



# Virginia Medical Review Process and NHTSA Study

Jacquelin Branche, R.N.  
DMV Medical Compliance Officer

Department of



Motor Vehicles

# Medical Review Assessments

- To ensure motorist's safety, drivers must meet certain requirements including vision, medical and mental standards
- Overall medical review requirements are based on the Code of Virginia, as well as, guidance from DMV's Medical Advisory Board

# Code of Virginia

- These standards are set by The Code of Virginia; specifically Va. Code Sections:
- § 46.2-204 – Medical Advisory Board
- § 46.2-322 – Review of Drivers
- § 54.1-2966.1 – Reporting in good faith

# Guiding Principles

- Allow customers to drive as long as they can do so safely
- Base driving on function, not age
- Evaluate each case on its own merits

# Reports of Impaired Drivers

DMV receives reports from:

- Law enforcement
- Physicians
- Courts
- DMV representatives
- Relatives
- Concerned citizens
- Self-disclosure (driver's license application)



# Reports of Impaired Drivers

Reports must include:

- Driver's identifying information
- Reason why reporting person is concerned
- Relationship to the driver
- Signature of person making the report
- Contact information for the reporting person
- Reports received by mail or fax



# Medical Review Process

Upon receipt of Medical Review request, DMV:

**Step 1:** Reviews report

**Step 2:** Follows up, if necessary

**Step 3:** Determines medical review requirements to be imposed

# Medical Review Process

Requirements may include:

- Medical report
- Vision report
- Knowledge test
- Road test
- Driver evaluation (outside of DMV)





# Medical Review Process

## Step 4: Notify driver of requirements

- Customer has 30 days to comply with initial medical/vision requirements
- An additional 15 days is allowed to complete DMV testing or driver evaluation



# Medical Review Process

**Step 5:** Evaluate all information

**Step 6:** Determine if additional information or tests are needed

**Step 7:** Review case with Medical Advisory Board, if necessary

# Medical Review Process

## Step 8: Determine next action(s)

- End medical review (no further requirements/action needed)
- Impose appropriate driver's license restriction(s)
- Require periodic medical/vision reports
- Send driver to a driver rehab specialist
- Suspend driving privilege

# 2007 NHTSA Study

## Purpose/Scope

To develop an intervention to increase law enforcement medical review referrals

- Reviewed the medical review process outcomes of:
  - 100 drivers referred by law enforcement
  - 105 drivers referred by 7 other sources

# Data Collection Methods

TransAnalytics selected 100 medical review cases referred by law enforcement (local and State Police)

- Sorted list chronologically by license number within the specified date range
- Selected every 11<sup>th</sup> driver from each list
- Yielded a stratified random sample



# Data Collection Methods

- Randomly collected data referred by 7 other sources (15 cases each), yielding sample of 105 drivers
  - Court incapacitated orders
  - General District Traffic Court
  - Customers themselves
  - DMV Representatives
  - Department for Blind & Vision Impaired
  - Family members & physicians

# Sample

## (Law Enforcement Referrals)

- Referred drivers ages: 17 – 94
  - 49% Male
  - 51% Female
- Highest percent of referred ages:
  - 70 to 79 (23% of the sample)
    - 6% of state population is 70-79
  - 80+ (24% of the sample)
    - 3% of state population is 80+
- 100 driver sample reduced to 72 drivers

# Sample

## (Law Enforcement Referrals)

- Of the 72-driver sample:
  - 21 drivers furnished unacceptable medical or vision reports
  - 7 drivers (age 65 to 89) were referred to driver rehab by their MDs (6 of the 7 drivers did not comply)



# Sample

## (Law Enforcement Referrals)

Also, of the 72 drivers:

- Another 4 furnished reports but were suspended due to failure to submit to other requirements (testing or rehab)
- Another 21 were suspended, medically unfit to operate a motor vehicle

# Sample

## (Law Enforcement Referrals)

- Of 47 remaining, 35 received restrictions or remained on periodic review
- 12 reviewed but resulted in no action (considered “non-quality” referrals)

# Study Outcomes

## Law Enforcement Referrals

**88% of LE referrals examined resulted in license actions**

- LE is an effective source of referrals
- LE is an active source of referrals (35%)
- Recommended that NHTSA continue to promote education & training programs to assist LE in identifying at-risk drivers and procedures for reporting

