



# Disability Services

## Information Sheet

### Vehicle Transfers: assistive equipment

Getting in and out of vehicles may be challenging due to a person's reduced strength and restricted movement. Fortunately, there is a wide choice of equipment currently available to assist both drivers and passengers.

Things to consider when selecting equipment to assist with vehicle transfers:

- ▶ Is it suitable for the vehicle(s) it is required to be used in?
- ▶ What is the method of operation?
- ▶ Is the person transferring independently or with assistance?
- ▶ What are the physical and cognitive abilities of the person transferring and/or the person assisting with the transfer?
- ▶ How is the transfer aid going to be stored when travelling?
- ▶ What are the warranty and service requirements?
- ▶ Do the vehicle modifications need testing and approval by the relevant road safety body?



### Adjustments to existing seats

- ▶ Altering the height, position or contouring of a car seat may improve a person's ability to transfer in and out of a vehicle.
- ▶ If bending at the hips is difficult, reclining the backrest to a low height may help when getting in and out of a car (it is not advisable to travel with the backrest in a reclined position).
- ▶ Seats that move up and down, and slide forward and backward can make it easier to position for transfers.
- ▶ Strategically placed high-density foam, firm pillows, rolled up towels or sheepskins can all be used to help level scooped or bucket style seats.
- ▶ For a more permanent modification existing seats can be reshaped, reupholstered or even replaced by an automotive trimmer.

### Permanent swivel seats

- ▶ A swivel base may be attached to the existing seat, enabling the seat to be rotated 90 degrees so that it faces sideways out of the vehicle. The swivel mechanism can be operated manually with a lever installed on either side of the seat. Powered options are also available.

- ▶ Some models allow the seat to swivel, and slide forward out of the vehicle.
- ▶ In cars swivel seats are generally only suitable for the passenger seat. Systems for the driver seat are only available for certain types of vans.

## **Transfer straps**

- ▶ Attaching an adjustable strap to the frame of the vehicle may assist with transfers into and out of the vehicle by providing a hanging handle for the occupant to use. The strap usually features two loops, one loop provides a handgrip, and the other loop attaches to the vehicle window frame or grab handle above the window.

## **Transfer handles**

- ▶ Portable transfer handles may support a person when getting in and out of a vehicle by providing a strong hand bar to hold onto. These consist of a handle for the person transferring to grip onto and a steel shaft that is inserted and locks into the door striker located on the doorframe of the vehicle (when the door is open).
- ▶ Transfer handles may not fit into all vehicles, so it is important to check with the manufacturer first. Some customisation may be available.

## **Leg/thigh lifters**

- ▶ Leg and thigh lifters may assist in repositioning the legs and feet when transferring into and out of a car. Incorporating two loops, one is placed over the forearm or grasped with the hand, and the second is placed over the foot or pulled up the upper leg to lift the thigh and leg. Various models are available.

## **Sliding boards**

- ▶ Transfer slide boards can be used to assist with sliding transfers by bridging the gap between surfaces to and from a seated position, such as between a car seat and a wheelchair.
- ▶ Options include a variety of lengths and shapes such as cut out sections designed to accommodate the rear wheels of a self-propelling wheelchair.
- ▶ Materials used in slide board construction range from timber, polyurethane, fibreglass, and plastic. Smooth or highly polished surfaces will have less friction.
- ▶ One model incorporates a disk that slides along the board. This is designed to minimise friction between the transfer board and the user.

## **Portable swivel cushions**

- ▶ Portable swivel cushions consist of a flat base with an upholstered circular rotating cushion that swivels 360 degrees over the base. When placed onto a car seat and sat upon the swivel cushion assists the user to rotate and swing their legs into and out of the car.
- ▶ Options include a variety of diameters, materials, heights, flexibility, profiles and weights. Some cushions include additional belts to enable the cushion to be secured during transit.

## Sliding mats

- ▶ Sliding mats act as an interface between user and car seat. Made from fabrics with slippery surfaces that move easily against one another they allow for easier manoeuvrability by reducing friction. Models will generally consist of two separate mats, one placed on top of the other.
- ▶ Models with handles can provide a place for carers to hold onto as they assist an individual to reposition in the car.
- ▶ Mats can also be used on top of slide boards to make transfers smoother and easier.
- ▶ A range of portable swivel cushions is available which include a slide mat function.

## Transfer turntables

- ▶ Transfer turntables may help a carer pivot a person during a standing transfer. They consist of a round base and a top of the same size that rotates 360 degrees over the base. The person's feet are placed on the turntable and they are helped to rise. The person is then helped to rotate using the turntable and positioned into the new position.
- ▶ Options include a variety of diameters, heights and weights. Surface finish is usually made of rubber, non-slip material.

## Hoists for transferring people in and out of vehicles

- ▶ There is a range of hoists available to lift and transfer a person from a wheelchair into a vehicle.
- ▶ May be user or attendant operated, manual or electrically operated.
- ▶ Suitable for driver or passenger side, front or rear seats.
- ▶ Mounted on the floor or rooftop of the vehicle.
- ▶ Mobile car hoists can be used to transfer someone into a car seat and then dismantled and transported in the boot.
- ▶ They are not suitable for use with every vehicle.
- ▶ Please note that there are also a number of hoists, lifts and ramps suitable for lifting and transporting both the user and their wheelchair together as well as lifting the wheelchair and scooter separate from the user.

## Contacting the Independent Living Centre

For further information or to make an appointment to visit the display please contact the Independent Living Centre. The Independent Living Centre offers free advice on equipment and techniques to help you with everyday tasks.

Independent Living Centre  
11 Blacks Road  
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or 8266 5260

Fax: 8266 5263

Email: [ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au](mailto:ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au)

Website: [www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc](http://www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc)

Accessible off street parking is available.

Bus routes:

From the city T500/T501 or  
207/208 to Stop 28 Sudholz Road

Timetable information: 8210 1000

