**Functional Driving Evaluation (FDE) – Q&A for Rehabilitation Professionals**

1. **How do I know if my client is appropriate for an FDE referral?**

   Driving is a complex task that requires the integration of core skills and the ability to adjust to a constantly changing driving environment. Drivers who have a medical condition that impacts their physical, visual, cognitive, perceptual or emotional function can be evaluated to determine medical fitness to drive, functional driving skills, driver rehabilitation potential, as well as recommendations for the future including cessation of driving. Many drivers can successfully compensate for deficits through vehicle modifications, training or strategies while others simply require reassurance and education that they have functional driving skills. Some stakeholders require definitive answers about fitness to drive to validate the need for transportation alternatives or modifications. Ultimately, the FDE is a highly effective way to comprehensively assess functional driving skills in one day, and it can occur at any point on the rehabilitation continuum. This is a specialized area of practice and driving limitations should be addressed comprehensively and in a timely manner for the safety of clients and other road users.

2. **What can my client expect when they come for this evaluation?**

   At Community Therapists (CTI), we assess people who have a medical condition with physical, cognitive, visual, and/or psychosocial deficits that may impact driving. This includes diagnoses such as: traumatic brain injury/concussion, anxiety/PTSD, paraplegia, stroke, and amputations, as well as persistent pain and fatigue-related conditions.

   The evaluation is divided into a Clinic-Based evaluation that is generally completed over a 2-hour session in the morning, followed by an On-Road evaluation in the afternoon. The In-Clinic portion includes a review of medical information, an interview, testing of core physical skills required for driving, a vision screen, and a battery of cognitive tests. The occupational therapist (OT) scores and interprets this information to determine if the client has sufficient core skills to proceed to the On-Road evaluation. If they do not meet the requirements for the On-Road evaluation, the client is informed of their results, information is provided regarding the next steps and the evaluation is discontinued at that point. Education on alternate modes of transportation is provided as appropriate.

   For those clients who are eligible for the On-Road evaluation, a lunch break is provided after the In-Clinic evaluation is completed. The On-Road evaluation is the gold standard for determining fitness to drive. It is conducted over 1.5 hours, with a break in the middle to provide feedback. We use a dual-controlled car, with the client in the driver’s seat, a trained driving instructor in the passenger seat, and the OT in the back seat.
Upon completion of the evaluation, the OT writes a comprehensive report that includes the clinical results of the In-Clinic and On-Road evaluations and provides an overall opinion regarding Functional Driving Skills related to their medical condition. The occupational therapist will review the results of the Functional Driving Evaluation with the client and the client should expect to receive the report within 2 weeks.

3. **Who gets a copy of the Functional Driving Evaluation report?**

   As per the consent form that is signed by the client prior to the evaluation, the report is sent to the fee payer, any medical/rehabilitation professionals as indicated by the client, and the client themselves. The report is also submitted to the Driver Medical Fitness Program – RoadSafetyBC, who determines the licensing status regarding medical fitness to drive. Please see the last page for more information regarding RoadSafetyBC.

4. **Will my client lose their license?**

   There are three general outcomes from the Functional Driving Evaluation:
   
   A. If the client demonstrated functional driving skills and has a valid license, they are advised they may drive. If they do not have a valid driver’s license they are advised not to drive until they receive further instruction from RoadSafetyBC.
   
   B. If the client does not demonstrate functional driving skills and is not a candidate for On-Road rehabilitation, then the client is advised not to drive and the role of RoadSafetyBC as the provincial authority regarding licensing for medically unfit drivers is reviewed. These clients will typically receive a letter from RoadSafetyBC regarding cancellation of their license based on the results of the Functional Driving Evaluation.
   
   C. The third outcome is that the client does not demonstrate functional driving skills, but is a candidate for a Driver Rehabilitation Program. See Question 8 for more details.

5. **What if my client just needs a spinner knob? Do they still need to go through the FDE process?**

   A spinner knob is classified as a vehicle modification. For clients who require adapted equipment to drive for medical reasons, the client needs to be assessed to determine what the most appropriate equipment is to meet their driving needs. There are a variety of vehicle modifications available, even for spinner knobs, and our OTs are trained to determine what type of equipment best meets your client’s needs. All clients are required to complete the full evaluation, as we need to screen for core skills required to drive. There can be secondary issues identified during the evaluation that may need to be addressed for safe driving. Our goal is to maximize success for clients in relation to driving.

