



Cars and Driving



Regaining the ability to drive can have an enormous impact on your sense of independence and quality of life. With the wide range of adaptive driving equipment and vehicle modifications available today, even people with limited hand and arm function can relearn how to drive.

Q: Will I be able to drive again?

A Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) can evaluate if or when it is appropriate for you to drive again as well as the specific modifications and driving equipment to accommodate your needs. The evaluation generally consists of both a clinical and behind-the-wheel assessment. It will assess your vision, muscle strength, flexibility, range of motion, hand-eye coordination, reaction time, decision making,

and your ability to drive with adaptive equipment. The evaluator may take medications into account and you may need a prescription for the evaluation. To find a local qualified CDRS, call a local rehabilitation center or contact the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (see below).

Q: What is the process to get a modified driver's license?

Each state has different requirements for drivers who have disabilities. In most cases, you will need to take a written test to attain a permit and then a road test using your modified vehicle to attain a license. Be sure to check with the Department of Motor Vehicles in your state to find out how to register your car, obtain your license and take care of any other specific requirements. You may receive a restricted license based on the use of adaptive devices. You may also need to take a driver's education course.

Steps to Driving

1. Talk to your physician about your desire to drive. You may need a prescription.
2. Contact a Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist to evaluate your abilities and needs.
3. Work with a local qualified car dealer to understand modification options and costs.
4. Visit your state Department of Motor Vehicles to review the licensing process.
5. Investigate the range of vehicle financing options.

Q: What types of modifications will I need?

Depending on your needs, a vehicle can be equipped with hand controls for braking and accelerating, power assist devices for easy steering, touch ignition pads and gear shifts, adjustable driver's seats, automatic door openers, and joysticks for people with extremely limited hand function. You will need to decide if you are going to drive from your wheelchair or transfer from it to the car seat. If you are driving from your wheelchair you will need a tie down system, such as EZ Lock. Make sure you get your permanent wheelchair before you buy an adapted vehicle as not all wheelchairs fit in every vehicle.

Q: Should I buy a new vehicle or modify my existing car?

Selecting a vehicle for modification requires collaboration with the CDSR and a qualified vehicle modification dealer. Some things to consider include:

- Will you be a driver or passenger? If you do not drive, what passenger accommodation space do you need?
- Will you be driving from a wheelchair and need a ramp or lift, or can you transfer to a car seat?
- Can the vehicle accommodate hand controls, a required lift or ramp and other needed equipment? Is there enough headroom? Can you sit in your wheelchair without your knees hitting the dashboard?
- What are the parking and garage space sizes and needs to load and unload a wheelchair or a mobility device?
- What devices and modifications may be covered by a third party?

There are many other considerations as well. Your age as well as prior wear and tear on your shoulders may mean you can't transfer and pull the chair in behind you to break the chair apart. Be sure to weigh all your costs, needs and options before making your decision.

Q: Where should I modify or buy my vehicle?

There are several online resources that can help you find a qualified dealer in your area (see below). It is best to purchase your accessible equipment face-to-face (rather than online) to guarantee a good fit, service and safety. Be sure to ask questions and check credentials and references. This should be a collaborative process between you, the dealer and your evaluator. A prescription may be required. You should also inquire about equipment training, service and warranty. Abilities Expos (<https://www.abilities.com/expos/>) are held in several cities every year and offer a venue to see many different adapted car and van models and equipment.

Q: How can I pay for a modified vehicle?

There is a wide range of public and private financing options available to help make your vehicle more affordable. Check with your vehicle dealer, local bank or lender for financing options. It is not uncommon that bank loans will only cover the adaptive vehicle and not the other adaptive equipment needed to make your vehicle fully adapted so be sure to ask if ancillary equipment will also be covered by the loan if going through a bank. Your state's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Department of Veteran Affairs may be able to help depending on your eligibility. Some auto manufactures provide financial assistance through rebates or reimbursements. Other options include grant programs through local and national non-profits and special financing assistance programs from organizations like Adaptive Driving Alliance (see below). Vehicle trade-ins and state sales and/or income tax savings may also help to reduce your costs. Be sure to check for any modifications covered by your insurance or workers' compensation and get a written statement of covered qualifying expenses.

