



SAFETY. AWARENESS. EDUCATION.



DRIVER'S EDUCATION **HANDBOOK** ELDERLY DRIVING EDITION



VISION & MISSION

Special Needs, Autism, Vulnerable Person, Elderly, Safety is an initiative built on a simple but powerful belief: everyone deserves to feel safe during moments of crisis or confusion. We work to build better communication between first responders, the community and individuals living with cognitive or developmental challenges such as autism, dementia, or traumatic brain injuries.

Whether it's a lost child with autism or an elderly adult in the early stages of Alzheimer's our goal is to make sure first responders have the tools and information they need before an encounter so every interaction can be safer, calmer and more compassionate.

DEMENTIA

Dementia is a decline of cognition due to loss of or damaged brain cells and can affect critical abilities needed to drive safely. These may include perception and visual processing, maintaining attention, responding to multiple stimuli, and making appropriate decisions in difficult traffic situations.

The NHTSA Driver Fitness Medical Guidelines lists the following signs to help determine if a person needs evaluation for possible dementia:

- Scores from screening tests show possible cognitive issues
- Has had a recent crash or moving violation
- Has been prescribed medications for memory problems
- Uses medications such as tranquilizers, benzodiazepines, neuroleptics, or antidepressants
- Is 80 years or older
- Has a recent history of falls



IMPACTS ON DRIVING

Vision:

The primary sense utilized while driving is vision. It is important that you see well to help ensure safe driving. Have your eyes checked regularly and wear glasses if needed.

Hearing:

Good hearing is important so you can be aware of incoming sirens, horns, and other audio cues needed to drive. Keep the radio at an appropriate level to hear such sounds.

Medication:

Review all medications prior to taking if you will be driving. Some medications have side effects that may cause impairment. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.

Cognition:

Cognition is the act of processing information. It includes your ability to think, use your senses, pay attention, etc. Driving is a complex activity that requires you to use these skills.





IMPAIRED COGNITION

Driving requires the ability to multi-task and being able to remember several objectives at one time. Examples would include accelerating, using turn signals, braking, shifting gear, etc.

Impaired cognition may result in:

- Distraction or disorientation while driving
- Problems maintaining control of the vehicle
- Slower response to traffic signs, signals, or markings
- Trouble recognizing changes in traffic conditions
- Delayed reactions to other vehicles
- Trouble recognizing and safely responding to pedestrians and cyclists
- Difficulties operating controls
- Improper use of turn signals
- Trouble safely navigating your driving route
- Frequently becoming lost or confused while traveling

AM I SAFE TO DRIVE?

A driver's license is an important document that offers mobility and independence. The decision to stop driving is never an easy one. The key to a positive transition from driving is planning.

Warning Signs/Self-Assessment:

- I get lost while driving
- My friends or family members say they are worried about my driving
- Other cars seem to appear from nowhere
- I have trouble finding and reading signs in time to respond to them
- Other drivers drive too fast
- Other drivers often honk at me
- I feel uncomfortable, nervous, or fearful while driving
- After driving, I feel tired
- I feel sleepy when I drive
- Busy intersections bother me
- The glare from oncoming headlights bothers me
- My medication makes me dizzy or drowsy
- I have trouble turning the steering wheel
- I have trouble pushing down the foot pedal
- I have trouble looking over my shoulder
- I have been stopped by the police for my driving
- I have had at-fault crashes in the past year
- I sometimes forget to use my mirrors or signals

Talk to your doctor about way to improve your safety if you are experiencing any symptoms that may affect your ability to drive. It may also be beneficial to consider having your driving assessed.

FAMILY & CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT

Changes in Behavior:

Family members or caregivers should be aware of potential problems affecting safe driving. Being able to recognize these changes will allow for early identification before a potential tragedy.

Reexamination Process:

A driver reexamination is conducted to assess a driver's abilities, behaviors, and habits, regardless of their age. It is used to determine what actions may be required to ensure your safety and the safety of others. A doctor may be required to complete a physician's statement of examination form.

Identification Card:

A state ID card is an alternative to a driver's license if you require an ID. This is easier to carry around unlike a passport and can fit inside a wallet or purse easily.

Medical Community:

Health care providers can make you more aware of how medical conditions and medications can affect your driving fitness. When the effects of a medical condition are progressive, periodic evaluations are necessary.

Reporting Drivers:

Some older drivers don't realize their driving may be dangerous. Discussing the issue may also be difficult for both the family member and the driver. Reporting an unsafe driver may be difficult for some however, it may be the only way to handle a serious situation.



DEVELOP A TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Learn your options, create a transportation plan, and try them out. Options in your area might include bus and trolley services, senior shuttles, walking, friends, and family, or community driving services.

Contact local senior centers to find programs and services available. Local communities and agencies partner with families to promote the well-being and safety of people living with dementia at all ages and stages.

Stigma is no longer a barrier to discussing, diagnosing and living with dementia. There is public awareness about brain health, dementia and research.