-emergency*** transports can be provided by TOI Volunteer Transportation Services. In case of an emergency, call the local ambulance service, 911.

8. Confidentiality

TOI's Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers honor the clients and organization that they serve by respecting the following points of policy:

- a. Client names and personal information should be discussed only with appropriate TOI staff.
- b. Details of specific services provided to clients are not discussed with anyone outside of the service or project group without the client's permission. This includes the family of both the client and the volunteer.
- c. Any personal information learned while performing volunteer work will be held confidential.

9. Guideline Principles for Transportation Services

- a. Passengers will be transported in a safe and lawful manner in accordance with NYS law. Seatbelts are required by NYS law for all vehicle occupants.
- b. Drinking of alcoholic beverages or usage of restricted drugs is strictly prohibited prior to or during TOI Transportation Services by all vehicle occupants.
- c. Call the Transportation Services Specialist no less than 24 hours of a scheduled ride if unable to complete a trip.
- d. The Transportation Services Specialist must be notified prior to a scheduled trip if any additional passengers will accompany the driver and passenger.
- e. Volunteer Transporters may NOT borrow vehicles from clients or others to provide transportation services.
- f. Trip Assignments: All rides must be pre-approved and assigned to volunteers by the Transportation Services Specialist. Rides will be dispatched by telephone. Special care needs to be taken when a passenger is making a telephone assignment request to ensure that all information is recorded accurately and completely. Please make sure to let the Transportation Services Specialist know of the date, time, and place of your upcoming appointment; along with any other stops that will be needed (i.e. pharmacy, grocery, bank, etc.). All stops must be pre-approved by the Transportation Services Specialist beforehand.
- g. No-Show: If a passenger fails to keep an appointment as assigned to the Volunteer Transporter, the office is to be notified immediately. Volunteer Transporters should make a reasonable effort to be sure that the passenger is aware that the Volunteer Transporter is ready and waiting to take the passenger. The Volunteer Transporter must wait for fifteen minutes past the appointed pick-up time before leaving and reporting a no-show. Patterns

of a passenger making last-minute cancellations may result in that person being removed from the program.

- h. Inclement Weather Conditions: In the case of inclement weather, the Volunteer Transporter has the right to cancel the ride, even with short notice. The Volunteer Transporter must call the office and the passenger when a decision is made to cancel. TOI finds that nothing is more important than the safety of the Volunteer Transporter and passenger. Please, only travel when you are confident that you can ensure a safe trip. It is advised to closely monitor and plan ahead for inclement weather during the winter months.
- i. Incidents: Report any incident involving the Volunteer Transporter and/or passengers to the Transportation Services Specialist or other TOI designated staff as soon as possible. The TOI staff will advise the Volunteer Transporter and the passenger if additional information is needed.
- j. Passenger complaints about Volunteer Transporters will be documented on the “Title VI Compliance Investigations, Complaints & Lawsuits” form, in accordance with New York State Department of Transportation. Clients will be provided this form at the initial assessment and upon request.

10. Passenger Assistance (3P’s – No Pick, No Push, No Pull)

- a. For the safety of the passenger and the Volunteer Transporter, the Volunteer Transporter is not expected to provide any more assistance than lending an arm for balance. A driver may lend a hand to steady a passenger while entering or exiting the vehicle. A volunteer is not expected to carry packages or personal items for passengers.
- b. Passengers able to transfer from a wheelchair may be transported but must transfer into the car without assistance from the Volunteer Transporter. The Volunteer Transporter can place the wheelchair in the trunk or backseat. If a passenger becomes weakened during their appointment (such as kidney dialysis) or trip and is unable to walk, the Volunteer Transporter should ask medical staff at the pickup point for assistance. At **NO** time is a volunteer to physically pick up a passenger. Volunteer transporters do not transport passengers who need physical assistance beyond holding an arm for balance.
- c. Door-through-door transportation services at TOI provides a trained Volunteer Transporter who will pick up customers at their door, transport them to their destination, often going through the door of their destination, and staying with the customer throughout the trip.
- d. Exceptions to this rule must be expressly requested. A Volunteer Transporter has the right to accept or refuse any trip for any reason.
- e. Animals will not be transported.

11. Program Evaluation

An important part of any good program is an on-going evaluation process to allow participants direct input into the future of the program. Evaluations are conducted to determine whether or not the agency has achieved its goals and objectives for a particular time period and, more importantly, to determine the effectiveness of its services. Annually, TOI staff will send out an evaluation form so that we can determine if we are meeting the needs of those we serve. When you receive this evaluation, please take a few moments to complete the form and return it to the TOI office. We appreciate and value your input.

12. CLOSING STATEMENT

The transportation program at TOI is dedicated to providing safe, dependable, affordable, and courteous service to our passengers.

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with TOI.

I have received a copy of the TOI Transportation Passenger Handbook.

TOI Transportation Passenger signature

Date

I have received a copy of the TOI Title VI Compliance Requirements Form.

TOI Transportation Passenger signature

Date

We are glad that you chose Tioga Opportunities, Inc. for services. We hope that your experience will be positive and very rewarding. If you have any questions about your transportation experience, please contact us. We are always glad to hear from you.

49 CFR 21.1, provides that, "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Transportation."

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. operates its programs and services without regard to color, race, or national origin in all in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with Tioga Opportunities, Inc.



CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS

Tioga Opportunities, Inc. welcomes you.
Its staff and management value all who walk through its doors.
Customer safety and satisfaction is our top priority.

To ensure quality and impactful services, customers can expect:

- ✓ A welcoming, empathetic, and caring environment
- ✓ Customer driven services
- ✓ Maximum privacy and confidentiality
- ✓ Non-discriminatory practices
- ✓ Fair and respectful treatment without bias
- ✓ Resourceful, knowledgeable, and compassionate staff
- ✓ Working together toward common goals
- ✓ Timely and prompt response to questions or concerns
- ✓ Assured access to personal files or records
- ✓ Customer grievance and complaint policy