

Policy & Procedure Manual

SAFE DRIVING POLICY– HR-XI-29

POLICY:

OPTIONS NORTHWEST has a legal duty under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act and Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 to protect employees and individuals being supported from all risk of injury which includes the hazards of vehicle operation.

It is the policy of OPTIONS NORTHWEST that all employees who operate a vehicle owned by OPTIONS NORTHWEST or a personal vehicle while conducting OPTIONS NORTHWEST business will be provided with applicable information/training to ensure the safe operation of vehicles for work-related purposes.

PURPOSE:

1. To ensure the safety of all OPTIONS NORTHWEST employees, people supported and general public while driving or riding as a passenger in a vehicle.
2. To ensure compliance of all relevant legislation.
3. To ensure the employer takes every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of an employee.

RELATED POLICIES:

1. Vehicle Orientation – Policy R-IX-1
2. Client Transportation – Policy R-IX-2
3. Vehicle Usage/Circle Check – Policy R-IX-3
4. Vehicle Manual – Policy R-IX-4
5. Telephone/Cellular Phone Use - HR-III-26
6. Driver's License Requirement - HR-III-41

7. Use of Personal Vehicle - HR-III-42

8. Drug and Alcohol - HR-XI-26

EXPECTATIONS – GENERAL:

Any OPTIONS NORTHWEST employee who is required by their job description to operate an agency owned vehicle, or operate a personal vehicle while conducting OPTIONS NORTHWEST business is required to:

- Comply with this Policy and its expectations
- Know and abide by all driving laws in all areas where they operate vehicles while conducting agency business
- Hold a valid driver's license in good standing; the license held must be valid for the type of motor vehicle being used
- Carry their driver's license at all times
- If requested, provide a driver's abstract upon hire and every 3 years thereafter
- Report to OPTIONS NORTHWEST management of any offences committed for which charges have been made under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act while on or off duty
- Maintain appropriate level of public liability insurance on their personal vehicle (\$1,000,000)
- Notify Management of any health and safety concerns, so that they may be dealt with in a prompt fashion
- Use appropriate safety equipment as required
- Report any incident, injury or hazard occurring while on duty
- Conduct a "circle check" inspection (refer to Policy R-IX-3 Vehicle Usage/Circle Check) prior to operating a vehicle
- Wear a seat belt at all times, and ensure that all passengers do as well
- Drive with the headlights on at all times
- Secure any cargo being transported
- Follow all Ministry of Transportation safe driving practices and always drive in a safe and courteous manner at all times
- Always be a defensive driver, avoiding any conflict (road rage) with other drivers

Only authorized employees shall operate an OPTIONS NORTHWEST owned, rented or leased vehicle. If unauthorized personnel are found driving an agency vehicle, they will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and/or prosecution.

EXPECTATIONS – SAFE DRIVING TECHNIQUES:

Drivers are expected to employ safe driving techniques at all times while operating an OPTIONS NORTHWEST owned vehicle, or while operating personally owned vehicles while on agency business.

Examples of safe driving techniques include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a safe following distance between the vehicle being operated and the vehicle in front, using the 3-6 second rule. The 3-6 second rule helps to determine the appropriate following distance when driving behind another vehicle. First select a fixed object on the road ahead such as a sign, tree or overpass. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the object, slowly count “one, one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand.” If you reach the object before completing the count, you’re following too closely. Making sure there are three seconds between you and the car ahead gives you time and distance to respond to problems in the lane ahead of you. Note during poor weather conditions (e.g. rain, snow, fog) follow the above procedure counting to 6 instead of 3.
- Checking blind spots and signaling in advance before changing lanes
- Driving within the posted speed limits at all times
- Obey all posted traffic signs and roadway/railway traffic signals
- Operating the vehicle at speeds that are safe for the conditions, recognizing that, in some instances (e.g. rain, snow, fog) it may be necessary to drive below the posted speed limit
- Avoid risk-taking actions at all times

EXPECTATIONS ATTENTIVENESS:

a) Use of Mobile Phones

OPTIONS NORTHWEST strictly prohibits the use of any handheld mobile devices while operating agency and personal vehicles when attending to agency business. Please refer to Policy HR-III-26 Telephone/Cellular Phone Usage for further details.

b) Display Screens

OPTIONS NORTHWEST strictly prohibits employees from viewing display screens which are unrelated to driving (e.g. laptop or DVD screens). Drivers are never permitted to have a laptop open and/or in use while driving. Laptops should be shut off and safely stored. In the event that a portable device must be used, the driver must stop in a safe location which does not impede traffic or is an unlawful parking area.

c) Global Position System (GPS)

Global Position Systems may only be used if the device is installed in the vehicle or attached to the dashboard or windshield and is programmed at the beginning of the trip before the driver leaves the parking area. The device should not be touched again while driving. If the GPS must be re-programmed during the course of the trip, the driver must stop or pull over in a safe location that does not impede traffic and is lawful for parking.

d) Music

Radio and CD players may be used when in the vehicle but should be touched as little as possible and turned off if they are found to be distracting to the driver or passengers. The volume level should not exceed a maximum of 5 decibels.

