

DRIVER REHABILITATION OVERVIEW

What is included in a Driving Evaluation?

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the individual's medical condition, medications, functional limitations and/ or anxiety affect his/ her ability to drive.

The in-clinic portion of testing allows the Occupational Therapist to determine if there may be physical, perceptual, cognitive, and emotional problems that may attribute to observations made while driving.

Vision Screening

All clients receive a vision screening for the minimum requirements for driving. If there are any concerns before or during the evaluation, the client is referred to an eye care specialist.

Cognitive Testing

A computerized evaluation and other testing is done to determine if a client has the necessary cognitive and perceptual skills for safe driving. Some cognitive skills evaluated include reaction time, decision-making speed, attention, information processing, impulse control, memory and mental flexibility, to list a few.

Physical Assessment

A complete assessment of the clients; physical abilities, such as movement, strength, sensation (feeling hands, legs and feet), balance, and ability to get in and out of the vehicle is completed to determine if there are any modifications to how the person will be safest to drive. The need for and type of adaptive equipment is determined. Adaptive equipment can be provided for the on-road portion to assist with physical limitations.

On Road Assessment

The client will drive our dual control vehicle so that the Occupational Therapist can assess all aspects of driving including physical ability and endurance to handle the vehicle, cognitive/behavioural skills, visual perceptual skills, and all the responses to the traffic environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the information gathered during the clinical portion and the actual driving portion of the evaluation, the Occupational Therapist is able to interpret results and make recommendations based on performance strengths and limitations as well as driving potential. The Occupational Therapist will discuss the findings with the driver after the evaluation and with a family member or friend present (with the client's consent). The results are provided that day prior to leaving.

Other Assessments

We also provide:

- Transport truck assessments.
- Bus driver assessments.
- Passenger assessments.
- All terrain vehicle (ATV) assessments.
- Other leisure craft assessments.

Vehicle and Equipment Prescription

In collaboration with the client, written recommendations for adaptive equipment and changes to new or current vehicles are provided. At least two quotes are obtained from qualified vehicle modifiers of the client's choice. Throughout the conversion process, the therapist is available to assist with any clarification, mid conversion for fitting and for final vehicle check-out to ensure function and safety.

What if the Person is Fearful of Driving?

Occupational Therapists have training in emotional and mental health issues. Anxiety and driving phobias can be treated through both in-clinic and on-road training sessions. An approach of systematic desensitization treatment is used with a gradual exposure to the person's areas of difficulty. If the client is working with a clinical psychologist, the occupational therapist will collaborate with the psychologist as well.

Driving Evaluations Are Indicated For:

- Traumatic brain injury
- Stroke
- Amputations(s)
- Spinal cord injury
- Memory disorders which could be non-specified, dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, mild cognitive impairment
- Cerebral palsy
- Arthritis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Congenital disorders
- Developmental delay
- Age related concerns
- Progressive disorders
- Other neurological events

- Driving anxiety
- Movement difficulties for any reason
- Anyone with concerns for their driving fitness and safety
- Vision deficits (but must be approved through the Vision Waiver Program)

Features of Our Program

- Approved program recognized by the Ministry of Transportation.
- One of seven programs recognized by the Ministry of Transportation to complete functional vision waiver driving assessments.
- The evaluation is completed in our dual control car.
- Adaptive equipment can be added, adjusted or removed as needed.
- Use of standard route allows for assessment of the client's skills in residential, medium and high density traffic situations depending on competency.
- This comprehensive evaluation is usually completed within 2-3 hours.
- We communicate with the Ministry of Transportation.
- Vehicle assessments and recommendations for passenger transportation are also available.

Driver Training

Clients learn to drive safely (using adaptive equipment when needed). The licensed driving instructor emphasizes safe, responsible driving.

Drivers will become more confident and have a working understanding of how to be a defensive driver. When new to driving with adaptive equipment, the client learns driving skills on the road beginning with the basics of vehicle control and then progresses to more challenging manoeuvres. For experienced drivers who have some medical or vision issues, intervention is guided by the individual's needs. New drivers and those with experience driving but now have the presence of a medical condition have different needs and the instructor is responsive to this.

Training is usually conducted in 1 hour sessions. The number of training sessions that the client may require will depend greatly on the client's needs. All clients will require a minimum number of lessons prior to being recommended to proceed with having their own vehicle modified. The client must be able to demonstrate a minimum amount of competence prior to being recommended to have the equipment installed in his/her own vehicle.

Professional Qualifications

Evaluations are completed by registered Occupational Therapists who have the following qualifications:

- Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialists.
- Licensed in-car driving instructors.
- Licensed classroom driver educators.
- Over 20 years of experience in driver rehab.
- Able to assist with appropriate adaptive equipment recommendations and write comprehensive vehicle prescriptions.
- Stay abreast of changes in the field of driver rehab by attending conference and workshops.
- Members of the Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED).
- Members of ADED's Ontario Chapter.
- Members of the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association.
- Frequent speakers at provincial, national and international conferences

How Do You Access Our Clinic?

Referral Process

Anyone may make a referral. If a person's license has been or will be medically suspended by the Ministry of Transportation, a request for a temporary permit will be made by us for evaluation purposes. A medical release form from the client's physician is needed stating that he/she is medically stable, free from seizures and not taking any medications that may affect his/her ability to drive.

Payment and Coverage

Coverage may be available in full or in part through extended health care benefit plans, motor vehicle accident insurance, disability plans, March of Dime, and DVA TAPS cards. This service is not covered by OHIP. Payment is due on the day of service.

Why Do Only Some and Not All Occupational Therapists Conduct Driving Evaluations?

Driving is a skill of daily living that most people value. When injury, disease, illness, or aging potentially affect one's ability to drive, this needs to be investigated for everyone's safety.

Occupational Therapy is a unique health care profession that is concerned with a person's total function within his/ her environment. Occupational Therapists work with people who have physical, cognitive, perceptual, and/or emotional difficulties to help them lead independent, productive and satisfying lives. With function as the primary focus, Occupational Therapists evaluate individuals to plan and implement treatment programs to work towards functional goals when possible.

Occupational Therapists possess a university degree which includes training in anatomy, pathology, biological and behavioral sciences in addition to courses in theory and techniques in Occupational Therapy. Supervised fieldwork experiences are included to supplement the academic components and to provide practical experience. In Ontario, therapists must be licensed and registered with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. They are governed by the Regulated Health Professionals Act 1990 and they are guided by a code of ethics and a standard of practice.

Occupational Therapists who conduct driving evaluations further specialize in driver rehabilitation through post graduate courses and membership in The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED). Ideally, these therapists go on to take a certification exam. In order to maintain this credential, the therapist must continue to obtain a minimum number of continuing education units per certificate period. The same way that a family physician understands about heart conditions, they will prefer to send the patient to a heart specialist because the heart doctor has more specialized testing and experience to treat the condition. As it is the same in the specialized field of driver rehabilitation, only some occupational therapists choose to work in this field.