


Gaining Independence on the Road

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Introduction

The introduction of new technology continues to broaden opportunities for persons with disabilities to drive vehicles with adaptive devices. Taking full advantage of these opportunities, however, can be time consuming and, sometimes, very frustrating.



Introduction

This information is based on the experience of driver rehabilitation specialists and other professionals who work with individuals who require adaptive devices for their motor vehicles. It is centered around a proven process - evaluating your needs, selecting the right vehicle, choosing a qualified dealer to modify your vehicle, being trained, maintaining your vehicle - that can help you avoid costly mistakes when purchasing and modifying a vehicle with adaptive equipment.



Introduction

Also included is general information on cost savings, licensing requirements as well as organizations to contact for help. Although the information focuses on drivers of modified vehicles, each section contains valuable information for individuals who drive passengers with disabilities.



Investigate Cost Saving Opportunities & Licensing Requirements

□ Cost Saving Opportunities

The costs associated with modifying a vehicle can vary significantly. A new vehicle modified with adaptive equipment can approximately cost \$20,000 to \$80,000. Therefore, whether you are modifying a vehicle you own or purchasing a new vehicle with adaptive equipment, it pays to investigate public and private opportunities for financial assistance.



Investigate Cost Saving Opportunities & Licensing Requirements

There are programs that help pay part or all of the cost of vehicle modification, depending on the cause and nature of the disability. For information, contact the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or another agency that provides vocational services, and, if appropriate, the Missouri Department of Veterans Affairs. You can find these telephone numbers in your local telephone book under state and federal agencies. For your convenience they are also located in the resource section.



Investigate Cost Saving Opportunities & Licensing Requirements

Also, you might want to consider the following options.

- Many nonprofit associations, organizations, and social service agencies that advocate for individuals with disabilities have grant programs that help pay for adaptive devices.
- If you have private health insurance or workers' compensation, you may be covered for adaptive devices and vehicle modification. Check with your insurance carrier.



Investigate Cost Saving Opportunities & Licensing Requirements

Also, you might want to consider the following options.

- Many manufacturers have rebate or reimbursement plans for modified vehicles. When you are ready to make a purchase, find out if there is such a dealer in your area.
- Some states waive the sales tax for adaptive devices if you have a doctor's prescription for their use.
- You may be eligible for savings when submitting your federal income tax return. Check with your tax consultant to find out if the cost of your adaptive devices will help you qualify for a medical deduction.



Investigate Cost Saving Opportunities & Licensing Requirements

□ Licensing Requirements

Missouri requires a valid learner's permit or driver's license to receive an on - the - road evaluation. You cannot be denied the opportunity to apply for a permit or license because you have a disability. However, you may receive a restricted license, based on your use of adaptive devices.



Evaluate Your Needs

Driver rehabilitation specialists perform comprehensive evaluations to identify the adaptive equipment most suited to your needs. A complete evaluation includes vision screening and, in general, assesses:

- Muscle strength, flexibility, and range of motion.
- Coordination and reaction time.
- Judgment and decision making abilities.
- Ability to drive with adaptive equipment.



Evaluate Your Needs

Upon completion of an evaluation, you should receive a report containing specific recommendations on driving requirements or restrictions, and a complete list of recommended vehicle modifications.



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Evaluate Your Needs

□ Finding a Qualified Evaluator

To find a qualified evaluator in your area, contact a local rehabilitation center or call the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED) at 608.884.8833. Additional contact information for ADED can be found in the resource section. The Association maintains a data base of certified driver rehabilitation specialists throughout the country. Additionally, your insurance carrier may also pay for the evaluation. Find out if you need a doctor's prescription or other documentation to receive benefits.



Evaluate Your Needs

□ Being Prepared for an Evaluation

Consult with your doctor to make sure you are physically and psychologically prepared to drive. Being evaluated too soon after an injury or other trauma may indicate the need for adaptive equipment you may not need in the future. When going for an evaluation, bring any equipment you normally use, for example, your walker or neck brace. Also, it is very important to tell the evaluator if you are planning to modify your wheelchair or get a new one.



Evaluate Your Needs

□ Evaluating Passengers with Disabilities

Evaluators also consult on compatibility and transportation safety issues for passengers with disabilities. They assess the type of seating needed and the person's ability to exit and enter the vehicle. They provide advice on the purchase of modified vehicles and recommend appropriate wheelchair lifts or other equipment for a vehicle you own. If you have a child who requires a special type of safety seat, evaluators make sure the seat fits your child properly. They also make sure you can properly install the seat in your vehicle.



Select the Right Vehicle

Selecting a vehicle for modification requires collaboration among you, your evaluator, and a qualified vehicle modification dealer.

Although the purchase or lease of a vehicle is your responsibility, making sure the vehicle can be properly modified is the responsibility of the vehicle modification dealer. Therefore, take the time to consult with a qualified dealer and your evaluator before making your final purchase. It will save you time and money. Be aware that you will need insurance while your vehicle is being modified, even though it is off the road.



Select the Right Vehicle

The following questions can help you with vehicle selection. They can also help determine if you can modify a vehicle you own.

- Does the necessary adaptive equipment require a van, or will another passenger vehicle suffice?
- Can the vehicle accommodate the equipment that needs to be installed?
- Will there be enough space to accommodate your family or other passengers once the vehicle is modified?



