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**Highlights**

Highlights of [GAO-03-697](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Millions of Americans are unable to provide their own transportation—or even use public transportation—for Medicaid appointments, Head Start classes, job training, or other services. Such “transportation-disadvantaged” persons are often disabled, elderly, or low income. Various federal programs are authorized to provide transportation services to them. GAO was asked to (1) identify the federal programs that fund such transportation services and the amount spent on them, (2) assess the extent of coordination among the various programs, and (3) identify any obstacles to coordination and potential ways to overcome such obstacles.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Departments of Labor and Education join the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. GAO also recommends that the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Transportation (1) strengthen the Coordinating Council’s strategic plan, (2) include long-term goals and measures for coordination in their agencies’ strategic and annual performance plans, and (3) develop and distribute additional guidance and information to encourage coordination.

The Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Transportation generally concurred with the findings and recommendations in this report.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-697](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-697).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834.

# TRANSPORTATION-DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

## Some Coordination Efforts Among Programs Providing Transportation Services, but Obstacles Persist

### What GAO Found

Sixty-two federal programs—most of which are administered by the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Transportation—fund transportation services for the transportation-disadvantaged. The full amount these programs spend on transportation is unknown because transportation is not always tracked separately from other spending. However, available information (i.e., estimated or actual outlays or obligations) on 29 of the programs shows that federal agencies spent at least an estimated \$2.4 billion on these services in fiscal year 2001. Additional spending by states and localities is also not fully known but is at least in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Efforts to improve services and achieve cost savings through coordination of transportation activities (through sharing resources or information or consolidating services under a single agency) among federal agencies vary. The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility—a body with representation from the Departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services—has undertaken some activities to improve coordination. However, other agencies that administer a substantial number of programs for the transportation-disadvantaged, such as the Departments of Labor and Education, are not part of the Council. In addition, the Coordinating Council’s strategic plan is not linked to its action plan and contains few measurable performance goals. The strategic and annual performance plans of the Departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services contain few references to coordination relating to their subagencies and programs that fund transportation services for the transportation-disadvantaged, and the plans of the Departments of Labor and Education do not mention coordinating these services.

Obstacles impeding coordination include concern among administrators that their own participants might be negatively affected, program rules that limit use by others, and limited guidance and information on coordination. To mitigate these obstacles, officials and experts suggested making federal standards more consistent, creating a clearinghouse or better Web site to facilitate interagency communication and provide better guidance on coordination, and providing financial incentives or instituting mandates to coordinate.

### Examples of Vehicles Used to Serve the Transportation-Disadvantaged



Source: Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (reprinted with permission).