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DEVELOPING SAFER DRIVERS

Behind-the Wheel with Autism

This is an individualized program with specially-designed instruction that works with teens and adults diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorder. This program is developed specifically for the enrolled individual on teaching the fundamentals of driving a motor vehicle. The program is a team effort and will include the student, the parents and individuals who support the new driver as they are introduced to the basic operations of the motor vehicle and how we operate the vehicle in several traffic environments.

We do not believe in “**only doing the minimum requirements**” or “**just the basics of driving.**” Our student’s safety in all driving environments is TOP PRIORITY.

We will provide training in the following sections; *intersections, right and left turns, right turn on red, left turns at lights, how to angle and perpendicular park, significant time is devoted to the speed limits on the city and residential streets.*

We work with the student to develop specific driving routes that will fit their specific driving needs as well as continuing to strive for overall driving proficiency. We establish standard and backup routes. Driving in all weather conditions is explored and alternatives established if driving is not an option in snow, ice or rain.

Other considerations are worked on such as negotiating entrances and exits onto 2 and 4 lane highways and interstates or driving in larger metro cities where applicable and if it is part of the goals for the driver. There are also considerations for a low speed vehicle.

This program can take a minimum of 3 months to complete and can go as long as necessary to achieve licensure. We can also assist in getting the Learner’s Permit. Our driving school can give the DOT Permit Test. Adequate instruction time and adequate retention is the concern to be sure the student is comfortable with all driving environments and is safe while doing so.

Program requirements: 30 hours of classroom time (state requirement if under 18)

Driving Instruction requirements: **Each student must drive a minimum of 10 hours with our instructors. No exceptions.**

Driver Safety and a thorough Understanding of the Responsibilities of a Driver on the Roadways is OUR Priority.

Monthly meetings or emails will be held to discuss the goals and progress of the student with the team.

We want all our students to feel comfortable when driving in their communities and continuing to grow and improve as a safe and responsible driver. The state requirements behind-the-wheel **are simply not enough.**

All our vehicles are lettered and visibly identified as an **Educational Training** vehicle. All vehicles are specially equipped with dual controls on the instructor's side (passenger) to assist in the modeling and training of the student.

Each student receives 60 minutes of in-car instruction and 30 minutes of Traffic Safety Class per day while in the car. Lessons are scheduled based on student/instructor availability. Simulator time may precede actual in-vehicle training.

This program is available anywhere in the State of Iowa. Cost of the program is based on goals set, skills needed and location of student. Instructors will be coming initially from Southeast Iowa.

Initial Evaluation: Each student will need to be administered a Driving Evaluation to provide insight to the instructor.

This will be done with our simulator or in-car. A thorough recommendation can be made after this assessment. A preliminary recommendation will be made prior to the assessment.

National Industry Driving Facts: This applies to any new driver

Minimum hours of driving instruction required: 10 hours (if a student has 20 + hours driving with a parent)
20 hours (if student has 5+ hours and picks up the skills quickly)
30 + hours (has had no driving at all)

Statistics show that anyone learning to drive **MUST** have a significant amount of driving experience to reach the appropriate level of driving skills to be able to operate a motor vehicle safely in all driving situations.

The key to successfully earning a driver's license is practice. This is done two ways.

1. We drive with your student all of the time. A frequent schedule is developed to ensure that consistency in driving happens. This is probably the most expensive route possible, but it is also most definitely the safest route to ensure your son or daughter is taught properly and effectively.
Each student will process and learn at their own speed. This will still take however much time your new driver needs.

There are factors to consider when we develop a IDEP.

1. The age of the student, maturity age as well. Sometimes they are different.
 2. Are there other conditions besides autism? ADHD? Anxiety? Fear?
 3. How big is the community they live in? 2000 pop, 10,000 pop, 30,000 pop, or bigger?
 4. Are they high functioning or low functioning?
 5. We need to consider what routes are they going to be driving? Residential only? Speed limits of 45 or less? Or will highway be needed? 4 lane or interstate? And are those viable options?
 6. Should I look at a recommendation of a LSV (low speed vehicle)? It is worth a serious conversation.
 7. Is processing a concern? Even non-autistic students have processing issues.
2. The parents share in the training of their son or daughter. I have a great set of videos that can be purchased to assist you in teaching your son or daughter to drive. I am also developing a vehicle you can rent from us that has a brake on the passenger side. You can train your student in several areas and it will come with a step-by-step handbook to help coach the basics to your new driver.
But I do understand how that role can be tough. We are trained as parents to "tell our kids to do things, not coach them." But I think of parents of these special kids, you have learned how to work with them in many learning environments. But teaching someone to drive is very different.
I would encourage you to consider this idea. It can be very gratifying to see your son or daughter start to learn the basics of driving from you. And the basics is primarily what we would want you to do.

We will develop a consistent schedule to work with them to cover all the instructional techniques that are required to meet the DOT driving test standards.

Drivers licensure is handled two ways, if the student is under 21, our school can certify them to drive and they will not have to drive for the DOT. If the student is over 21, then we must spend the appropriate time to prepare them for the DOT drive test. I like to use smaller communities for the drive test. It just works better. The stress level is lower and the DOT examiner is not biased against the student. If we are considering a LSV, then this is even more a reason to use a smaller community for the testing.

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Low Speed Vehicle (LSV) – A low speed vehicle is a street-legal, four-wheeled, electric vehicle with a top speed of 25 mph and a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 3,000 lb.

Most states allow LSVs to drive on roads marked 35 mph or less. Iowa is one of those states. The vehicle has headlights, turn signals, brake lights, mirrors, doors and wipers.

A low speed vehicle is an excellent vehicle for an individual who has the capacity to drive, but does not have the ability to drive in higher speed driving environments.



Low Speed is Safer

Pedestrians today are more distracted than ever. Last year, pedestrian fatalities hit their all-time high. Operating heavy, high-speed vehicles in high foot traffic areas can be hazardous.

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LSV Regulations

LSVs must be equipped with three-point seat belts, running lights, headlights, brake lights, reflectors, rear view mirrors, back-up cameras, and turn signals. They also cannot go faster than 25 mph.

