OVERVIEW OF THE MEDICAL AFFAIRS BRANCH

The Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) of the Registry of Motor Vehicles has 2 main functions:
1. The branch is responsible for the issuance of disabled parking plates and placards; and
2. The branch sets policies and procedures regarding minimum physical qualifications to operate motor vehicles.

A. DISABLED PARKING PLATES AND PLACARDS
MAB issues disabled parking plates and placards to qualified Massachusetts residents who meet our eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria to obtain a disabled parking plate or placard were developed in consultation with the Registry of Motor Vehicle’s Medical Advisory Board and in accordance with federal guidelines governing the issuance disabled plates and placards. For further information regarding applications for disabled parking plates and placards, you may contact Medical Affairs at 857-368-8020 or visit the RMV’s web site at www.massrmv.com and click on “Medical Affairs.”

B. PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS TO OPERATE MOTOR VEHICLES
MAB is primarily responsible for setting agency policies and procedures regarding physical qualifications for operator licensing. MAB sets its policies in accordance with recommendations made by the RMV’s Medical Advisory Board. The Medical Advisory Board was established by statute, Massachusetts General Laws chapter 90, section 8C, and consists of a panel of approximately 15 physicians and non-physicians of varying specialties. Currently, the Medical Advisory Board has set minimum standards for vision qualifications, loss of consciousness, and seizure conditions, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. When the RMV has cause to believe that a person may be unable to operate a motor vehicle due to any other condition not specifically addressed by the RMV’s minimum standards, the MAB shall conduct an individualized assessment of that person’s qualifications to operate a motor vehicle safely.

OLDER DRIVER ISSUES:
The Medical Affairs Branch sets driver license policies without regard to age and therefore, has no policies based on age alone.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:
The reporting procedure summarized herein represents an abbreviated version of the RMV’s entire reporting process.

Please note the following basic information: (1) if a licensee has a medical condition which s/he believes may affect his/her ability to operate a motor vehicle, s/he must report such condition to the Registrar and refrain from operating a motor vehicle until the condition is resolved. (2) There is no legal requirement for a physician or other interested party to report a possible unfit driver to the RMV, however, if an interested party chooses to report such a driver to the RMV, then the RMV will act on the information provided in accordance with the procedure noted on page 2.

(1) Form of Reports:
All reports must be in writing and must be signed by the person making the report. The report must contain the name and address of the complaining party. The report must contain identification of the individual, whose driving ability is being questioned, including the name and at least one of the following: Social Security Number, license number, date of birth, and address. In addition, the report must contain the reason for the complaint and/or a description of the purported functional limitation.

MAB will accept reports from family members, physicians, law enforcement, or other interested third parties, including, but not limited to, members of the individual’s community (such as neighbors), private driving schools, physical therapists, etc.

When the report is from a health care provider:

“Health care provider” is defined as “registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, physician, physician’s assistant, psychologist, occupational therapist, optometrist, ophthalmologist, osteopath, podiatrist, or physical therapist who is a licensed health care provider under the provisions of M.G.L., Chapter 112.”

Please note that if the physician’s report is not submitted on a medical evaluation form provided by the RMV, then the physician must make the report on his or her official letterhead, and include his or her signed name, Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine number, telephone number and address.

(2) Registry Procedure Upon Receipt of reports (excluding physicians and law enforcement):

When the MAB receives a report that a licensed driver may be unfit to operate a motor vehicle due to an alleged physical or mental condition, MAB shall conduct an individualized assessment of the reported individual’s qualifications to operate a motor vehicle safely. MAB shall initiate such assessment by requesting that the reported individual submit a medical evaluation from his or her physician which addresses the individual’s reported condition and medical qualifications to operate a motor vehicle safely. MAB shall then take any appropriate licensing actions, in consideration of the physician’s evaluation.

The RMV seeks expert opinion from the individual’s treating physician because the physician is the person best qualified to respond to questions regarding the individual’s medical condition and its potential implications on the ability to operate a motor vehicle safely. In appropriate circumstances and in consideration of the physician’s recommendations, the RMV will assess the individual’s ability to operate a motor vehicle by requiring that the individual undergo a competency road examination and/or an assessment for adaptive equipment and appropriate license restrictions, prior to taking a licensing action.
3 Registry Procedure Upon Receipt of Reports from Physicians and Law Enforcement:

When the initial report is from a physician or from law enforcement, Medical Affairs may initiate a licensing action directly, corresponding to the request provided.

(4) Possible Licensing actions:

(1) No further action if the RMV concludes there is no basis to the complaint.

(2) Request that the individual schedule and take a competency road examination and/or an assessment for adaptive equipment and appropriate license restrictions.

(3) Request that the individual voluntarily surrender his or her license if the RMV concludes that the individual is not qualified to operate a motor vehicle safely. An individual who voluntarily surrenders her license is eligible to receive a Massachusetts identification card free of charge. In addition, when a license is voluntarily surrendered there is no negative impact on the driving record. Further, if the individual’s condition improves, such that he or she is able to provide appropriate documentation of his/her medical qualifications to operate a motor vehicle safely, the license may be restored to its former active status.

If the individual does not comply with the RMV’s request to voluntarily surrender the license, Medical Affairs shall notify the Driver Control Unit to schedule a hearing on the matter. If the Driver Control Unit does not find in favor of the individual, then the license may be indefinitely revoked.

(5) Where to Send Reports:

Registry of Motor Vehicles
Medical Affairs Branch
P.O. Box 55889
Boston, MA 02205

Fax: (857) 368-0018
Tel: (857) 368-8020