



Advances in Technology Make Driving More Accessible for Individuals with Disabilities

By: Bebe Bode

Only the ability to drive a vehicle can make unlimited freedom of travel possible. This is particularly true for a person with a disability.

Advances in technology have made private vehicle travel attainable, and even more preferable. More and more, persons with a disability are able to modify their vehicles and obtain an adaptive driver's license to enhance their independence.

Driving allows persons with a disability to participate in activities when, where and how they want to without having to depend on others for transportation. It basically heightens a person's ability to live life by his or her own plan.

Throughout our state, the availability of accessible public transportation for persons with a disability varies greatly from region to region. A person that is able to drive may find it easier to travel to and from work without being held back by transit schedules. They may also be able to accept employment in places not easily accessible to commuter stations.

“Persons with disabilities have a jobless rate that far exceeds the national average; it's estimated that 40 percent of people with special needs are unemployed.” In most instances it's not a person's education or ability level that is limiting them in



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obtaining employment; it's the ability to get to work in a manner that is reliable, safe and consistent.

There's also a social plus for people with disabilities that learn to drive. They can attend events, socialize, and take part in hobbies, activities and interests without having to arrange for transportation.

Not everyone with a disability will be able to drive. For people that are able adaptive driving, also referred to as assisted driving, is a form of driving that makes use of specialized equipment that serve the same purpose as conventional equipment components. The equipment is designed to make it easier for a person to safely operate a vehicle within his or her skill set, while abiding by the rules of the road.

“For example, if a person is immobile below the waist, brakes and accelerators can be operated by hand controls or joysticks. Or, if a person has use of a left hand and not a right, controls can be relocated on the vehicle's console. Additionally, modifications such as wheelchair lifts and ramps, accessible doors and handles engineered in vehicles so drivers – and passengers, for that matter – can enter, be secured within, or exit a vehicle with ease.”

Learning to drive a modified vehicle can be a challenge in and of itself. There are, however, specialists – often occupational therapist with specialized training – and resources that can assist people in learning how to drive a vehicle confidently.

For more information on driving with a disability, please join [Families Helping Families of Jefferson](#) on Wednesday, October 14, 2015 at the East Bank Regional Library, 4747 W. Napoleon Avenue, Metairie, LA, from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm. To register, please call 504-888-9111 or online at <http://tinyurl.com/np4vk4u>



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