Sources: Adaptive Driving Alliance, Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

Need to talk to someone?

Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions.

Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 7 am-8 pm EST.

Or schedule a call or ask a question online at

<https://www.ChristopherReeve.org/Ask>.

Resources for Cars and Driving

Adaptive Driving Alliance

<https://www.adamobility.com/>

Phone: 330-928-7401

A nationwide group of vehicle modification dealers. Members modify and sell adaptive automotive equipment including car hand controls and other driving aids, wheelchair vans, wheelchair lifts, and scooter lifts.

AM General

<https://www.amgeneral.com/what-we-do/platforms-automotive-systems/vehicle-lineup/mobility-ventures-mv-1/>

105 North Niles Ave.

South Bend, IN 46617

Phone: 574-237-6222

Email: info@mv-1.us

Mobility Ventures makes vehicles specifically for people with disabilities and those who help service them. Its MV-1 is the only vehicle designed from the ground up for wheelchair accessibility. The MV-1 is not currently in production. Please see AM General with questions about parts and service.

American Occupational Therapist Association (AOTA): Find A Driving Specialist

https://myaota.aota.org/driver_search/index.aspx

AOTA offers a nationwide database of driving programs and specialists can help you to locate services near you.

Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED)

<https://www.aded.net/>

Phone: 866-672-9466

Email: info@aded.net

ADED supports professionals working in the field of driver education/training and transportation equipment modifications for persons with disabilities. The site includes a directory that allows people to search for driver rehabilitation specialists and mobility equipment dealers by location.

Craig Hospital: Am I Ready for a Van?

<https://craighospital.org/resources/estoy-listo-para-una-camioneta>

Disabled Dealer Magazine

<http://www.disableddealer.com/>

Disabled Dealer runs classified ads for adaptive equipment, including vehicle access items such as lifts and hand controls. The site also lists mobility equipment dealers by geographic area.

KEMPF

<https://www.kempf-usa.com/>

1040 Indian Wells #418

Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Phone: 408-773-0219, 888-453-6738 (Toll-free)

Email: info@kempf-usa.com

KEMPF manufactures adaptive driving products that can be installed in cars with automatic transmission.

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center: Driving After Spinal Cord Injury

<https://msktc.org/sci/factsheets/driving>

National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration: Adapted Vehicles

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/vehicle-safety/adapted-vehicles>

National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA)

<https://nmeda.org/>

Phone: 813-264-2697

NMEDA is a trade association of mobility equipment dealers, manufacturers, driver rehabilitation specialists and other professionals. All members work together to improve transportation options for people with disabilities. The organization sets annual guidelines for equipment installation and modifications and has a Quality Assurance Program (QAP) developed to promote quality, safety, and reliability within the industry. The site has a *dealer locator* for people to find QAP certified dealers of wheelchair accessible vehicles and adaptive equipment. NMEDA organizes an annual contest to give away a few adaptive vans to people with disabilities. Please contact them for the details. Please see their **Consumer Guide to Purchasing Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Equipment** at https://nmeda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023_NMEDA_ConsumerBuyingGuide_Online.pdf.

New Mobility: Fuelservice App Helps Disabled Drivers Find Refueling Assistance Oct. 3 2023

https://newmobility.com/fuelservice-app-helps-disabled-drivers-find-refueling-assistance/?mc_cid=5eaf3ea856&mc_eid=0de5f6a757

Northwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury System: On the Road Again—Driving After Spinal Cord Injury

<https://sci.washington.edu/info/forums/reports/driving.asp>

Video can be viewed for free

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Driver Rehabilitation Fact Sheet

<https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/factsheet/Driver-Training-FactSheet.pdf>

The Veterans Administration provides driver rehabilitation to disabled veterans and active duty members at 48 facilities nationwide.