   In addition, using vehicle modifications changes how people drive. Clients need time to habituate use of vehicle modifications so they can respond in complex driving scenarios while using this equipment. This includes smooth steering, ability to make quick sharp turns in hazard avoidance maneuvers, and maintaining lane position at high speeds on highways. Part of our evaluation determines how much time your client needs to learn to use the vehicle modifications consistently and effectively.
RoadSafetyBC may require an ICBC re-examination road test with this equipment in place. The purchase of any recommended equipment occurs once the client has demonstrated functional driving skills with the vehicle modifications in place. This generally occurs after any driver rehabilitation is completed and/or the client has successfully passed the ICBC Road Test. Therefore, our job is to determine what equipment your client needs, how we can help them learn to use that equipment, and how to prepare for the ICBC Road Test. We work with vendors to obtain quotes for equipment, and to ensure modifications are completed as per our recommendations. All the vendors we use in BC are NMEDA-certified, which means they will not install modifications in a vehicle if a client has not been evaluated on their ability to properly use this piece of equipment.

6. My client has an anxiety condition and I don’t think they have the tolerance for a full 1.5-hour on-road evaluation. How do you accommodate this?

If the client is not able to complete the On-Road portion on the evaluation date, we will modify as needed on that day. As many clients do well during the evaluation and are found to have functional driving skills, a full FDE will be booked. For clients who need a gradual re-entry to driving, our evaluation helps determine where the most appropriate place is to start. We can incorporate strategies to manage their emotional response to driving, while the client is supported by a certified driving instructor in a dual-controlled car. If the FDE determines that they are a candidate for Driver Rehabilitation, then we will develop a plan to gradually assist your client back to driving, in collaboration with their counselor or psychologist if applicable.

7. My client is a new driver and doesn’t have much experience. How will that impact the evaluation? Should my client take driving lessons to prepare for the evaluation?

We see many young drivers who need compensatory strategies and/or vehicle modifications to learn to drive and we help them through that process, while recognizing that they often require additional time to learn basic driving skills. For clients who have never driven, the evaluation results will indicate whether or not they have the potential to learn to drive at a beginner level. Our job is to separate out what on-road errors are due to the medical condition and what errors are due to lack of driver knowledge. Taking lessons prior to the evaluation is not advised due to safety reasons; additionally, the objective of the evaluation is to determine the client’s current level of functioning related to their medical condition so that the lessons (if needed) can be catered specifically to address these areas of deficit.

8. What is a Driver Rehabilitation Program?

A Driver Rehabilitation Program can include both off-road remediation and on-road driver rehab training. This rehabilitation program is individualized based on the client’s deficit areas and targeted driving skills as identified in the Functional Driving Evaluation.

Off-road remediation targets skill deficit areas within the safe environment of a clinic, client’s home or community (i.e. visual scanning, attention, etc.). The goal is to transition to an on-road driver rehab program when clinically appropriate to do so.
On-road driver training includes driving lessons in an adapted vehicle facilitated by a trained driving instructor, under the supervision of the OT. In addition to general driving skills, specific education on strategies to help your client compensate for their identified areas of deficit is provided. These recommendations and strategies will be detailed in the FDE report. The OT develops and monitors this program, and will provide your client with a Driver Rehab Lesson Plan. This program is customized to meet the client’s needs and therefore there is no set number of lessons or costs that can be provided prior to having the client complete the FDE. A Driver Rehabilitation report will be completed upon completion of the program indicating the outcome of the program.

9. What does the referral process look like?

To make a referral, please contact our Service Coordinator at 604-681-9293 ext. 210 or email services@communitytherapists.com. Once funding has been established and basic client information obtained, we send consent and authorizations forms to the client, along with a Driver Readiness Questionnaire for the client’s family physician to complete. When these forms are sent back to us, then we provide a date for the evaluation. Generally, we do not carry a waitlist and referrals are processed as they are received. There is often an urgency to have the evaluation completed quickly. You can help this process by following up with the client to ensure they complete and send back the consent forms in a timely manner.

10. When is the best time to refer my client?

This varies based on the client’s skill deficits and abilities. For clients with neurological conditions, the client’s awareness of skills and deficits is a critical factor. Clients with orthopedic injuries who may benefit from vehicle modifications may need to delay the evaluation until after they have fully recovered from any surgeries or procedures. Generally, clients should have a stable level of function and the tolerance to complete the In-Clinic and On-Road evaluation.

RoadSafetyBC - Driver Fitness Medical Program is responsible for licensing decisions due to medical conditions. If you have a physician’s report or medical information to submit to RoadSafetyBC, please fax it to: 250-952-6888. If patients have driver fitness questions, RoadSafetyBC has a toll-free hotline: 1-855-387-7747.