

**WHO WE ARE:** The Medical Justice Alliance is a non-profit organization that mobilizes volunteer physicians to help protect the rights of people who are incarcerated. With over 300 volunteers, MJA has worked on hundreds of cases for people in federal and state carceral facilities in 40 states. As physicians working on compassionate release and medical parole cases, we recommend these best medical practices in determining whether patients are ambulatory.

**AMBULATORY DEFINITION:** In a medical setting, the term “ambulatory” refers to an individual who can walk around and perform normal daily activities without assistance from a person or wheelchair. Examples of normal daily activities include going to the grocery store, walking a few blocks, or picking up a plate of food and walking with it. If an individual requires another person or a wheelchair to perform these activities, whether due to unsteadiness, weakness, or deconditioning (e.g. getting significantly short of breath), they would not be considered ambulatory, even if they are able to walk shorter distances unaided.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:** Questions can help you gauge your client’s mobility status. Having the client talk through a day from start to finish can reveal issues they face. For example:

- When you get up in the morning, how do you get out of bed?
- How long does it take you to get out of bed?
- Do you use any assistance such as canes to walk?
- How long would it take you to walk to the other side of your unit?
- How far can you walk without stopping?
- Do you feel steady when standing?
- How often do you stumble or fall?

**OTHER ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING:** In addition to ambulatory status, consider whether your client has trouble completing other activities of daily living (ADLs) independently. ADLs include eating, dressing, toilet/hygiene, and memory/activity. Asking your client about their ability to complete these activities with or without assistance can help supplement the narrative. Physical therapy and occupational therapy evaluations can provide helpful information.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR TYPICAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

**<18 sec**

Time needed to walk across a standard 30 ft intersection

**5 blocks**

Walking distance for essential functions (e.g.groceries)