



Behind-the Wheel for Exceptional Learners Program

Welcome to our **Driving For Exceptional Learners Program**. This program was founded by Andy Nelson, CEO, Founder and Driver Rehabilitation Professional. This is Iowa's only individualized program with specially designed instruction that works with individuals diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Anxiety and those with Executive Functioning Disorders and Physical Disabilities.

The program is a team effort and will include the student, the parents/guardians 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 providing the minimum driving requirements” or “just the basics of driving.”**

Our student's driving safety in all driving environments is our TOP PRIORITY. We look at how the new driver will be able to adapt to every driving condition, the focus is also on the safety of the other drivers on the road.

The training will cover all the necessary driving skills need to drive in the community. We do tailor our instructions to fit the individualized needs of the new driver. *The complete list of driving skills can be found at the end of this document.*

Our program works with the student to develop specific driving routes that will fit their specific driving needs to help them develop independent living skills so they may be able to go places by themselves.

Driving in all types of weather conditions is explored and alternative options are established if driving is not a safe option in snow, ice, or rain. The training will explore negotiating entrances and exits onto 2 and 4 lane highways or interstates and/or driving in larger metro cities where applicable.

Adequate instruction time and adequate retention is the primary concern to be sure the student is comfortable with all driving environments and is safe while doing so.

This program can take a minimum of 3 months to complete and can go as long as necessary to achieve licensure. We can assist in getting the Instructional Learner's Permit. Our driving school can give the DOT Permit Test.

Program requirements: 30 hours of online coursework. This is required for every student regardless of age.

It is not enough to learn how to drive a vehicle, but it is also imperative that each new driver understands the rules associated with driving and the various situations that do arise when operating a motor vehicle.

The online course is a self-paced course that is user friendly and allows the student to work at their own pace. This course is provided at no charge when enrolled in our driving lesson program.

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.

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.

Our vehicles are lettered and visibly identified as a **Training Vehicle**. All vehicles are specially equipped with dual controls on the instructor's side (passenger) to assist in the modeling and training. Each vehicle has a passenger side gas and brake pedal.

Each student receives a minimum of 60 minutes of in-car instruction. As driving lessons progress, the instruction time may increase to 2 hours. This is the maximum amount of time a new driver will spend in the training vehicle with us. Lessons are scheduled based on student/instructor availability.

As we begin with a new driver, we will initially schedule lessons once or twice a week. But as driving skills increase, we will move towards multiple days per week when available. Increased frequency in driving will improve their driving skills, build confidence and the driver will begin to become more comfortable behind-the-wheel.

This program is available everywhere in the State of Iowa.



Cost of the Program:

We charge an hourly rate for the lessons and mileage to and from the client.

All instructors will travel to the location of the new driver.

We schedule days, evenings, and weekends for better flexibility for the client.

We will work with every family on the financial costs. We have resources for funding and organizations that can help with financing. Based on the initial evaluation, we will provide you the best estimate of driving lesson hours required and whether the new driver requires Tier 1 or Tier 2 level of service.

The Process:

Once it is determined that the family or new driver would like to proceed, intake forms will need to be filled out asking for contact and emergency contact information, basic medical information regarding any diagnoses and allergies, a couple questionnaires about the new driver. Everything meets HIPPA requirements, and all information is kept confidential. These forms are on our website, SaferDriver.net under Logins.

It is important that all mental diagnoses and any psychological testing that has been done in the last 3 years be disclosed so we have all the information about the new driver. Psychological testing is not something that would not necessarily prevent driving lessons, but it is important for the entire team to discuss so we can prepare the best educational plan possible.

The owner or another qualified instructor will come to your home and meet the new driver, parents, and support team to discuss the goals and needs of the new driver's desire to earn a driver's license. If in-person is not feasible, then a Zoom meeting will be scheduled.

After the meeting is held and a plan is agreed upon, a driving assessment will be scheduled. At that time, a contract will need to be signed to set up services.

Initial Evaluation: Each new driver will need to be administered a Driving Evaluation to provide insight to the instructor. This will be done with our Training Vehicle. The assessment is to ascertain the cognitive and physical skills of the new driver. A thorough recommendation will be made after this assessment, but a preliminary recommendation can be made afterwards.

A written recommendation will be available to the new driver and parents/guardians. The recommendation is just that. **There is no set guarantee that the number of hours recommended** will be the actual total hours given to reach licensure. Because **Safety is one of our primary concerns**, it is literally impossible to be very exact.

The number of hours is based on the evaluation. As the new driver begins with us, they will begin to show visible and cognitive improvements as we drive. But I should make it clear, that while a new driver may show growth in the basic driving skills, it is possible that they may show a decline or an inability to maintain the driving skills needed as the complexity of driving increases, such as downtown intersections with multiple traffic signals. Again, this is not a determination that a license is not attainable, it may only mean that additional hours will be required to practice or identify new travel routes to avoid high traffic areas.

