



# News Release

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## **Driver Rehabilitation Specialists Uniquely Qualified to Address Needs of Growing Population of Older Drivers**

### ***ADED Focuses on Safe Senior Driving During Older Americans Month in May***

**HICKORY, NC, March 27, 2014** – America is going gray. By 2030, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts the number of people aged 65 and over will nearly double from the current level of 40 million up to 78 million – making up 20 percent of the population. As a result, the number of older drivers on America's roads will continue to dramatically increase. One organization – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED) – represents driver rehabilitation professionals who are uniquely qualified to assist older adults, offering driving evaluation, counseling, training, and remediation.

Driving a motor vehicle is a complex task requiring more than the ability to operate controls. Adequate vision, appropriate cognitive skills, and integrated reflexes are required to process what one sees and how one reacts, in a manner quick enough to ensure safe, efficient behind-the-wheel decisions. While older adults typically have decades of driving experience, age-related declines in sensory, cognitive, and physical functions can result in driving impairments. Older drivers with a chronic illness or disease may find that driving impairments are intensified due to complications from their conditions.

These impairments, whether age-related or due to disease, illness or disability, can make affected older adults less safe drivers and more vulnerable to injury or death when involved in a crash. According to 2010 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics, older drivers have the second highest injury and fatality rate per 10,000 licensed drivers as well as the highest injury and fatality rate per 100-million miles driven.

While many older adults are safe drivers with good driving records, a segment of the older population with varying levels of impairments continues to drive, despite warning signs. The freedom to travel for basic needs like getting groceries and medication, visiting the doctor, seeing family and friends, and attending social activities is a key component to their being independent. The proper evaluation, training, and equipment can often allow an older adult to keep their independence for many years to come.

ADED and its member-professionals are specially attuned to the needs of older drivers. In fact, ADED's mission is to promote safe, independent community mobility for those at greater risk for sensory, cognitive, and physical impairments or medical-related issues, including older adults and people with disabilities. ADED represents driver rehabilitation specialists (DRS) and certified driver rehabilitation specialists (CDRS). A DRS is a health professional with specialty training in driver evaluation and rehabilitation. A CDRS is an advanced driver rehabilitation specialist who has received certification from ADED upon fulfillment of specialized experience and education requirements and successful completion of a written exam. ADED provides specialists with education and access to

advances in the industry while offering the public a pool of professionals who provide this unique service.

ADED recommends a driver evaluation be conducted by a DRS or CDRS to determine an older adult's ability to drive, especially if that driver has exhibited any physical, sensory, or cognitive impairment; is medically at-risk; or has been in a motor vehicle accident while driving. A driver evaluation generally consists of a clinical assessment and a behind-the-wheel assessment. The evaluation process includes a review of medical history and medications; tests of physical function, vision, perception, attention, motor function, and reaction time; and actual driving performance assessments.

Based on the evaluation results, the DRS or CDRS will determine: 1.) whether the individual has the ability to drive independently or at all; 2.) whether customized driver training or rehabilitation is required; and 3.) if there is a need for adaptive driving equipment or vehicle modifications. Examples include: lifts and ramps for wheelchairs; custom seating; steering devices, such as spinner knobs; hand controls for operation of accelerator and brakes; siren detectors; special mirrors or exterior mounted cameras for backing up.

Referrals to a driver rehabilitation program, DRS or CDRS can be made by family physicians; medical specialists like gerontologists, eye care professionals, and occupational therapists; and driving schools, among others. Even family members or the older adults themselves may initiate contact.

"ADED takes very seriously the role of our members in keeping the roadways safe for everyone," said ADED Executive Director Elizabeth Green, OTR/L, CDRS. "To ADED, 'rehabilitation' means taking a proactive approach to helping older adults maintain optimal driving skills behind the wheel, or providing alternative transportation and mobility resources if an impairment means driving retirement."

To locate a DRS, CDRS, or a local evaluation center, contact ADED by visiting [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net), phoning (866) 672-9466, or e-mailing [info@aded.net](mailto:info@aded.net).

**ABOUT ADED:** The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists, or ADED, is a non-profit organization made up of members dedicated to promoting safe, independent community mobility for persons with disabilities and the aging. The group provides education, research, and support to professionals working in the fields of driver education, driver training, and transportation equipment modifications for those with disabilities. ADED is the only organization in North America to offer the Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) designation. The first CDRS exam was conducted in 1995. In 2013, ADED members numbered 737 worldwide, with 350 active CDRS professionals in the U.S. and Canada. ADED is registered as a 501 (c) (3) corporation. For more information, visit [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net).

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