

7/22/2014

Subject: MTO Inquiry Regarding Cognitive Screening - DIV2014-0352

To: Mr. Ed Rockburne
erockburne@cogeco.ca

Dear Mr. Rockburne:

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the in-class cognitive screening component used under Ontario's 80 and Above Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program.

On April 21st, 2014, the Ministry of Transportation implemented enhancements to its 80 and Above Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program. It is important to highlight that these changes do not involve SIMARD MD screening and do not involve increased licensing costs. In response to your questions, The names of the two brief, non-computerized in-class screening exercises are the Clock Drawing Test and the Letter Cancellation Test. Samples of these exercises can be found on the MTO website at www.ontario.ca/seniordriver.

I would like to emphasize that the validity and accuracy of both cognitive screening exercises used under the newly enhanced 80 and Above Senior Licence Renewal Program are substantiated by extensive evidence. In 2012, a consultant was awarded a contract by the Ministry to identify which cognitive screening exercises best determine driving ability. This consultant reviewed 446 recent, peer-reviewed articles evaluating reliability and validity of various cognitive screens. 42 tools were selected based on their relevance to fitness to drive. After applying selection criteria and further prioritizing based on predictive ability, simplicity of scoring and administration, and zero cost impact, the Clock Drawing and the Single Letter tools were selected for use in the renewal program. These assessments allow the Ministry to account for a driver's ability to recognize and organize information, interpret what they see (e.g., detecting objects on the road), and react to situations (e.g., hitting the brake when a pedestrian is crossing). The introduction of these tools is also supported by recommendations from Ontario's Coroner and the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators' (CCMTA) Medical Standards for Drivers.

It is worth noting that Ministry research also supports the replacement of the current prior program's knowledge test with the two cognitive screening tools. Data obtained during the review of this research indicated that the current knowledge test is generally not an effective indicator of a senior's actual ability to drive. Being that many seniors have a wealth of driving experience, testing their knowledge of driving rules during the renewal session is not a productive means of tackling the primary cause of their elevated risk – cognitive impairment.

If you would like to review research underpinning Ontario's senior licence renewal enhancements, please search for the reports entitled, "Meta-analysis of Cognitive Screening Tools for Drivers aged 80 and Over" and "Synthesis of the Meta-analysis of Cognitive Screening Tools for Drivers aged 80 and Over and the Review of Ontario's GES", on the MTO Library website at the following link:

<http://www.library.mto.gov.on.ca/webopac/search.asp?mode=search>

Ultimately, I would like to assure you that MTO makes every effort to ensure that its senior driver programs balance the need for senior mobility and independence with public safety. We strongly believe that the enhancements to our renewal process for drivers age 80 and above accomplish this goal.

Thank you again for your enquiry on this very important road safety issue.

Sincerely,

Ryan Bailey
Team Leader, Special Projects
Ministry of Transportation Ontario