

## Driving and Dementia, Part II: Practical Steps for Caregivers

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In the last edition of the Caregivers' Grapevine, we discussed the importance of monitoring the driving of an individual with dementia and how to plan ahead for the time when he or she needs to hang up the keys. In this article, we will continue to explore the complex issue of driving and dementia and focus on what practical steps you as a caregiver can take when you feel that your family member can no longer drive safely.

If you believe that someone is having difficulty driving, the first step is always to discuss your concerns with that person. In some cases, the individual will recognize that their ability to drive is compromised and will choose to give up their driver's license. If this is the case, he or she can swap their license for a BC Identification Card (BCID) at any driver licensing office.

Alternatively, your loved one can voluntarily complete an independent re-examination road test through the Driver Fitness Program with the Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles (OSMV). This program allows for the testing of drivers of all ages to assess their ability to drive safely. It is important to note that even if the individual passes the re-examination road test, he or she should be monitored closely and retested every six months or as the symptoms of dementia worsen.

However, often the individual does not recognize that their ability to drive is compromised.

This is a very difficult situation for everyone involved. If this is the case, you will need to take action. You can make a report to the OSMV which, in turn, can choose to send the driver for a medical exam. This decision can be based on a reliable report from you, another family member or another individual questioning the individual's ability to drive. Based on the results of the medical exam, a doctor can recommend a re-examination road test to the OSMV. Doctors, registered psychologists, and optometrists have an obligation to report if an individual has a medical condition that may affect his or her ability to drive safely.

Reexamination road tests are conducted by ICBC and there is no charge for the re-examination road test if it is recommended by a doctor. If the driver fails the re-examination road test, the OSMV has the power to impose conditions on or revoke the individual's driver's license.

As discussed in the last edition of the newsletter, there are a number of options for transportation for individuals who are no longer driving. The individual can use HandyDart or taxi savers for transportation; however, as the dementia progresses, it will be less likely that he or she will be travelling alone. Consequently, the individual may need to rely on family members, volunteer drivers, or a paid service for transportation. If your loved one has a disabled parking placard, the privileges that they have with the placard can be transferred to another vehicle as long as they are with the driver of that vehicle. Remember, although talking to your loved one about "hanging up the keys" can be uncomfortable, keeping your loved one (and others on the road) safe should be a top priority and must be addressed.