

## **Identifying and Reporting Medically-at-Risk Drivers**

Developed by Dr. Anne E. Dickerson, East Carolina University

**Purpose:** This education provides the information to identify and report medically-at-risk drivers by first responders and includes how to complete the appropriate form to send to the North Carolina Medical Review Program of the Department of Motor Vehicles.

**Rationale:** First responders, like law enforcement officers, are called into service when a citizen of their city or county is in a crisis. In general, first responders are called to a crash to transport individuals to the hospital or respond to a medical emergency (e.g., heart attack, injury) at home or business. However, there are times when the first responder is called for an individual that does not have a clear physical issue but appears to be impaired cognitively – after ruling out alcohol/drug impairment. This becomes a safety concern to the public if the individual refuses to be transported to the hospital and clearly intends to immediately drive a motor vehicle. Unlike law enforcement, first responders do not have any legal jurisdiction to stop the person from driving. However, this form allows them to report their concerns about the medically-at-risk driver to the appropriate office of the NC DMV, the program that deals with medical conditions.

**Objectives:** Upon completion of the module, the first responder will:

1. Recognize potential medically-at-risk drivers who need to be reported to the NC Medical Review Program of the DMV.
2. Demonstrate ability to complete the reporting form for medically-at-risk drivers.
3. Recognize the importance of identifying and reporting drivers who may be at risk to themselves or others.

### **Key Points:**

1. Submitting this form does **not** mean the driver will have their license revoked. It is a start of a process of having a physician examine the driver for fitness to drive (see below for a more complete description).
2. A *medically-at-risk driver* is an individual who has or appears to have a medical condition that affects (or may affect) their ability to operate a motor vehicle safely.
  - a. Medically-at-risk drivers can be of any age. However, as people age, they are more likely to have medical conditions. Thus, medically-at-risk drivers are often older adults.
  - b. Age is not necessarily related to being an at-risk driver. Most older drivers are generally safe drivers. However, as one ages the risk for cognitive impairment increases.
3. More than 16 million people in the United States are living with cognitive impairment<sup>1</sup> including Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. If you see a person who may be at significant risk for unsafe driving due to a cognitive impairment, it is important to report. Their cognitive impairment **may be reversible** with treatment. If not, a medical fitness-to-drive evaluation may be necessary to determine if an individual is fit to drive.
4. It is helpful to the MRU staff to have as much description as possible about the individual.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

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<sup>1</sup>Family Caregiver Alliance. Available at [www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=438](http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=438).

1. In the case of Isabel in the film, would it have been better to force her to go the hospital? Why or why not?
2. What kinds of situations have you experienced that you would have used this reporting form? What did you do instead?
3. Suppose Isabel had a more significant injury to her knee and was transported to the hospital, do you think it would be appropriate to still submit the form? Why or why not?

**Process after Submitting the EMS Form:  
Recommendation for Medical/Driver Examination**

**A key point is that this form does NOT take away the driver's license. It is a start of a process to have a physician examine the person for fitness to drive. The Medical Review Program requires confirmed medical information to cancel a driver's license. The reporting form submitted does not meet that criteria, it only can come from a physician.**

**Steps of the Process:**

1. First Responder sends the *Recommendation for Medical/Driver Examination* to the MRU through fax or email.
2. The reported is handled in order from the date received (there are exceptions).
3. The MRU sends the **driver** the *Information Form Letter* and the *Medical Report Form*. The *Medical Report Form* letter requires the driver to go to their physician and complete the form within 30 days and return it to the MRU.
  - a. Request for report is **always** sent to the driver, as the person whose privilege to drive is in question.
4. If the *Medical Report Form* is not returned within 30 days, another letter is sent after 15 days by certified mail. If there is not a response, the license is cancelled (~45 days).
  - a. Drivers can request an extension for a justified reason. For example, the physician requires a driver rehabilitation evaluation, and the driver cannot get an appointment.
5. The physician completes the *Medical Report Form* indicating their summary of the medical fitness of the driver.
  - a. The form **always** needs the signature of the operator/driver.
  - b. The physician needs to address all the questions or it may delay the process.
6. Based on the information from the physician the MRU may:
  - a. Ask for additional information or an evaluation from an occupational therapist (including an on-road assessment);
  - b. Revoke the driver's license;
  - c. Place restrictions on the driver's license (e.g., no highway driving, restricted times, restricted areas, periodic evaluations);
  - d. Report the driver as fit to drive.

**There is an Appeal Process or Change in Status**

- Driver can always appeal, with hearings (information on website).
- Additional information or change in status of medical (information on website).