



## **Position Statement: The Role of Occupational Therapists in Driver Assessment and Rehabilitation in New Brunswick**

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The New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists (NBAOT) recognizes that driving and community mobility is important to individuals and families for promoting health, well-being, and participation (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2009). Community mobility is defined as “planning and moving around in the community and using public or private transportation, such as driving, walking, bicycling, or accessing and riding in buses, taxicabs, or other transportation systems” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014, p. S19). Occupational therapists have an understanding of the relationship among the person, occupation, and environment, and thus are uniquely positioned to provide valued services that promote safe driving and community mobility (CAOT, 2009). Assessments related to driving may be requested when an individual experiences a change in their medical or functional status.

NBAOT has identified three levels of driving assessment and rehabilitation services provided by occupational therapists (OT). Specific training requirements are not defined; however, it is up to the practitioner to ascertain and practice within their own background, knowledge, resources, skills, and abilities.

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## **Three Levels of Driving Assessment and Rehabilitation**

### **Level 1: Generalist - Driving Screening**

The “OT-Generalist” may work in a variety of settings and has knowledge and skills in health promotion, facilitating community mobility, and screening of those at risk for unsafe driving. An OT-Generalist is able to perform functional assessments (basic and instrumental activities of daily living) and analyze underlying performance components (for example, physical, cognitive, behavioural, and perceptual abilities). The OT-Generalist can recommend driving cessation based on their knowledge and skills to assess safety and ability to participate in complex instrumental activities of daily living. An OT at this level may work with clients to facilitate alternative transportation to needed and desired activities. When the client’s driving ability requires further evaluation, the generalist can recommend referral for advanced or advanced specialist assessment.

### **Level 2: Advanced - Driving Assessment**

The “OT-Advanced” has further knowledge and skills in assessing the physical, cognitive, visual-perceptual, and behavioural aspects of safe driving using standardized office-based and/or on-road assessments. The OT at this level has additional background and abilities to do an in-depth office-based assessment specific to driving.

### **Level 3: Advanced Specialist - Comprehensive Driving Assessment and Rehabilitation Services**

The “OT-Advanced Specialist” has highly specialized knowledge and skills in assessment, training/retraining of driving skills, vehicle modifications, and use of assistive technology for driving. An OT at this level may have advanced training with post-graduate or driving rehabilitation specialist certification. The OT-Advanced Specialist can complete comprehensive driving evaluations (CDE) always in conjunction with a licensed driving instructor. If it is determined that the client requires adaptive equipment to drive (for example, steering knob, hand controls, and left foot accelerator), they will be required to have a road test with a driver examiner using the recommended equipment. This will ensure that the client meets provincial requirements and that appropriate restrictions are noted on the driver’s license.

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## **Responsibility of the Occupational Therapist With Regard to Licensing**

In the province of New Brunswick, physicians, optometrists, and nurse practitioners are required by law to disclose their concerns regarding driving safety to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles (New Brunswick Motor Vehicle Act, 1973, Sections 309.1 and 309.2). Unless a client has given consent, occupational therapists cannot disclose their concerns without the potential risk of legal action. It is recommended that the OT inform the client's family physician or referring physician of their concerns related to driving safety. Although an occupational therapist may deem that a person has the required visual, cognitive, and perceptual abilities to drive, the final licensing decision is determined by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. In some cases, the Registrar may request a re-test (vision, written, and road) regardless of the result of the driving assessment. Additional information may be required from the treating physician that the driver is fit to return to driving.

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## **Resource for Occupational Therapists in New Brunswick**

For more information regarding the role of occupational therapy in driver assessment, rehabilitation, and community mobility, please contact the occupational therapist at Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation's Adaptive Driving Service, located in Fredericton, NB.

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