



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE

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ISSUE 4 February 2007

A Driving Force: How Can You Get Behind The Wheel If You Have a Disability



Most people who are at least 16 years old would like to be able to drive. If you have a disability, you may wonder what you can do to learn to drive, get a license and get a car, van or truck. Here are some answers to your questions.

Applying for a Driver's License If You Have a Disability

Some people with disabilities can get a driver's license the same way anybody else does. They take drivers education classes, take the written and driving tests, and get their licenses.

People with some disabilities, though, must tell the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) about their disability when they apply for a license. A Medical Board reviews each of these people to decide if they can get a license.

The disabilities you have to report to MVA include:

- Cerebral palsy
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy - (must not have a seizure for at least 3 months to get a license)
- Heart condition
- Loss of use of an arm or leg, or loss of an arm or leg
- Bipolar disorder
- Mental retardation – MVA may approve a license if mental retardation is mild, but not if it is moderate, severe or profound. *The terms "mental retardation" and "mild, moderate, severe and profound" are words that people with disabilities typically dislike. They prefer "intellectual disability" or "developmental disability." These outdated terms are used here because that is still what MVA uses.*
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Dementia
- Schizophrenia
- Severe anxiety disorders
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury
- Other illnesses that cause blackouts

(continued)





YEA UPDATE

GRANTS FOR MARYLAND TEENS & YOUNG ADULTS

Promoting Involvement of Individuals with Disabilities in School and Community Activities

The Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA) is offering grants of up to \$500 per project to teens or young adults, ages 14 – 25. The focus of the grants will be to help schools and communities do a better job of including and involving youth and young adults with developmental disabilities.

In order to apply for a grant, a team or committee must be formed that includes at least one teen or young adult with a disability, one teen or young adult who does not have a disability, and one adult support person.

Application Deadline: Monday March 26, 2007

Inclusion Grant Opportunity for Community Groups, Organizations & Leadership Programs

To promote leadership development for youth & young adults with disabilities.

The Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA) will award mini-grants, of up to \$5,000, to groups, organizations, and leadership programs that serve youth and/or young adults to include youth and young people with developmental disabilities in their programs.

Submit RPF by: Monday, March 26, 2007

To obtain more information: Download complete details from www.md-council.org or www.mdyea.org and click on Grant Opportunities or contact Ann Marie Lane at AnnMarieL@md-council.org or call 410-937-4957.

A Driving Force: How Can I Get Behind

Driving Evaluations and Training If you need some extra help learning to drive because of your disability there are agencies that can assist you. Some agencies will help figure out if you have the ability to drive, and some will also teach you to drive. Some agencies can help if you have a physical disability, and some can help if you have a learning problem. There is a list of **Maryland Driver Rehabilitation Programs** on the back page. These programs provide services such as, clinical evaluations and behind-the-wheel driver evaluations and training. Use the following list of questions when you call each program. This information will help you decide which agency can best assist you.

Do you have modified vehicles for evaluation and training?

Do you have vans and cars?

Do you serve people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities?

What is the fee for the clinical evaluation?

What is the fee for the behind-the-wheel driver evaluation?

Do you provide driving lessons, and what is the fee?

If you need to drive to be able to work and you cannot afford to pay for a driving evaluation or training, you might get help from the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**. DORS is a state agency that helps people get services they need to work. DORS provides driving evaluations and training. You can find the DORS office nearest you at www.dors.state.md.us (click on "DORS Locations"). Contact that office to apply for services.

Getting a Car, Van or Truck After you get your license, there is still one big thing missing: how can you get a car, van or truck to drive? The hard part is usually getting the money to buy one. Most people do not have thousands of dollars lying around.

Loans The most common way to buy a car, van or truck is to get a loan. With a loan, you borrow money from a "lender" (usually a bank or credit union) and then pay some of it back each month for a few years. You pay back the amount you borrowed plus a little extra called "interest." The interest is the lender's way of making money on the loan.

Not everyone can get a loan. Lenders usually want to be sure you have a steady job so you earn enough to pay back the loan. They also want to be sure you have good "credit" – that means you have paid back other loans or credit cards on time. If you have not had other loans or credit cards, or if you have not made your payments on time, lenders do not often want to give you a loan.

There is a program that may be able to help you get a loan even if you do not have good credit. It is called the **Assistive Technology Loan Program. The Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP)** runs the program. The program helps people get loans if they have enough money to repay them, even if their credit is not great. The program's loans also do not make you pay as much interest as most other loans. The program makes loans for cars, vans or trucks if you have a job and need the vehicle to get to work. You can also get a loan if the vehicle is modified to help a person with a physical disability use it, even if you do not need it for work. The Assistive Technology Loan Program does not approve loans for everyone who applies, but it gives loans to many people who would be turned down by other lenders.

To ask questions or apply for a loan, you can call **(1-800-832-4827)** or e-mail loans@mdtap.org.

The Wheel If I Have a Disability?

Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS) What if you want to get a loan to buy a car, but you do not make enough money to afford the loan payments? If you get checks from Social Security, you might be able to use a Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS) to get more money so you can get a loan. A PASS lets you pick a work goal, like getting a new job, working more hours, or getting a promotion. The PASS lets you list things you need to pay for to reach your goal. That might include a car, van or truck.

