

# Wheels Up!

## Traveling with a Disability Program

The Columbus Regional Airport Authority and OhioHealth Outpatient Neurological Rehabilitation have joined together on an initiative to enhance OhioHealth's Traveling with a Disability Program. This program was created to help patients with neurological injury to confidently return to the air travel experience.

After a collaborative meeting between the two partners, OhioHealth presented the Airport with a series of questions raised by their patients enrolled in the program. Working closely with CMH-based airlines, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), skycap service providers and others, the Airport's customer service team has prepared this comprehensive response that will raise awareness of what a person with disability can expect when preparing for air travel.

**It is important to note that while this information covers a broad application, it is subject to change; therefore, it is recommended that you check with your airline, TSA.gov or the Airport's customer service before flying.**

### Questions/Answers

**Q - Who do I contact if I need wheelchair transport at the airport from drop-off, shuttle lot or garage?**

**Q - Can I have assistance during this process?**

There are two companies that provide wheelchair/skycap service at John Glenn Columbus International Airport: **Huntleigh USA** and **PrimeFlight Aviation Services**.

**Huntleigh** is contracted by American, Delta, United, Air Canada, Spirit and Frontier to assist their passengers. Arrangements can be made by calling 614.207.9845.

**PrimeFlight** is contracted by Southwest to assist their passengers. Arrangements can be made by calling 614.554.6035.

- Wheelchair assistance can be requested at the curbside drop-off location and/or at the airline ticket counter locations upon arrival at the airport.
- Southwest passengers also have the option to request wheelchair assistance from a PrimeFlight skycap from their curbside check-in podiums located on the south end of the departures drive.

Wheelchair assistance can also be requested at the rental car counter for assistance to the terminal by either Huntleigh or PrimeFlight.

Additionally, all airport parking shuttle buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts for our passenger's convenience. Shuttle drivers are trained on passenger safety and equipment operation. There are no reservations needed for this shuttle lot service.

**Q – How do I get through security with my wheelchair?**

**Q - Do I have to get out of my wheelchair during TSA check? Can I use my assistive device?**

If you are being helped by a Huntleigh or PrimeFlight wheelchair assistant, they will perform the necessary tasks while processing through the security checkpoint including, but not limited to, the following:

- Aid passenger with the removal of outer garments (such as a jacket) that must go through screening;
- Place carry-on bags and other personal property into bins and onto belt for security screening and collect items from bin after screening completion;
- Assist passenger to stand (if able) so they can walk through metal detector or other screening equipment as deemed appropriate by the TSA officer.
  - Note: Passengers are welcome to remain in the wheelchair and undergo secondary screening measures as directed by TSA officer if preferred.
- Canes and other assistive devices must go through the metal detector.
- Passenger with disabilities and/or medical conditions may not be required to remove footwear; however, they must undergo visual/physical inspection and explosive trace detection testing.
  - Note: Private screening can be requested at any time during the process

**Q - If I use a walker or a cane, where is that stored? Can I have access to in while on the plane to get to the bathroom?**

- Canes are permitted on board the aircraft and can be stowed in the overhead compartments. When needed, they can be accessed for use by the passenger. Flight attendant can also access for the passenger.
- Walkers and manual wheelchairs are both too large to be stowed inside the aircraft cabin and are therefore gate checked and turned over to the ramp agent at the point of aircraft entry.
  - Note: check with the airline for cabin availability for walkers; sometimes this request can be accommodated.
- Once a passenger has reached their destination, these mobility devices are brought from the aircraft cargo hold to the jet bridge for collection by the passenger as they exit the aircraft. Assistance exiting the aircraft will be accommodated as needed.

**Q - What is the best way to pack my wheelchair and cushion?**

- Manual wheelchairs are not packed, but simply folded, tagged and stowed in the cargo hold of the aircraft.
- Cushions should remain in the passenger's possession for use aboard the aircraft or stowed with carry-on luggage.
- For electric wheelchairs that must go into the cargo hold of the aircraft. Airlines will need to know the weight and battery type used for the equipment. Lithium batteries are strictly prohibited.
- All other questions should be directed to the airline as each one may have different regulations and/or recommendations.

**Q – Can I qualify for bulkhead seating?**

Bulkhead seating is a term that refers to the seats that are immediately behind the bulkheads (or walls) of an airplane that separate first class from coach or one section from another. This space often provides additional legroom. Those who may qualify for this space include:

- Passengers traveling with a service or emotional support animal;
- Passengers using an aisle chair and who is unable to transfer over a fixed aisle armrest;
- Passengers who require the assistance of a caregiver or safety assistant to perform functions such as feeding, administering medications, etc.;
- Passengers with a fused or immobile leg;
- Other (contact airline for additional information)

**Q - What information do I need regarding my implanted device?**

**Q - Do I have to disclose my medical diagnosis?**

**Q - How do I get my medications through security?**

- To ensure safe screening at the security checkpoint, passengers should declare to the TSA officer if they have a medical implant such as a pacemaker, insulin pump, etc. and/or artificial joints such as a hip or knee.
- Passengers are not required to disclose specific information about their medical history, only that they have a medical condition.
- Medications must be clearly labeled and placed in the bin for screening. It is recommended that pill bottles and/or medical liquids be placed in a zip lock bag; medical liquids must be declared to the TSA officer along with any other devices such as syringes, etc.

