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OLDER DRIVER SAFETY AND TRANSITION

FOR THE AGING NETWORK



The number of older drivers will increase from 29 million now to 57 million, almost double, by 2030.

Essie Wagner, US Department of Transportation

As the number of older drivers on the road continues to increase, so do concerns about the skills and safety of those drivers. However, despite growing numbers of older drivers, fewer older drivers died in crashes and fewer were involved in fatal collisions during 1997-2006 than in years past, according to a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (as reported in *ScienceDaily*, 2009/01/09). Yet, accidents involving older drivers, especially when a fatality occurs, continue to have a strong influence on public policy and public attitudes.

Family caregivers and many older adults themselves have very real concerns about the safety and well-being of older drivers, and express concerns about vehicle passengers and pedestrians as well. Often, a major conflict confronting family caregivers revolves around efforts to persuade – or force - an older relative to give up the keys. As administrators of programs that serve older adults and family caregivers, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Title VI Native American Aging Programs have heard many such concerns.

The Aging Services Network recognizes the value and importance of these issues, and works with other community organizations to identify resources and successful programs that address older driver safety and transition. Activities already undertaken by many aging programs include reaching out to older drivers, sponsoring educational events and connecting elders and family members to community resources. Older driver safety will continue to receive increased attention. New resources and new information appear frequently.

Key Messages in the publication:

- The older adult should be involved in the discussion about his or her driving.
- It is important to focus on the older driver's functional capacity, not age or disease.
- Age does not make someone a bad driver.
- Driving cessation is not necessarily the immediate goal.
- The purpose is to identify ways to ensure safety and driver remediation, not on giving up the keys.

(“Driving Transitions Education” page 3.)

Some advice cannot be repeated too often. For example, it is never too early to begin gathering information on alternative modes of transportation and it is never too early to start trying them out. The older driver may discover that it really is more comfortable to take a taxi after dark rather than drive, or it is much easier to keep a medical appointment downtown by using a bus rather than fighting with traffic and searching for parking. Testing the waters before a crisis occurs always makes it easier.

Local Resource List: A template for creating a local resource list is included in the publication. It breaks down the types of information needed and suggests sources for filling in local contacts. It provides guidance on how to develop an individualized mobility plan, assess the types of transportation an individual needs and identify resources to meet those needs, including all of the places one needs and wants to go, plus how

to get there. An individualized **mobility plan** might include walking, cycling and public transportation, as well as individuals or affiliations that offer rides.

Difficult Conversations

Another resource, “**Family Conversations with Older Drivers: Safe Driving for a Lifetime,**” is very helpful in initiating the difficult conversation about an older driver's capabilities. This publication includes instructions on planning for mobility options. It is available in English and Spanish at www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers.

Other Resources

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety website features a very useful news release about the effects of medications on older adults and offers a number of resources in this area. A recent study found that many older adults take multiple medications, which can have a significant impact on their driving ability — without the patient's awareness. A summary fact sheet useful for public awareness is available at: www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/MedsOlderDriversFS.pdf.

New from NCST

A companion fact sheet prepared specifically for the older driver, “**Older Driver Safety and Transition—For the Mature Driver**” is available from the NCST at www.seniortransportation.net.



Find community organizations that offer transportation assistance:

Resources:

Senior Centers (Yellow Pages) local contact
Red Cross (Yellow Pages) local contact
Volunteer Organizations (Yellow pages)..... local contact

This fact sheet identifies training and information about older driver safety and transition that can assist professionals and community agencies in their efforts. While Area Agencies on Aging may not have sufficient staff to create an in-house program, they can offer information about resources to address the needs of those they serve. The Allegany County, New York Area Agency on Aging, for example, refers older consumers to the **AARP Driver Safety Program** Training, directs them to **Roadwise Review** for self-assessment, encourages them to participate in **CarFit** sessions to check out their physical relationship to their car, and works with the Occupational Therapists from the local hospital on driver assessments. (See the Resources at the end of this fact sheet for contact information for these programs.)

This document serves as a companion to another fact sheet developed by the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST), **“Older Driver Safety and Transition—For the Mature Driver,”** which provides information about resources to aid in driving skill improvement and decision-making and offers advice on transition from driving. Resources listed in both fact sheets are available online.

DriveWell

DriveWell is a formal curriculum with prepared presentations, handouts, a synthesis of research, and background information originally designed as a day-long train-the-trainer session to prepare those who work with older adults to provide education on older driver safety. It is available online from the American Society on Aging (www.asaging.org/drivewell). To obtain a hard copy of the DriveWell toolkit, go to the NHTSA Traffic Safety Materials Catalog at www.nhtsa.gov/people/outreach/media/catalog/Index.cfm.

If you are interested in offering training presented by an experienced DriveWell trainer, contact the NCST at the address listed at the end of this fact sheet.

Driving Transitions Education: Tools, Scripts, and Practice Exercises

A new resource, **“Driving Transitions Education: Tools, Scripts, and Practice Exercises,”** can help AAAs, Title VI programs and aging staff respond to older driver safety issues. This resource is available on the websites of both the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (www.nhtsa.gov) and the American Society on Aging (www.asaging.org).

The toolkit is designed for staff who are not steeped in transportation, including information and referral/assistance staff, case managers, social workers and nurses. It is a handy reference with quick information that will bring a non-expert who deals with a myriad of issues up to speed on driver safety. This resource also prepares aging staff to conduct effective discussions about driver safety, make educational presentations and respond to inquiries.



This fact sheet outlines the steps to help an older driver maintain mobility and experience a smooth transition to other options when the time is right.

The steps include:

- Assessment of driving skills, both informal and objective
- Refreshing lifelong driving skills
- Making mechanical adjustments to the car
- Making adjustments in driving strategies
- An objective evaluation
- Working with a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist
- Identification of mobility options/alternatives to driving
- Trying the alternatives

We hope that you consider taking on the challenge to help keep older adults in your community on the road longer, safely!

NCST

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Senior Transportation*



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.



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Web site: www.seniortransportation.net

Web-links to Resources:

AARP Driver Safety Program Training:

www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/driver_safety

Roadwise Review, a free online self-assessment, at www.seniordrivers.org/home/toppage.cfm

CarFit: www.car-fit.org to evaluate your space in your car

Occupational Therapists or Driver Rehabilitation Specialists:

www.aota.org/olderdriver or <http://aded.net>

"Drive Well" curriculum for older driver safety: www.asaging.org/drivewell

"Driving Transitions Education: Tools, Scripts, and Practice Exercises," National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (www.nhtsa.gov) and the American Society on Aging (www.asaging.org)

For difficult conversations: www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers

New NCST resource for the older driver:

"Older Driver Safety and Transition—For the Mature Driver," www.seniortransportation.net

Based in Washington, D.C., the National Center on Senior Transportation is administered by Easter Seals, Inc. in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, and with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Federal Transit Administration.