Select the Right Vehicle

- Is there adequate parking space at home and at work for the vehicle and for loading/unloading a wheelchair?
- Is there adequate parking space to maneuver if you use a walker?
- What additional options are necessary for the safe operation of the vehicle?



Select the Right Vehicle

If a third party is paying for the vehicle, adaptive devices, or modification costs, find out if there are any limitations or restrictions on what is covered. Always get a written statement on what a funding agency will pay before making your purchase.



Select the Right Vehicle

Choose a Qualified Dealer to Modify Your Vehicle

Even a half inch change in the lowering of a van floor can affect a driver's ability to use equipment or to have an unobstructed view of the road; so, take the time to find a qualified dealer to modify your vehicle. You can begin with a telephone inquiry to find out about credentials, experience, and references. Don't be afraid to ask questions about how they operate. Do they work with evaluators? Will they look at your vehicle before you purchase it? Do they require a prescription from a doctor or other driver evaluation specialist? How long will it take before they can start work on your vehicle? Do they provide training on how to use the adaptive equipment?



Select the Right Vehicle

If you are satisfied with the answers you receive, check references; then arrange to visit the dealer's facility. Additional information to consider is listed below.

- Are they members of the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA) or another organization that has vehicle conversion standards?
- What type of training has the staff received?
- What type of warranty do they provide on their work?
- Do they provide ongoing service and maintenance?
- Do they stock replacement parts?



Select the Right Vehicle

- **Once you are comfortable with the dealer's qualifications, you will want to ask specific questions, such as:**
 - How much will the modification cost?
 - Will they accept third party payment?
 - How long will it take to modify the vehicle?
 - Can the equipment be transferred to a new vehicle in the future?
 - Will they need to modify existing safety features to install the adaptive equipment?



Select the Right Vehicle

While your vehicle is being modified, you will, most likely, need to be available for fittings. This avoids additional waiting time for adjustments once the equipment is fully installed. Without proper fittings you may have problems with the safe operation of the vehicle and have to go back for adjustments.



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Obtain Training on the Use of New Equipment

Both new and experienced drivers need training on how to safely use your new adaptive equipment. Your equipment dealer and evaluator should provide information and off-road instruction. You will also need to practice driving under the guidance of a qualified driving instructor until you both feel comfortable with your skills. Bring a family member or other significant person who drives to all your training sessions. It's critical to have someone else who can drive your vehicle in case of an emergency.



Select the Right Vehicle

The Missouri Department of Vocational Rehabilitation may pay for driver training under specified circumstances. Their contact information is located in the resource section. At a minimum, their staff can help you locate a qualified instructor. If your evaluator does not provide on-the-road instruction, ask him or her for a recommendation. You can also inquire at your local motor vehicle administration office.



Select the Right Vehicle

Maintain Your Vehicle

Regular maintenance is important for keeping your vehicle and adaptive equipment safe and reliable. It may also be mandatory for compliance with the terms of your warranty. Some warranties specify a time period during which adaptive equipment must be inspected. These “check ups” for equipment may differ from those for your vehicle. Make sure you or your modifier submits all warranty cards for all equipment to ensure coverage and so manufacturers can contact you in case of a recall.

For additional vehicle safety information you can log onto the NHTSA’s web site at www.nhtsa.gov or contact the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline at 888.327.4236.



Resources

- **The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED)**
2425 N. Center St. #369
Hickory, North Carolina 28601
866.672.9466
www.driver-ed.org
www.aded.net
- **National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA)**
3327 West Bearss Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33618
866.948.8341
www.nmeda.org
- **AAA**
1000 AAA Drive
Heathrow, Florida 32746-5063
404.444.7961
www.aaa.com



Resources

- **Department of Veteran Affairs**
800.827.1000
www.va.gov
- **D W Auto & Home Mobility**
1208 N. Garth Ave.
Columbia, MO 65203
1.800.568.2271 or 573.449.3859
573.449.4187-Fax
www.dwauto.com
- **Missouri J YhYf Ubg'7 ca a]gg]cb**
205 Jefferson Street
P.O. Drawer 147
Jefferson City, MO 65102
1.866.VET.INFO-Toll Free or 573.751.3779
mvc.dps.mo.gov



Resources

□ Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Central Office

3024 Dupont Circle

Jefferson City, MO 65109-0525

1.877.222-8963-Toll Free or 573.751.3251

573.751.1441-FAX; 573.751.0881-TTY

dese.mo.gov/vr/vocrehab.htm



Resources

- **The following manufacturers offer rebates or reimbursements on new vehicle modification:**

Chrysler Corporation

800.255.9877

800.922.3826-TTY

www.chryslermobility.com

Ford Motor Company

800.952.2248

800.TDD.0312-TTY

www.fordmobilitymotoring.com/

General Motors Corporation

800.323.9935

800.TDD.9935-TTY

www.gmmobility.com



Resources

- **The following manufacturers offer rebates or reimbursements on new vehicle modification:**

Honda

800.331.4331

800.443.4999-TTY

www.toyotamobility.com

Volkswagen

800.822.8987

www.vw.com

Audi

800.822.2834

www.audiusa.com