The minimum number of hours required is 10, the instructor will be in constant contact with the support team on how the lessons are progressing.

Every driver learns differently, and the primary concern is how comfortable the new driver is. We will be providing supports to alleviate anger, anxiety, impulsiveness, and ADHD. Depending on any other challenges, the Safer Driver Management team will be overseeing all clients and will be in communication with the instructor and support team as well.

For clients who live at home or have access to a relative with a vehicle, supplemental practice is strongly recommended. As much as we want to provide all the instruction and practice to the client, this is just not feasible given our client load. Therefore, we are asking the parent/guardian to provide additional support for the client to practice when we are not there. If additional practice is not possible, then please understand that more hours are likely going to be required to achieve licensure.



It is important to acknowledge that enrolling in our program does not guarantee a license. Our instructors may suspend driving lessons if they are concerned that driving skills are not being met in the time frame that we expect. We will discuss our concerns with the team either individually or as a group depending on the time it would take to schedule a meeting.

Once skills reach proficiency at our standards, if a client is under 21, Safer Driver Solutions can certify the driver. **But we do reserve the right to defer the final drive assessment to the licensing authority, the Iowa Department of Transportation**, if we have any concerns about the safety of the individual. The safety of the client and the other drivers is our primary concern. All new drivers ages 21 and older will take the **final drive assessment with the licensing authority, the Iowa Department of Transportation**. We will schedule the drive assessment for the client, and they will use the training vehicle they have been practicing in for the Drive Test.

Any driver of any age, including those ages 14 and up, who have any type of physical disability, will be required to provide physician signed forms to Safer Driver Solutions and the Iowa Department of Transportation Driver Fitness section, in order to proceed with a permit and approval to proceed with instruction.

Also, once approval has been granted, and enrollment in the program, driving lessons are underway or completed, any driver with a physical disability requiring adaptive equipment to be installed in the client's vehicle or utilizing adaptive equipment in our vehicles will be required to do the final drive assessment with the **licensing authority, the Iowa Department of Transportation**. **This is requirement to be approved for an Iowa License.**

National Industry Driving Facts

This applies to every new driver:

Minimum hours of driving instruction required:

10 - 15 hours (if a student has 10 + hours driving with a parent/guardian)

20 + hours (if student has limited to no driving experience 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 national average amount of hours behind-the-wheel is 50.

We do not recommend any of our new drivers participate in any driving after midnight until they have at least 5 years of experience driving in various situations. And even then, I still do not recommend it.

Driving or Riding in a Motor Vehicle is the leading cause of death among individuals ages 14 – 25.

It is important to use a professional driving school like us to educate and build awareness for the new driver/JC if we are ever going to lower or eliminate the above statistic.

The key to successfully earning a driver's license is practice. Our instruction provided is done in multiple ways.

1. **We Set Expectations LOW and Achievable.** It may take several hours of lessons for the new driver to grasp the driving skill. They will need constant encouragement for everything they do. We make the process single step when necessary.
2. **Supplemental Driving is strongly recommended** when a new driver is living at home. All new drivers need a way to practice beyond our program. We simply cannot provide the driving instruction every day. We need the parent/guardian's support. It is imperative that the new driver be encouraged to drive all the time. Practice is what will help make them successful.



