

When Dad Should No Longer Drive

"Can I have your car keys please?"

The Beach Boys were not thinking of their aging parents when they wrote "and she'll have fun, fun, fun til her daddy took the T-Bird away". The sad reality is there will come a time each of us should not drive if we live long enough. You know when that time comes for your parents when you will no longer ride in the car when they are driving.

We know how hard it will be to lose the independence that driving affords us in the United States. We do not have many transportation options other than automobiles.

So what is the best way to take the keys away from dad?

The first step is to have a conversation with dad. You need to be tactful and considerate in your approach. Think about these options before you have the conversation:

- Arrange for someone to drive dad as needed or arrange for items to be delivered (food/prescriptions).
- Reduce the need to drive – assisted living/independent community options.
- Be firm and proactive about not driving.

When this communication does not work:

- Disable the car
- Control access to keys
- Have a friendly police officer speak with dad
- Have dad's doctor speak with him

When this does not work, consider having a Driving Assessment

The dad's doctor can write a doctor's order to have a driving assessment done. This is frequently a service offered through the occupational/rehabilitation departments of major hospitals. Supplemental insurance offered through a former employer (such as GE or IH) will often pay for the occupational therapy portion of the test when they test, vision, memory, etc. The person then has to pay for the drivers test part of the test at an approximate cost of \$180.00. The results of the assessments are forwarded back to the referring physician. If the person did not pass the assessment, it is incumbent on the physician to take further steps to revoke the license, i.e., writing a letter to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to request the license be legally removed.

Parkview Hospital and Lutheran Hospital each offer a driving rehabilitation program for drivers in Northeast Indiana. Click on information about Parkview programs and this link for information about Lutheran programs. You can call Lutheran Hospital at (260) 435-6122 or Parkview Hospital at (260) 460-3202 for more information about these programs. You can [click on this link](#) for information about both programs. You can also call the Alzheimer's Association at (800) 272-3900

When all else fails, contact the Indiana BMV. This procedure is:

Someone in the family (or Police Dept. or physician) can write a letter to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles at the address below requesting the person's license be revoked and stating the reason why. The letter should include the name of the person, the license registration number, some examples of the person's unsafe driving because of medical reasons and why you feel it is unsafe for the person to continue operating a car. The letter must be signed; however, it will remain confidential and the author will not be revealed to the person with dementia. The address is:

Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles
State Office Building
Room 405-N Driver Services
100 N. Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 233-0901 – phone

It is recommended that this letter be sent by registered mail, return receipt requested.

- BMV will send a letter to the person with dementia, stating that their ability to drive has been questioned, but it will not say by whom. There will also be medical forms enclosed that the person must take to their physician to be completed within 30 days and returned to the BMV.
- If the papers are not completed within 30 days, the license will automatically be revoked for failure to submit an acceptable medical report. If the forms are completed on time, a doctor on the BMV Medical Advisory Board will be assigned to review the case and make the final decision whether to suspend the license or not. The individual will then be notified in writing that their license has been revoked.

Please visit www.thehartford.com/alzheimers for an excellent brochure about this topic.

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