

## **U.S. Department of Transportation: The Physician's Guide**

*The Physician's Guide is a tool for medical professionals to use to help their patients understand whether they are safe drivers. It provides office-based screening tools, information on the linkages between medical conditions, functional ability, and crash risk, and information on referring drivers to each state's driver licensing authority. The goal is to help drivers maintain their ability to drive safely, and to transition appropriately when they can no longer drive.*

### **Lead Agency:**

U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

### **Agency Mission:**

Save lives, prevent injuries and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes through education, research, safety standards and enforcement activity.

### **Principal Investigator:**

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### **Partner Agency:**

American Medical Association

### **General Description:**

The *Physician's Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers* was created by the American Medical Association (AMA) with support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to help physicians address preventable injuries— in particular, those injuries incurred in motor vehicle crashes. Currently, motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of injury-related deaths in the 65-74 age group. While traffic safety programs have been successful in reducing the fatality rate for drivers under the age of 65, the fatality rate for older drivers has consistently remained high. Physicians are in a position to address and correct this problem. By providing effective health care, physicians can help their patients maintain a high level of fitness, enabling them to preserve safe driving skills later in life and protecting them against serious injuries in the event of a crash. By adopting preventive practices— including the assessment and counseling strategies outlined in this guide—physicians can better identify drivers at

increased risk for crashes, help them enhance their driving safety, and ease the transition to driving retirement if and when it becomes necessary. Through the practice of medicine, physicians have the opportunity to promote the safety of their patients and of the public. The goal of the *Physician's Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers* is to forge a link between public health and medicine, and to provide doctors with the tools and information they need to advise their patients about safe driving.

Older drivers and their families consistently identify physicians as the most credible source for information related to a person's ability to drive. Unfortunately, physicians have not historically had the tools to comfortably assist older patients in making a determination about driving. This *Guide* provides physicians with advice on how to screen a driver, how to counsel a driver on maintaining their driving abilities and to document conversations about driving. Developed with the American Medical Association, the *Guide* brings their medical expertise and methods regarding functional abilities and screening to an educational tool that promotes to physicians having conversations with their patients about safe driving. Thousands of physicians from around the world have been trained on the use of the guide. Teams from multiple states have brought driver licensing and state medical societies together to promote the use of the guide. In FY 2008, AMA and NHTSA have renewed their support for the *Guide* and are issuing a revision. The partners are also developing a computer-based course designed to train medical residents on the use of the *Guide*. By using the *Guide*, physicians can help countless older drivers stay safer, longer.