

Driving is important to our independence and community participation. It gives us a sense of freedom and control, and it allows easy access to employment, school, shopping, social connections and healthcare. It is easy to forget that driving is one of the most complex and dangerous things we do on a daily basis. Following a brain injury, you should have your driving skills evaluated because the skills you need for safe driving may have been affected when you sustained a brain injury.

Treatment Team:

- Because of the impact that a brain injury can have on the skills needed to safely drive, you should discuss driving with medical professionals. Your doctors will determine if you need therapy or a driving evaluation.
- Therapists will help evaluate your skills related to driving and have you participate in activities to improve these skills.
- Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialists (CDRS) complete driving evaluations, including a behind-the-wheel assessment to determine if restrictions or vehicle modifications are necessary.
- Your doctor will make the final decision as to if, when and how you can return to driving.

Occupational therapists at Shepherd Pathways are trained in pre-driving to provide individualized assessment and treatment to help clients return to the community safely. The pre-driving program includes the following:

- Client/Family Interview:
 - » Determine if state licensure guidelines are met. This is individualized for each client, as regulations vary by state.
 - » Review medical history including medication, pain, seizures and fatigue.
 - » Review past driving history.
- Evaluation and Treatment of Vision:
 - » Assess acuity (clarity of vision), visual fields (side vision), ability to judging distances, how well eyes work together and how the brain is processing this information.
 - » See the **Vision Area** of the Mind and Body page to learn more about these skills.
 - ♦ myshepherdconnection.org/abi/Mind-and-Body/Body-Functions
- Evaluation and Treatment of Thinking Skills Assess:
 - » Memory, speed of thinking, attention, multi-tasking, planning, judgment, decision making and brain fog or mental fatigue.
 - » Sense of direction.
 - » Safety awareness.
 - » See the **Thinking Skills** page to learn more about these skills.
 - ♦ myshepherdconnection.org/abi/Mind-and-Body/thinking-skills
- Evaluation and Treatment of Motor Skills Assess:
 - » Ability to move and use arms, legs, head and neck.



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- » Ability to get in and out of vehicle and manage mobility device (walker, wheelchair, etc.).
- » Brake reaction time.
- » Coordination for use of vehicle controls such as turn signals, wipers or gas and brake pedals.
- Evaluation and Treatment of Emotional Regulation Skills Assess:
 - » Ability to manage emotions like anxiety or frustration which can affect the way a person handles stressful driving situations.
 - » See the **Behavior and Emotions** page to learn more about emotional changes.
 - ♦ myshepherdconnection.org/abi/Mind-and-Body/Behavior-and-Emotions
- Evaluation and Treatment of Functional Driving Knowledge and Skills Assess:
 - » Understanding of road laws and safety guidelines.
 - » Ability to apply knowledge during community outings and simulator training.
 - » Ability to manage strategic, operational and tactical driving tasks during simulator training.
 - ♦ **Strategic** – Planning and decision making before and during driving.
 - ♦ **Operational** – Vehicle operation (steering, braking and use of mirrors and turn signals).
 - ♦ **Tactical** – Applying rules of the road and adapting to demands of driving conditions.

After completion of the pre-driving program, an occupational therapist will work with you, your treatment team and your family to make the following decisions:

- If other healthcare professionals are needed to evaluation and/or address specific needs
- If you are prepared to complete an on-road driving evaluation with a driving rehabilitation specialist
 - » If so, the doctor will write a prescription for the on-road driving evaluation.
 - » If you are followed by a case manager at Shepherd Pathways, they can help you to schedule the appointment
 - » If not, contact the **Shepherd Center Adaptive Driving Program** at **404-352-2020**.
- If other transportation options are recommended instead of driving for the time being:
 - » An occupational therapist can help you explore other transportation options.
 - » Other transportation options may include:
 - ♦ Rides from family or friends
 - ♦ Public transportation, such as buses or local trains/subways. Some communities provide public transportation specifically for individuals with disabilities.
 - ♦ Rideshare or taxis

If you want to learn more about driving programs and resources, visit:

- Shepherd Center Adaptive Driving Program at shepherd.org/patient-programs/outpatient-clinics/adapted-driving-services
- Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists at added.net
- Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center at msktc.org



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