# Study Outcomes

## (Referrals from Other Sources)

- Only 8 drivers of total sample of 105 (8%) deemed fit to drive without restriction or continuing medical review
- 87% of drivers referred by family members had license suspended
- 73% of drivers referred by physicians had license suspended
- 80% of drivers referred by prosecutors and judges had license suspended

# Findings

Those who refer medically at-risk drivers to VA DMV provide a valuable public safety service

- Majority were quality referrals
- Non-quality referrals may serve as data for the future if those drivers are involved in crashes or are referred again
- Other-referred driver sample yielded a quality referral rate of 92% compared to 88% referred by law enforcement

# Outreach and Education

VADMV representatives provide outreach to:

- Adult children of medically at-risk drivers
- Physicians
- Prosecutors and judges
- Nursing homes/assisted living facilities
- Colleges and universities
- Schools
- Medical support groups

# Outreach and Education

Public awareness tools resulting from Study:

- Card - Red Flags of Medically At-Risk Drivers
- DVD - Identifying the Medically At-Risk Driver
- Additional initiative:  
Mature Driver Study

# Red Flags of Medically At-Risk Drivers

## Before the traffic stop:

### Has the driver committed any of the following traffic violations?

- Driving the wrong way on a one-way street or on the wrong side of a two-way street
- Failing to stop or yield to other traffic
- Making unsafe turns, especially a left turn
- Turning from the wrong lane
- Straddling dividing lines
- Driving off the road
- Other driving violations that are particularly unusual or difficult to explain

## Look for the following red flags after the driver has been pulled over:

### Physical clues

- Is the driver taking too long to pull over
- Examine the car: Are there numerous dents on the vehicle the driver cannot explain
- Does the driver have difficulty communicating
- Is the driver experiencing difficulty producing identification
- Slow reflexes, poor coordination, difficulty walking

### Psychological Clues

- Admission of being unaware of other vehicles, traffic, what they had done that resulted in violation
- Lack of recall (Not knowing the current time, week, month, or year)
- Inability to comprehend
- Unaware of traffic rules
- Driver is confused, lost, fatigued, disoriented, or drowsy

## Less obvious red flags may include medical conditions and medications that may impair driving:

### Partial list of medical conditions

- Memory loss
- Alzheimer's or dementia
- Neurological conditions, such as seizure or blackout disorders
- Sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea
- Visual impairment

### Partial list of medications

- Sedatives
- Pain relievers
- Antihistamines
- Antitussive (cough suppressants)
- Blood pressure drugs
- Sleeping pills
- Antiarrhythmics
- Stimulants

If you are concerned with the driver's ability to drive safely, ask yourself the following questions: (The following are red flags if you answer "No")

1. Does the driver know where he/she is coming from?
2. Does the driver know his/her destination?
3. Can you comprehend what the driver is saying?
4. Does the driver recall the time of day, day of the week, month, and year?

## Look for the following:

1. Is the driver wearing an identification bracelet or necklace indicating dementia?
2. Is the driver's clothing non-matching, inappropriate, or incomplete?
3. Is the driver far from their residence and unaware of it?

If you are concerned about the driver's ability to drive, submit a Medical Review Request form to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to conduct a medical review of the licensed driver. Reports must be submitted in writing or using the Medical Review Request (MED 3), which can be found at:

1. Go to [www.dmvnow.com](http://www.dmvnow.com)
2. Select "Medical Information"
3. Select "Medical Forms"
4. Select MED 3 Form

## The following must be included with the report:

1. Information that will help DMV identify the impaired driver (name, address, date of birth, etc.).
2. Name, address, and phone number of the person reporting the driver.
3. Specific information about your concerns and why the driver should be reviewed.

## DMV contact information:

DMV Medical Review Services  
Post Office Box 27412  
Richmond, Virginia 23269-0001  
Phone: (804) 367-6203  
Fax: (804) 367-1604

[http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/citizen/medical/spec\\_restrict.asp](http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/citizen/medical/spec_restrict.asp)



# Law Enforcement Training on Referrals

- NHTSA ongoing project underway for LE training, including training on referrals
- Identifying the “At-Risk Driver” video
  - <http://www.smartsafeandsober.org/resources/videos.php>

# Reference

U. S. DOT/NHTSA (2011). *Medical review process and license disposition of drivers referred by law enforcement and other sources in Virginia. DOT HS 811 484.*