Rental/Sale Companies:**Accessible Vans of American (AVA)**

<https://www.wheelchairgetaways.com/>

Phone: 866-224-1750

AVA is a member owned organization made up of independent mobility dealers across the United States who rent, sell and service wheelchair accessible vehicles. The organization focuses primarily on the rental of wheelchair accessible vehicles through a nationwide network of dealers. Part of Wheelchair Getaways.

BraunAbility

<https://www.braunability.com/us/en.html>

Toll-free: 800-488-0359

Braun manufactures a full line of mobility products, including wheelchair vans and wheelchair lift systems.

MobilityWorks

<https://www.mobilityworks.com/>

Phone: 877-275-4907 (sales)

Phone: 877-275-4915 (rentals)

Offers the sale or rental of accessible vans, as well as adaptive driving aids, adaptive seating, lifts/ramps, and vehicle servicing.

Rollx Vans

<https://www.rollxvans.com/>

6591 Highway 13 West

Savage, MN 55378

Phone: 952-890-7851, 800-956-6668 (Toll-free)

E-mail: questions@rollxvans.com

Rollx Vans sells new and used mini and full-size wheelchair vans direct to consumers.

VMI Vans

<https://www.vantagemobility.com/>

5202 S. 28th Place

Phoenix, AZ 85040

Phone: 855-864-8267

Email: info@vantagemobility.com

Vantage Mobility International (VMI) sells wheelchair accessible vans and offers rebates to veterans with disabilities.

Wheelchair Getaways

<https://www.wheelchairgetaways.com/>

Phone 888-432-6414 (Toll-free)

Wheelchair Getaways offers daily, weekly, monthly and long-term wheelchair and scooter accessible van rentals in all 50 states and some parts of Canada. Delivery is available in some areas. As of January 1st 2019, Wheelchair Getaways joined the Accessible Vans of America LLC. All Wheelchair Getaways Wheelchair Van Rental locations will continue to provide the same vehicles and customer service.

Wheelers Accessible Van Rentals

<https://wheelersvanrentals.com/>

Phone 800-456-1371

Wheelers offers wheelchair and scooter accessible transportation by the day, week, month and longer. Rental facilities are located in more than fifteen states nationwide.

Funding

Funding for the purchase or modification of an automobile is difficult to obtain. Here are some resources for obtaining financial assistance.

Harmar Mobility: Mobility Reimbursement Program

<https://www.harmar.com/financial-assistance/>

This site has information on mobility programs from Chrysler, Ford, GM, Saturn, Toyota, Lexus, Volkswagen, Honda, Hyundai and Acura that provide rebates to disabled drivers for the installation of adaptive equipment in new vehicles.

Hyundai Mobility Program

<https://www.hyundaiusa.com/us/en/special-programs/mobility>

Offers \$1,000 toward the cost of adaptive equipment.

MobilityWorks brochure: 7 Ways to Fund Your Accessible Vehicle

<https://www.mobilityworks.com/financing/grant-assistance/>

Mobility Van Sales

<https://www.mobilityvansales.com/>

An online market place for buyers and sellers of new or used wheelchair vans.

The Mobility Resource: Financing a Handicap Accessible Vehicle

<https://www.themobilityresource.com/financing-handicap-accessible-vehicles/>

111 Stow Ave., Suite 103

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221

Phone: 866-771-7770

Email: news@themobilityresource.com

The Mobility Resource is the largest online inventory of accessible vehicles and adaptive equipment. This includes a complete line of scooter and wheelchair lifts, and adaptive driving equipment.

A final tip: Your home state's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services may provide assistance with vehicle adaptation when the person with the disability is trying to maintain employment, or continue their education. Please see the Reeve Foundation's fact sheet on Vocational Rehabilitation for contact information. <https://www.ChristopherReeve.org/factsheets>.

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