

# DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING OF THE DRIVING CHECK-UP: EXPANDING THE CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST OLDER DRIVERS

## INTRODUCTION

The Driving Check-Up is designed as part of a larger continuum of services available to assist older adults in their goal of remaining safe and active drivers. Based in driving schools, certified driving instructors trained to conduct the assessments provide older adults with objective feedback aimed at improving safety and maximizing driving longevity through a 60-90 minute evaluation of key driving skills and abilities. An essential component of the Driving Check-Up is the relationship between the driving school and occupational therapy/driving rehabilitation specialist, ensuring that drivers identified with health-related concerns can be directed to the appropriate medically based driver rehabilitation services. The Driving Check-Up, however, is not an evaluation of driver fitness.

The goal of this project was the development and initial pilot testing of the Driving Check-Up, a model program for a driving-school evaluation of driving knowledge and skills for older adults.

## COMPONENTS OF THE DRIVING CHECK-UP

- *Scheduling* helps to ensure that the Check-Up is appropriate for the client, in addition to ensuring that the client understands the nature and requirements (e.g., license and vision) of the service.
- The *Pre-Drive Interview* gathers information on the older adult's driving history, licensure, health issues, reason for seeking a Check-Up, and emergency contact.
- *Screening Tests* assess vision, motor, and cognitive processes in order to determine if the older adult has an impairment that might affect his or her driving ability or safety, and to justify the decision to proceed on-road versus referral to an appropriate health care provider.
- In the *On-Road Drive*, the driving instructor observes the older adult's performance on potentially risky maneuvers for older drivers as well as any unsafe habits, traffic violations, and/or critical errors.
- The *Post-Drive Discussion* summarizes the outcome of the Check-Up and offers helpful information and resources regarding maintaining driving fitness, planning for transition to other transportation options, and/or referral to an appropriate specialist.

## ABOUT

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit [www.AAAFoundation.org](http://www.AAAFoundation.org) for more information.

## MORE INFORMATION

[AAAFoundation.org](http://AAAFoundation.org)

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VIEW REPORT



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## KEY FEATURES OF THE DRIVING CHECK-UP

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### *Referral*

- The program is designed to assist relatively healthy older adults in maintaining or improving their driving skills and knowledge; therefore, it is critical to have a process to address those older adults for whom the program is not appropriate. Thus, an essential component of the Driving Check-Up is the collaborative relationship between the driving school and a local occupational therapy/driving rehabilitation specialist.

### *Liability*

- Driving schools must have the appropriate liability insurance to cover their vehicles, which is a primary reason the Driving Check-Up is designed for the older adult to be assessed in the driving instructor's vehicle. Also, given the education and training of the typical driving instructor, the screening tools, form for release of information, and referral process are designed to help protect the driving instructor and school and ensure that older drivers with medical impairments are detected and appropriately referred.

### *Training*

- Driving instructor training for the Driving Check-Up is essential for appropriate implementation. The training highlights the differences between instructing novice drivers and assessing experienced older drivers, ensures the Check-Up is performed according to its objectives, and provides information and tools to help recognize and refer medically at-risk drivers. It also includes practice implementing the Check-Up and using the tools and forms while the trainers observe and provide feedback.

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## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PILOT TESTING

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- 92% of participating driving instructors indicated they were somewhat or extremely likely to offer Driving Check-Ups in the future.
- The majority of driving instructors indicated they felt the screening tools were very or extremely useful.
- 83% of older adult participants indicated they would be somewhat or extremely likely to recommend the Driving Check-Up to a friend or family member.
- Older adult participants' descriptions of the Check-Up were overwhelmingly positive: 89% described it as worthwhile, 83% valuable and 81% informative.

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## METHODOLOGY

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### *Development of the Driving Check-Up*

Several activities were carried out to provide input into the development of the Driving Check-Up program. These include the formation of and consultation with an advisory committee to provide guidance and assistance, a review of the published literature with a focus on on-road evaluations of older drivers, a survey to gather information about the current state of driving school-based evaluation programs, and interviews with a sample of program providers.

### *Pilot Testing of the Driving Check-Up*

The objective of the pilot testing was to evaluate the initial developed program, materials, and training for the Driving Check-Up, and inform the revision of the program. An iterative process was planned by staggering implementation across six pilot sites. Each of the six sites was asked to recruit at least two driving instructors and 10 older drivers, with the goal of a total of 12 driving instructors and 60 older drivers offering feedback on the Driving Check-Up.