3. When we drive with a new driver, one of our goals is to establish trust. New drivers need a positive support system. Our instructor will never get upset, yell, or berate the new driver, instead will provide calm, supportive statements of encouragement.
4. Each student processes and learns at their own speed. Our instructors will work with each new driver and provide individualized instruction. We discuss with the new driver how they feel and allow them to have some say in how fast or slow the program progresses. Pushing can lead to frustration. When this occurs, it will take more time to regain the confidence in driving.
5. We will also work towards increasing **Drive Stamina**. A driver will not always have the luxury of driving for 15 minutes or an hour. Some driving situations involve detours, road construction, weather changes and mechanical difficulties or traffic collisions where the new driver may have to wait before proceeding. It is very important that everyone understands that the new driver may not understand about road construction or traffic collision delays. We need to educate and build awareness. It is also extremely important that a parent/guardian not make negative comments about delays. They are a fact of life when driving and those negative comments could be misunderstood and interpreted differently by the new driver.
6. All drivers must be able to adapt to the various changes when driving. This relates to #5 above. Besides road construction and traffic collision delays, weather is very unpredictable and as much as we would like the opportunity to drive with the new driver in rain (the most common form of inclement weather they will drive in) or snow or wind. It is not realistic that this will occur. We encourage the parent/guardian to drive with their new driver in these weather patterns at least for some experience until we can discuss as a team what bad weather represents. Will it be too much, or will we be able to work with them? For a new driver who is seeking better employment opportunities, driving in bad weather may be something we need to discuss. It is possible that including the current or prospective employer in the conversation may be beneficial. If they understand the goal for the new driver and this will make them a better candidate for employment because they have a license, they may be receptive to assisting the new driver in reaching this goal.
7. The enrollment in this program **DOES NOT GUARANTEE** a driver's license. Unfortunately, some new drivers start to display driving skill concerns once we get past the basics. If another instructor or I feel that a new driver is not progressing in the manner we should expect a driver to be at, we do reserve the right to have another instructor evaluate them.
8. Once we reach the skill proficiency required to get a license, we have two ways to earn the license.
 - a. If the new driver is over 21, they will be required to pass a DOT Drive Test at a **DOT Station or County Courthouse**. This process can take longer because the instructor will need to spend time working with the new driver on what the expectations are for a DOT Drive Test.
 - b. The new driver will use the training vehicle they have been learning to drive in for the DOT Drive Test. The instructor will work with the new driver to schedule the DOT Drive Test.
 - c. It has been my experience that scheduling a DOT Drive Test at a **County Courthouse** will generally be a less strenuous test for the new driver. We will try this first. It may still take a couple of attempts for the new driver to pass the test. But passing is very achievable.

There will many questions as the process goes on. Do not hesitate to reach out to our staff for guidance.

We are here to help as we work with the client to achieve a driver's license.

Once we start driving with the New Driver, it is important for the parent or guardian if part of the support team, to be conscious of what is said out loud and that remaining positive throughout the process is extremely important.

The instructor is trained to help the new driver learn the correct way to drive. This may not be the way the parents drive, but you must not disagree with the instructor. You may present your concerns in an email to office@saferdriver.net. The owner will investigate any concerns and respond when he has made a decision.

We have many clients to serve. Please allow the instructor to do their job.



Please initial here to acknowledge you understand and will abide by the above statements. _____

There are several factors we consider when developing the IDEP (Individualized Driver Education Plan).

1. The age of the student, maturity age as well. Sometimes they are different.
2. Are there other conditions besides autism? ADHD? Anxiety? Fear? Cognitive delays?
3. How big is the community they live in or will live in? 2000 pop, 10,000 pop, 30,000 pop, or bigger?
4. Are they high functioning or low functioning? Maybe somewhere in between, other factors that we may not see right away.
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?
Nighttime driving? Driving in darkness – Darkness comes at 4:30 in October
Weather concerns? Rain, Snow, Fog, Wind, Ice?
6. Is processing a concern? Even non-autistic students have processing issues.

We are constantly developing innovative ways to provide the best instructional techniques for the new driver.

These are the Driving Goals for Every Client

1. **Understanding the Vehicle Functions:** dash, mirrors, seat, seatbelt, tires, radio, heat/air
2. **Lights:** Understanding the function of headlights, taillights, brake lights and hazards
3. **Windows:** Understanding how important visibility is to the driver
4. **Steering:** Understanding how steering works, where hands go, do's and don'ts
5. **Acceleration:** building consistency with the gas pedal, how to learn balance with the right foot
6. **Braking:** building consistency in braking maneuvers, too hard, not enough, release the gas pedal.
7. **Backing up:** the correct way to back up, turning the head around, when to use a backup camera
8. **Complete Stops:** building consistency in making sure all stops are accurate.
9. **Signs:** what signs to look for, which ones are more important than others, sign colors & shapes
10. **Traffic Lights:** how to approach a traffic lights, turning arrows and flashing lights/arrows
11. **Pavement Markings:** Understanding the importance of reading the pavement markings
12. **Approach to Intersections:** Understanding how to identify and navigate all intersections
13. **Left Turns:** Establishing that turning left is more dangerous because we cross oncoming traffic
14. **Right Turns:** Establishing the differences when turning right, if right on-red is safe to do
15. **Signaling:** Establishing the importance of the turning signal, when is it too soon or too late
16. **Parking:** we will cover Angle, Perpendicular, Parallel, Curbside, Uphill & Downhill parking.
17. **Pedestrians:** Understanding the right of the pedestrian, bicyclist, moped rider & motorcyclist
18. **Drive Stamina:** Understanding about fatigue, drowsiness, and loss of focus.
19. **2 & 4 Lane Highways, Interstates:** how to enter & exit, and what are considered proper speeds.
20. **Specialty Driving Environments:** Gravel, Rain, Snow, Wind driving techniques will be discussed
21. **Night Driving:** We will cover the expectations and dangers of night driving.