For more information on the TSA screening process, go to <https://www.tsa.gov/travel>

**Q - Can I arrange assistance for getting on/off the airplane?**

- If you are being helped by a Huntleigh or PrimeFlight wheelchair assistant, they are responsible to aid you onto the aircraft and to your seat using an airline-provided aisle chair.
  - Note: Special assistance personnel undergo instruction on the proper ways to lift immobile passengers and are to follow the instruction of the passenger on how best to physically assist them during this transition.
- Wheelchair assistants will assist with the deplaning process at the destination city; however, this service must be pre-arranged in the passenger's reservation.
  - If this request has not been pre-arranged, notify the flight attendant for help.

If you are being assisted by your family member, the airline will take responsibility for wheelchair passengers once the pre-boarding process begins. Family members are prohibited from entering the aircraft.

**Q - Are people available to assist with my luggage in the airport and/or TSA check points?**

Yes, both Huntleigh and PrimeFlight offer skycap service to assist with luggage.

- For departing passengers, skycaps are available to assist from the curbside drop-off area to the ticket counter.
  - If engaging the services of a wheelchair assistant, they will manage luggage through entire process.
- For arriving passengers, skycaps are available in the baggage claim area and can assist with luggage pick-up and transport to curbside passenger pick-up, commercial drive shuttle bus pick-up or to vehicles parked in the garage.

**Q - What do I need to have to bring my service animal on board?**

A service animal is defined as any animal individually trained and which performs functions to assist an individual with a disability i.e., seeing eye, hearing assist, seizure alert.

- Passengers who travel with a service animal may be required to provide a valid certificate from the organization that trained or supplied the animal.
  - Check with your airline regarding their specific requirements as airline policies vary.

Emotional support animals are service animals that have an innate ability to assist a person with a mental or emotional disability.

- Passengers who are traveling with an emotional support animal are required to provide current documentation on letterhead of a licensed mental health professional including a medical doctor specifically treating the passenger's mental or emotion disability.

**Q - Are there facilities to accommodate my service animal?**

- The airport has a designated pet relief area located on the south end of the departures level next to the terminal building. This public area is open for all and is wheelchair accessible up to the gate door.
- For the visually-impaired, assistance to this location can easily be accommodated by a Huntleigh or PrimeFlight representative, an airline agent, or via the Information Center on ticketing or baggage claim levels.
- For passengers traveling with service animals, the airport has designated pet relief areas post-security in all three of the concourses. Passenger access to these areas require escort by an airline representative or other badged personnel.

**Q - Can I use my oxygen on the plane?**

- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) **does not** allow travelers to carry their own oxygen tanks or liquid oxygen aboard commercial aircraft. Instead, most patients can use a Department of Transportation approved battery-powered portable oxygen concentrator (PPOCs).
- Airlines maintain a list of acceptable devices for use onboard aircrafts, so it is recommended to check with your specific carrier at the time of flight booking.

**Q - Are there private bathrooms that can accommodate my wheelchair?**

- The airport's public restrooms meet all ADA compliance regulations; therefore, there are no less than two designated wheelchair-accessible stalls in each location.
- Designated family restrooms are also available to accommodate families with small children, those assisting people with special needs and our guests in wheelchairs. These extra-large restrooms are private and can be found in both pre and post security locations throughout the terminal.

Additionally, the airport offers stand-alone nursing stations for mothers and babies which meet ADA requirements as well. These rooms are located both pre and post security.

**Q - How much advance planning do I need to arrange wheelchair transport?**

- Prearranged wheelchair assistance can be scheduled 30 – 60 minutes prior to arriving at the airport.
- Prearranged wheelchair assistance from the garage can be challenging; especially in the early morning when there is a high concentration of wheelchair service; however, a call can be placed to request assistance once on property. Passengers should expect to wait as an immediate response can vary depending upon the time of day.
- Wheelchair assistance at destination cities and/or upon arrival back to CMH should be prearranged. There are two options to secure this service; the airline can add into the reservation system at the time of check-in, or passengers can add to their on-line reservation at the time of booking.
  - Note: if wheelchair assistance was not arranged, please advise the flight attendance.

**Q - If family can help, do they have to have a ticket?**

- Family members traveling with the special assistance passenger are welcome to use one of the wheelchairs specific to the contractor for that airline.
- If the family member wishes to push/escort the wheelchair passenger to the gate, but are not flying, they must see the airline ticket agent and request a gate pass.
  - Note: It is at the discretion of the airline as to how many gate passes are issued.
- **Important:** Passengers who are completely immobile are required by the airlines to travel with a care giver.

**Q - How would I use the restroom on the plane without my wheelchair?**

- Flight attendants are not contracted or required to assist special needs passengers to the restroom.
- If an individual is totally immobile, a caregiver or safety assistant should accommodate the passenger.