

The Healthcare Consortium

For Your Health

“Making Connections to Care with CARTS”

Sydney Keiler, Director of Development and Communications

For more than 25 years, the Healthcare Consortium’s Children and Adults Rural Transportation Service (CARTS) has provided free, door-to-door, non-emergency medical transportation to Columbia County residents. Since its start in 1999, CARTS has helped nearly 4,000 people access essential healthcare by providing more than 270,000 rides and traveling over 4 million miles!

Unfortunately, the distance that must be traveled to get to a healthcare appointment and home again can often be a very real barrier to getting and staying healthy. This can be for many reasons. For instance, individuals may not own a vehicle, or even if they do, they may not have the resources to maintain it, fill its tank, or pay tolls. Having certain kinds of procedures, like cataract surgery, or receiving treatments such as chemotherapy and dialysis, can also make it difficult—or even impossible—to safely drive afterward. In addition, many older neighbors are understandably reluctant to drive in unfamiliar urban areas where healthcare providers are often located.

Whether due to a lack of transportation, limited resources, injury, illness, or age, many factors can prevent people from getting to and from healthcare appointments without assistance. Providing that help and connecting neighbors to care is where CARTS comes in.

How do we do it? CARTS operates its own well-maintained, smoke-free fleet of 13 vehicles, including minivans, sedans, and a multi-passenger wheelchair-accessible minibus. These vehicles are driven by employed drivers who are professional, friendly, and deeply dedicated to our mission. The CARTS motto is “Our cars, our drivers, our pleasure,” and we mean it!

Any Columbia County resident with a need for non-emergency medical transportation is eligible to receive this service; no other factors—such as age, income, or disability—are considered when someone asks for our help. The service is door-to-door, meaning one of our courteous and compassionate drivers will escort an individual from the door of their home or other pickup location to the door of a healthcare provider’s office.

Anyone needing a greater level of assistance should be accompanied by a family member, friend, or aide. CARTS provides transportation from any location in Columbia County to destinations within the Twin Counties Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. We also offer transportation to destinations north—such as Albany, Troy, and East Greenbush—on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and to destinations south and east—such as Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Pittsfield (MA), Great Barrington (MA), and Sharon (CT)—on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

This winter, CARTS is running the Match for Mobility campaign. Through January 31st, the Rip Van Winkle Foundation will match every donation to CARTS dollar-for-dollar — up to \$25,000. Funds raised support operating costs, including vehicle maintenance, fuel, and staffing, helping keep CARTS on the road in the year ahead. Learn more and help us meet the match at columbiahealthnet.org/match.

The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit www.columbiahealthnet.org or call 518-822-8820.