

## Older Driver Safety & Evaluation

Giving up driving is very difficult for most people. Driving gives a person freedom and control, a sense of self-esteem and independence. Often concerns arise about elderly parents, neighbors or friends and their ability to drive safely. Fortunately, most elderly drivers assess their own skills and begin changing their driving habits – not driving after dark, or at busy times of the day. Overall, elderly drivers are responsible and experienced.

However, a few high profile accidents have brought this issue to national attention.

### Simple Tips to Safer Driving

- Have regular check-ups including eye and hearing exams
- Take part in an exercise program so that you maintain your health and can react quickly
- Ask your doctor if any of your medications can affect your driving
- Reduce noise in your car; turn off the radio
- Ask passengers to not disturb you in high traffic or confusing situations
- Plan rest stops in any long distance driving and allow plenty of time
- Do not use a cell phone while driving
- Do not travel with your pets unless they are in a cage
- Avoid high traffic times and areas; drive only during the daylight hours
- Do not drive in bad weather; wear your seat belt properly
- Make sure your car seat and mirrors are adjusted for your height
- Keep your car well-maintained and equipped with emergency equipment such as a flashlight and blanket
- Take a refresher driving course to improve your skills. You *may* get a discount on your insurance.

### What Should I Say?

If you have a loved one that you are concerned about, the first thing to do is to approach them directly. Do not expect this to be an easy task or that they will want to hear what you say. Be prepared with specific incidents and suggestions. You are threatening their independence and their dignity. Your approach can make all the difference in how well they hear you and their willingness to change their driving habits. “Dad, you’re too old to drive anymore” won’t go near as far as “Dad, I’m concerned about your driving and the fender-bender you had yesterday. Can we discuss some ways to help you drive a little longer and still be safe on the road?”

Some signs that may indicate a need for the above discussion include: forgetting how to get to familiar places, failure to follow traffic signs, poor judgment of distance, making turns that are too wide or too tight, making poor decisions in traffic such as failing to yield or too slow to react to emergencies, nervousness or fatigue after driving. Another sign is a series of fender-bender accidents.

Help your loved one find alternative solutions to driving. Check out the bus route close to their home, whether their doctor’s office or hospital has transportation options, if there is a senior center that can take them to the store. Offer to take them to the big wedding on Saturday or the funeral on Monday. Would the grandchild like more practice driving by taking grandma to get her hair done? Give gift certificates or cash for birthdays that can be used for transportation other than driving. Contact local agencies to see what is available in the areas they usually drive. *Your assistance and guidance in making this transition may need to be ongoing.*

### What Action Can be Taken?

A family member, caregiver, or person concerned about the wisdom of a driver continuing to drive may seek the assistance of the state by completing this form: <http://www.ksrevenue.org/pdf/DriverEvalRequest.pdf> and mailing it to Division of Vehicles Medical/Vision Unit, PO Box 2188, Topeka, KS 66601-2188 or fax to (785) 296-5857. Include the name of the person, the license registration number, and examples of the person’s unsafe driving because of medical or health issues, memory or cognitive problems like Alzheimer’s Disease or dementia, and why you feel it is unsafe for the person to continue operating a vehicle.

Outcomes may include revoking the license if a doctor states the individual should not be driving, authorizing a full test, restricting the driver’s license if recommended, and/or requiring an annual medical reporting.

Call 785-296-3671 Option 9 for more information and see <http://www.ksrevenue.org/dmvdcontact.html>

## **Who Can I Call for Information on Transportation Resources?**

Call your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to find out about transportation options available in your area. In Johnson County, Kansas...call 913-715-8861...or nationwide find your AAA at 1-800-677-1116.

## **Seniors and Driving – Helping a Loved One Stay Safe**

(Excerpts from pamphlets available from [www.journeyworks.com](http://www.journeyworks.com) ) 1-800-775-1998

- + Age alone does not tell you who should or should not drive. Some age-related conditions do affect driving.
- + With *some* age-related conditions, it helps to limit night driving, avoid freeways, and limit how far you drive.
- + Medical and eye exams can help a person detect issues with vision, hearing, memory, health conditions, or medications that might affect reaction time and other driving skills.
- + **Signs that indicate unsafe driving** are close calls, accidents, people honking, difficulty staying in the lane, difficulty judging distances, driving too slowly, confusion about directions in familiar places, hitting the gas pedal instead of the brake, getting frequent tickets or warnings.
- + Be respectful, but let drivers know your concerns. “I am concerned about your safety & the safety of others.”
- + As a last resort, family member or caregivers of resistant drivers with significant memory loss may need to disable the car or “lose” the keys.
- + Assessing driving ability before an accident can help make the roads safer for everyone.
- + To find alternative transportation ask family or friends, use public transportation, consider living arrangements where you can walk to stores, or call about senior services in your area.

## **Resources for Safer Driving**

*Options and assessments for drivers with physical and cognitive challenges.*

**AARP Driver Information Line** 1-888-227-7669 <http://www.aarpdriversafety.org>

*(List of classes, online course option, contacts.)*

**Americans for Older Driver Safety** <http://afods.org/>

*Empowers older adults to extend their years of safe driving. Education, research, & consumer support information.*

**Avenues Driving Rehabilitation Program** 8826 Santa Fe Drive #203 Overland Park, KS 66212

913-272-1710 <http://www.avenuesdrivingrehab.com/>

**Kansas Department of Insurance -Accident Prevention Courses** 800-432-2484 | 785-296-3071

[www.ksinsurance.org](http://www.ksinsurance.org)

**Kansas Department of Revenue - Driver Control** 785-296-3671 | 785-296-3613 TTY

<http://www.ksrevenue.org/dmvdcontact.html>

*Unsafe driver: license revocation requests Tu-Th*

**KU HealthPartners Driving & Mobility Services** Laboratory for Advanced Rehabilitation Research in Simulation

KUMC, Olathe Pavilion, GO42, MS 4039 3901 Rainbow Boulevard, Kansas City, KS

913-945-9673 <http://larrs.kumc.edu>

*Assessment and rehabilitation of driving skills for older adults and individuals with a wide range of medical conditions.*

**Johnson County Community College - Defensive Driving & Driver Education Classes**

12345 College Boulevard, Overland Park, KS 66210 913-469-2323 [www.jccc.edu/ce](http://www.jccc.edu/ce)

*Continuing education classes and/or behind the wheel practice, certified instructors,*

*variety of classes, see/request catalog for more information, register online or by phone.*

**(The) Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City** 3011 Baltimore, Kansas City, MO 64108

816-751-7900 *Driver evaluation and training.* [www.rehabkc.org](http://www.rehabkc.org)