e) Fatigue

OPTIONS NORTHWEST expects that all employees arrive to work well rested and ready to attend to expected duties. Employees who are fatigued may be adversely affected as fatigue reduces a person's ability to perform mental and physical tasks, including driving a vehicle safely. Someone suffering from fatigue is more likely to:

- Have slower reaction times
- Be unable to respond to changing conditions
- Take risks

Employees who are experiencing fatigue are not permitted to drive and must notify their Supervisor/Manager/Director to determine the appropriate course of action (e.g. have another employee drive the vehicle, or book another form of transportation). If an employee refuses to operate a vehicle until they have rested and are no longer suffering from fatigue, they will not be reprimanded provided that the refusal is based on the belief that operation of a vehicle constitutes unsafe work.

Employees who are required to drive for long periods of time should take regular rest breaks, or whenever possible utilize the buddy system to share driving responsibility and allow each individual a rest period from driving.

f) Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

Employees are not permitted to drive if unfit to do so (e.g. are under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, medications or other drugs that are likely to affect your alertness while driving). Driving under the influence is against the law and will not be tolerated by OPTIONS NORTHWEST. Any employee proven to be driving under the influence while on agency business will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

g) Inclement Weather

During periods of inclement weather (e.g. snow, fog, rain, ice, hail, high winds), drivers should reduce their speed and allow for increased stopping distances.

Employees should change their driving to adapt to any of the above mentioned weather conditions.

In the event that poor weather makes driving unsafe, or the road ways impassable, employees are directed to stop their vehicle in a safe position and wait until it is safe to proceed and contact agency and emergency contacts as necessary. If an employee has not started to drive for agency purposes, they will dialogue with their

Supervisor/Supervisor On Call/Manager/Director to confirm the necessity of the road trip and/or reschedule the activity.

h) Driving at Night

Employees that are required to drive at night should exercise increased levels of caution. As with inclement weather, drivers should reduce their speed and drive in a safe manner.

i) Vehicle Maintenance

Employees are responsible to ensure personal vehicles used for employment purposes are in good working order. Agency vehicles are inspected annually to ensure compliance with Ministry of Transportation requirements. Employees should refer to Vehicle Manual Policy R-IX-4 for maintenance guidelines of agency vehicles

All OPTIONS NORTHWEST owned and operated vehicles will be subject to regular vehicle maintenance.

j) Other Distractions

Employees are expected to comply with all safe driving laws and eliminate/minimize all distractions. Distractions include but are not limited to the following:

- Looking at mobile phone
- Texting or talking on mobile phone while driving
- Smoking/vaping
- Eating or drinking
- Not adhering to pedestrian crossovers
- Not giving cyclists one meter of room where possible

Failure to adhere to these laws could lead to fines and/or demerit points. Drivers with their G1 or G2 license could have their permit suspended on the spot.

First Aid Kits/Road Safety Kits

All OPTIONS NORTHWEST owned and operated vehicles contain a fire extinguisher, first aid kit and road safety kit for use in case of emergencies. Supervisors are to ensure these items are placed in the vehicle and all personnel driving the vehicles are responsible to ensure such items remain in the vehicles. Where an employee operates their personal vehicle for agency business, they are highly encouraged to carry a first aid and road safety kit in their vehicle.

Each worksite will have available kits which can be signed out for road trips and returned at the end of shift. Kits will be inspected for expired or missing items during monthly inspections.

EXPECTATIONS IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT:

In the event of a motor vehicle accident when driving an agency owned vehicle employees are to follow the directions as outlined in the Vehicle Manual that can be found in each agency vehicle. In the event of a motor vehicle incident while driving a personal vehicle on agency business, employees are directed to follow the following guidelines:

- Move the vehicle into a safe location out of traffic, if possible
- Assess the situation and call the appropriate emergency personnel (Ambulance, Fire Department, Police)
- Obtain the appropriate contact information from the other parties involved in the accident, including their insurance information, names and phone numbers
- Contact employees immediate Supervisor/Manager/Director to inform of the accident, and provide as much information as possible
- Report any injuries sustained to Supervisor/Manager/Director and inform of the need to seek medical attention if required
- Use the first aid/road safety kit as required

In the event of an accident the driver is specifically directed not to reference or assume any responsibility for the accident. This direction is provided to permit the individuals conducting the investigation to make their determination based on all of the evidence and witness statements regarding the accident.

Withdrawal of Agency Vehicle Privileges

The privilege of driving a vehicle owned/leased by OPTIONS NORTHWEST may be withdrawn for any of the following reasons:

- Abuse or misuse of any agency vehicle
- Failure to comply with agency policies and procedures
- Loss of driver's license or a drivers abstract which becomes unsatisfactory
- Conviction or a guilty plea to driving an OPTIONS NORTHWEST vehicle under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance

RECOMMENDED BY: Director, Human Resources

APPENDICES: 0

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Community Services Administration, Community Services (all)

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: March 2016

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE:



