Assessment of Inclusive Driver's Education Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

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Introduction

Driving is an important skill that provides individuals with independence and mobility. However, people with disabilities often face barriers in accessing driver's education and driving itself. This literature research analysis examines ways to make driving and driver's education more accessible for people with disabilities. The unequal opportunities have resulted in those who identify as having disabilities being required to seek out education at other facilities compared to other populations.

Objectives

The purpose of this research is to coincide with the opportunity the Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD) received the authorization to be eligible to consider the CDD as a driving testing site. To effectively implement a driver's education program, the collaboration of our research is to help identify:

1. Potential Barriers for the Disability Population
2. Strategies to Alleviate the Barriers
3. True Perspective a Self-Advocate

The idea was to create a comfortable and accessible environment for individuals. Due to the time restraints of the timing of this research, the implementation of the program will occur after the conclusion of this year's ILEND term.

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Methods

The research provided in this poster encompasses multiple literature reviews to assess how we can obtain more inclusive driving opportunities and education. The purpose of the poster is to provide information regarding barriers and how we can combat them. We also included a lived perspective and experience to see how the experiences aligned with the research.

Findings

Several studies have explored the challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing driver's education and driving. For instance, a study (Tyler et. al., 2017) found that the top three challenges faced by individuals with disabilities are:
1. High cost of vehicle adaptations
2. Availability of adapted vehicles
3. Need for more information about adaptive driving equipment.

Similarly, another study (Wong et. al., 2018) found that accessibility was a major issue for people with disabilities, as many driver's education programs and driving assessments were not designed to accommodate individuals with diverse needs.

To address these challenges, researchers have suggested several strategies to make driving and driver's education more accessible.
1. Providing financial assistance to individuals with disabilities to help offset the costs of adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications (Tyler et. al., 2017).
2. Driver's education programs should be tailored to meet the needs of people with disabilities, and that assessments should be designed to account for diverse needs (Wong et. al., 2018).
3. Other studies have explored the use of specialized technologies and adaptive equipment to help make driving more accessible.
   - The use of driving simulators could help individuals with disabilities learn to drive safely in a controlled environment (Ismail et. al., 2019).
   - Consider using assistive technologies, such as voice-activated GPS systems, which could help people with disabilities navigate while driving (Rosenbloom et. al., 2018).

References

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Tyler, B., Kramer, J. L., Burns, S. P., & Sabharwal, S. (2017). Mobility and disability in spinal cord injury: An update. Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America, 28(4), 681-695.
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A Real-Life Perspective

Would having the ability to drive make getting a job or accessing healthcare easier?
"It would. That way I would not have to rely on others to get me to my appointments. I have not had to reschedule yet as I either have someone to take me or take a Lyft. It would be nice to drive myself to appointments. Sometimes the things I talk about with doctors are things I'd like to keep to myself, if my mom or a family member is there I am not as comfortable talking about those things."

If you had to seek healthcare but needed to drive, would it impact your decision to receive healthcare?
"It might. If I could not easily get there, I might wait until later unless what was going on was really serious."

When driving, do you need special equipment? Are there any access barriers that you face?
"I did a driving assessment at Courage Kenny in Minneapolis. When I did the assessment, the evaluator felt I needed something to boost my seat up so I could see over the dashboard. Passing the written test has been difficult for me as well."

In your opinion, how do you think we could make driving education more accessible?
"I think taking the test on my own would help. Going to the DMV is kind of stressful with all the background noises and stuff. If you could take the test home, it would help. I have taken the test like 6 times and cannot pass it. I get distracted at the DMV."

How do you think having the driving testing at other locations, such as the CDD, be more impactful?
"I think it would be helpful. If I took it in a place like CDD, it would be helpful because it is quieter there and familiar. It would help me because I am in a place that I know and not a lot of distractions. I think I might do better and pass the test."

Conclusion

Making driving and driver's education more accessible for people with disabilities requires a comprehensive approach that addresses physical, cognitive, and financial barriers, such as:
- Providing financial assistance
- Developing specialized driver's education programs
- Offering comprehensive driving assessments,
- Using specialized technologies and adaptive equipment

These strategies can help increase accessibility, mobility and promote independence for people with disabilities.