The PASS helps you pay for things by giving you more money from Social Security than you would get without the PASS. For example, people who get SSI (Supplemental Security Income) checks usually have their checks reduced when they work. A PASS can let you keep more SSI while you work. Other people who get a different check called SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) might not usually be able to get SSI checks at all, because they receive too much SSDI. But if they use a PASS, they might get two checks from Social Security – SSDI and SSI.

The extra SSI money can help you afford loan payments, and that can help you get approved for a loan.

For help with a PASS, you can contact: If you live in Baltimore City or Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Howard, Carroll or Harford County: **Benefits Resource Center** at (1-888-560-2221). If you live in any other county in Maryland: **Benefits InfoSource** at (1-888-838-1776).

Car Recycling We all know about recycling bottles, cans and newspapers. Two programs in Maryland recycle cars. They fix up old cars and sell them very cheap to people with low incomes who need cars to get to work. **Vehicles for Change (1-800-835-3821)** is a program that can help you get a car if you live in Baltimore City or Anne Arundel, Carroll or Montgomery County. **Cars for Careers (410-418-5310)** can help if you live in Howard County. It costs less than \$1,000 to get a car from these programs, and you usually pay less than \$90 per month for about a year. They have waiting lists, so it can take a while to get a car.

Modifications People with some physical disabilities often need changes, or “modifications,” to a car, van or truck to be able to use it. These modifications might include a wheelchair lift, special seat belts for a wheelchair, hand controls (so you can drive without needing your feet for the brake or gas pedals), or other items. Who can help you get modifications?

One good place is the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**. Sometimes they pay for modifications to cars, vans or trucks if you need them for a job. DORS can give you an evaluation to find out what modifications you need to drive, and can pay for most or all the cost of the modifications. But DORS will not pay for the car, van or truck itself – you need to pay for that yourself, maybe with a loan. It can take a long time to get modifications from DORS, but if they cost a lot, it can be worth the wait.

To ask questions you can call (1-888-200-7117).

WRITTEN BY: Michael Dalto, Maryland Technology Assistance Program, Maryland Department of Disabilities

The **Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA)** is a project of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council which promotes independence and leadership skills in youth¹ and young adults with disabilities.

The **YEA** seeks to engage youth and emerging leaders with disabilities in activities that will enable them to define a vision for themselves and their communities. The result will be a successful transition and a higher quality of life for each individual.



Any youth or young adult interested in participating in YEA Project activities, please contact:

**Ann Marie Lane,
YEA Project Director
410-937-4957**

AnnMarieL@md-council.org

(1) Refers to youth at least 14 years of age

List of Maryland Driver Rehabilitation Programs

List of Maryland Rehab Facilities Providing Clinical Evaluations & Behind-the-Wheel Evaluations & Training

Doctors Community Hospital
8118 Good Luck Road
Lanham, Maryland 20706-3596
Dana Nixon, OTR/L, DRS
240-965-8438 (phone)
www.dchweb.org

Driving Rehabilitation of Frederick

Frederick, Maryland 21702
Tim Jones, OTR/L, CDRS
(301) 682-9110 (phone/fax)
ottjones1@yahoo.com

Good Samaritan Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland 21239
Karen Amoyal, COTA
(410) 532-4601 (phone)
karen.amoyal@medstar.net
(MVA licensed and certified)

Johns Hopkins at Green Spring Station Driving Program
Lutherville, Maryland 21093
Annette Lavezza, OTR/L, CDRS
(410) 583-2643 (phone)
alavezz@jhmi.edu
(MVA licensed)

National Rehabilitation Hospital
Washington, DC 20010
Glen Digman, OTR/L, CDRS
(202) 877-1705 (phone)
(MVA licensed and certified)

Sinai Rehabilitation Center
Baltimore, Maryland 21215
Kim High, OTR/L
(410) 601-9843
(Driving phone line)
(410) 601-5830 (Scheduling)
kgeier@lifebridgehealth.org

Veterans Affairs BRECC
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
Sheila Jackson, RKT, CDRS
(410) 605-7000, x 5804 (phone)
sheila.jackson@med.va.gov
(open to VA clients ONLY)

Washington County Hospital @ Robinwood Total Rehab Care
Hagerstown, Maryland 21742
Tim Burkhart, OTR/L
(301) 714-4025 (phone)
tburkhart@wchsys.org
(not licensed or certified but behind-the-wheel services are provided by Allegany Driving School with the driver rehabilitation specialist present.)

Workforce and Technology Center
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
For scheduling: Dan Dubay
(410) 554-9208 (phone)
(MVA licensed and certified)

List of Maryland Rehab Facilities Providing Clinical Assessments Only

Kernan Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland 21207
Lori Patria, OTR/L
(410) 448-6275 (phone)
lpatria@kernan.umm.edu

St. Agnes Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland 21227
Hedy Tanenholtz, OTR/L
(410) 368-2800, Option 1
htanenho@stagnes.org

Suburban Hospital
Bethesda, Maryland 20814
Theresa Robbins, OTR/L
(301) 896-3169 (phone)
trobbins@suburbanhospital.org

Federal Grant No. 90DN0193 A Project of National Significance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Washington, DC

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