

## Medical Evaluation Program Summary and Questions

The Medical Evaluation Program is a vital part of the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles. It is responsible for gathering and evaluating the medical information of licensed drivers or applicants for driver licenses who are currently suffering from qualified disabilities that could have an impact on highway safety.

The Medical Evaluation Program's mission is to provide scientific and medical services to evaluate drivers who may suffer from conditions that adversely affect their ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. The Program's medical staff reviews medical records and statements from attending physicians in conjunction with driving records. Using their knowledge and experience in medicine and public health, they analyze this information and provide a recommendation as to what, if any, restrictions should be placed on a driver license. Their goal is to protect highway safety without causing unnecessary hardship on the driver.

Drivers thought to be medically impaired are brought to the attention of the DMV's Medical Evaluation Program. Anyone can request that a driver be evaluated, as long as the request is in writing and signed. Anonymous requests are not accepted. Reports of medical impairment are most often received as follows:

- The driver license examiners are the first line of discovery. When a customer comes to renew his license, the examiner asks a series of health-related questions. If the examiner has a concern about the driver, the examiner will conduct a road test and give the customer a medical report form to be completed by his physician. After completion, the form is returned to the Medical Evaluation Program.
- Family members may call in to ask for a re-examination of their parents, aunts, uncles, etc. DMV requires this request to be in writing and signed by the family member.
- Physicians may send information to DMV about patients that they feel may be at risk to themselves or others.
- DMV reviews all accident reports to determine whether a health problem could have contributed to the accident. If a health problem is suspected, the Medical Evaluation Program will send a letter and medical form to the driver.
- Law enforcement officers may send reports of drivers who they have observed with poor driving habits that could be related to a health problem (vision, slow reaction time, reports of blackouts, falling asleep).
- The court system may send involuntary commitments and incompetency orders to be entered into a driving record.

There are many medical conditions that could affect one's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. The following list gives some examples:

- Seizures
- Cardiovascular disorder
- Diabetes
- Impairment of limbs, back or neck (Cerebral Palsy, stroke, injury, etc.)
- Cognitive impairment (stroke, head injury, dementia, etc.)
- Vision impairment
- Psychiatric disorder

- Neurologic disorder (Parkinson's, dementia, alcoholic dementia, various other neuro-degenerative disorders)
- Substance abuse disorders

This does not mean that anyone with any of the above medical conditions should not drive. However, if these conditions are not properly controlled or if they have progressed to a stage where it would not be safe to operate a motor vehicle, the driver license most likely would be medically cancelled. If the medical condition is controlled and the medical advisors have documentation from the attending physician that this person is a safe driver, the recommendation may be for continued driving with or without restrictions. The restrictions could be any one or several of the following:

- Corrective lenses
- Daylight driving only
- 45 MPH/No interstate driving
- To/From work, doctor, church, (anywhere within a safe distance of home)
- Within a radius of home
- With a licensed driver
- Other restrictions that safely allow a person to continue driving

The purpose for the Medical Evaluation Program is to keep safe drivers driving and to get unsafe drivers off the roads.

**Questions:**

**1. Who makes the recommendation whether someone drives or not?**

The Medical Evaluation Program has physicians on staff and on contract who analyze each situation.

**2. How long does it take to obtain a review by the Medical Evaluation Program?**

Time can vary depending on how quickly the customer returns information to the Division, whether it is completed properly, or whether additional information is needed.

**3. Once a customer is placed in the medical program, can he ever get out?**

Yes. If the condition for which you were placed in the program remains stable and you are in compliance with medication, you can be considered a safe risk and removed from the program.

**4. How often must someone be evaluated?**

This depends on the medical problem and whether it is progressive. Evaluations can be as short as once every six months or as long as once every four years.