

Many people in the United States do not get the health care services they need. Delaying medical care can negatively impact health and increase the cost of care. People who cannot get the care they need may have more preventable complications, hospitalizations, emotional stress, and higher costs. Access to care was one of three identified priority areas in the 2023-2026 Meigs County Community Health Assessment.

A necessity for health and well-being is safe, accessible and affordable transportation. Transportation affects health and overall well-being in several ways including access to care, health behaviors and health outcomes through the ability to get to health care, jobs, school, child care, social services, grocery stores, parks, libraries and other destinations. Transportation can also improve mental health and well-being by giving people of all abilities the independence to get around and connect with others in their communities. Transportation (including active transportation systems, which connects the places where people live, learn, work, shop, and play by providing safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities) plays an important role in building and maintaining healthy communities; improving policy and programming; providing a more equitable environment; enabling better health outcomes and a higher quality of life; allowing for access to health care services; decreasing missed or delayed health care appointments, increased health expenditures and overall poorer health outcomes; being a vehicle for wellness by supporting walking and cycling to improve health.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that, in the United States, 45% of people have no access to public transportation. Public transportation is a win-win for states and municipalities. Each \$1 invested in public transportation generates 4x as much in economic returns. 87% of trips on public transit directly affect the local economy.

The Meigs County Health Dept. (MCHD) is proud to partner with Meigs County Public Transit (MCPT) and presently serves on the Meigs County Transit Development Advisory Board, which is looking to expand services for County residents. Since the start of service in 2022, MCPT has completed 17,675 rides and registered 726 riders in its collective system. MCPT provides demand response, curb-to-curb public transportation service within Meigs County, Ohio. Door-to-door service is also available upon request for those needing reasonable assistance beyond the curb. Trips are scheduled on a time-and-available space basis. MCPT currently operates Monday through Friday from 7AM-4PM as shared-ride service. Passengers may be on board the vehicle with others who are traveling at the same time and in the same direction. Individuals with mobility disabilities are welcome to use wheelchairs and manually powered mobility aids, i.e., walkers, crutches, canes, braces, or other similar devices designed for use by individuals with mobility disabilities. MCPT also transports individuals traveling with portable oxygen tanks and respirators. All trips are scheduled in advance on a first come, first served basis, and are scheduled on a time and space availability basis. Passengers may be asked for the following information when scheduling trips: name, home address, telephone number, pick-up/drop-off addresses, desired arrival or drop-off time, and if any special accommodations are needed. Trip reservations should be requested 48 hours in advance of requested pick up time. To schedule trips or for more information, call (740) 444-5555. Trips cannot be scheduled by telling a driver. Next day and same day trips will be accommodated if available.

In addition, the MCHD coordinates the Meigs County Cancer Initiative's (MCCI) Transportation Assistance Program, which provides gas vouchers (payable to Meigs County service stations) to county residents travelling to cancer-related appointments on a monthly basis. In 2023, 279 \$20 gas vouchers were issued

to 17 patients. For an application or more information, contact me at 740-992-6626 (Monday – Friday 8AM-4PM) or via email at courtney.midkiff@meigs-health.com.

Also, the Meigs County Quick Reference Guide (QRG) (which is updated quarterly and posted at www.meigs-health.com) includes contact information for other transportation providers serving Meigs County. Check out the QRG for other essential services associated with access to care.

In conclusion, two of Public Health's 10 Essential Services are to strengthen, support and mobilize communities and partnerships and to enable equitable access. Your MCHD is supporting local transportation initiatives to address health disparities by expanding the ability of everyone to access safe transportation options.

Courtney Midkiff, BSC
Administrator

