

VEHICLE SAFETY

Applicability: This policy applies to all Oak Hill employees who drive Oak Hill vans.

Oak Hill employees are expected to exercise care, caution and vigilance when operating Oak Hill vehicles, especially when transporting program participants. The expectations for safe and courteous driving are established through both Oak Hill policy and in-service modules of Defensive Driving, Tie Downs and Passenger Assistance.

Each Oak Hill employee shall comply with all traffic and vehicle safety laws, regulations and ordinances when operating an Oak Hill vehicle, including, but not limited to, fastening seatbelts, refraining from cell phone use, and observing all posted speed limits.

Employees must closely supervise program participants when in or near parking lots, driveways, streets and other areas as many program participants do not have adequate safety skills and moving vehicles may constitute a life-threatening situation.

To prevent accidents, and to ensure the safety of the program participants and Oak Hill Staff, Oak Hill vehicles must be driven out of driveways facing forward. Under no circumstances should a vehicle be backed out into the street. To allow the vehicle adequate turn-around space, and greater maneuverability, it may be necessary for employees in some locations to park their own vehicles on the main road in front of the location or on the closest side street. Employees must not park their vehicles on the grass and must be considerate of neighbors when parking on the street.

Vehicle drivers are responsible for keeping the keys secure at all times. Vehicle drivers will ensure that they turn off the motor, remove the keys from the ignition, lock the vehicle and take the keys when leaving the vehicle. Unauthorized passengers shall not be transported.

Smoking, eating and drinking by staff or participants while on the van is prohibited. Any food being transported in the vehicle must be safely secured. Caustic, toxic and all pharmaceutical products must be secured in the rear of the van away from program participants. This includes cleaning supplies, laundry supplies, automotive fluids, medications and other hazardous substances.

When transporting program participants, an adequate number of employees must provide coverage appropriate to the needs of the passengers. When more than one employee is in the van, the other employees must be seated in rear passenger seats if available, in order to be better able to attend to the needs of the program participants. In some cases, there may be specific seating assignments for participants and staff. Keep vehicle doors locked while traveling. Seat belts must be used by all occupants of the vehicle at all times. All wheelchairs must be safely secured at all times.

Employees shall not operate Oak Hill motor vehicles while using cell phones or mobile electronic devices, even with hands-free devices, except in emergency situations. In the event of an emergency situation, an employee must bring the vehicle to a complete stop, then place the call to an emergency response operator, a hospital, a physician's office, health clinic, ambulance company or fire or police department. Hands free devices may not be used or worn while on duty.

Consistent with Connecticut law, employees are responsible for removing snow and ice from the vehicle before use.

Any employee who is observed operating an Oak Hill vehicle in an erratic or unsafe manner may be subject to progressive discipline. Van speed and location may be tracked and randomly monitored by Oak Hill administrators through GPS devices. Traveling in excess of the speed limit is deemed a health and safety issue and will result in disciplinary action consistent with other health and safety infractions. Nothing in this policy shall preclude Oak Hill from taking more significant disciplinary or other action in the event of a very serious traffic or vehicle safety violation.

Each employee shall notify his/her supervisor upon receipt of any traffic, vehicle safety or parking ticket, summons, citation or warning while operating an Oak Hill vehicle. Such employee shall be responsible for the payment of any fines or penalties associated with such violation.

Any employee who receives a ticket, summons, citation or warning for a traffic or safety violation while operating an Oak Hill vehicle shall also be subject to progressive discipline. In addition to being disciplined, an employee shall also be required to participate in Oak Hill's Defensive Driving and/or similar training module.

Cross-reference: Telephone, Facsimile and Cell Phone Use

Originally published: May 1, 2006

Revision approved: February 18, 2009