

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY for VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS

Persons with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging may require



vehicle modifications to accommodate their driving needs.

Available equipment selections include steering adaptations, brake/accelerator systems, hand controls, lifts, locks, back up alarms,

rain sensing windshield wipers and driver positioning devices.

### User Considerations

The decision to install special equipment and the task of identifying individual adaptive equipment needs requires a team effort. Teams typically include a trained driving evaluator, a qualified vehicle modification dealer and the potential driver. A comprehensive driver evaluation provides the adaptive equipment needed.

*For wheelchair and scooter users*, lifts can be installed that raise the driver and wheelchair or scooter together, or just the mobility device so that it can be stored. Adjustable power seats that swivel allow riders comfortable entry and exit and facilitate wheelchair or scooter transfers. Strategically located handles and grab bars provide additional positioning assistance. Automatic door openers, remote car starters, power locks and power window controls decrease the amount of movement and strength needed for some driving tasks.

*For individuals preferring to remain in their wheelchair while driving or riding*, tie-down devices are required to keep the chair securely in place while the vehicle is in motion. Some tie-downs are manually operated, using belts to hook the wheelchair frame to a floor-mounted track. There are also power lockdown devices that allow the individual in a wheelchair to drive

directly over an automatic latching mechanism which grabs the lower chair frame and secures it in place.

*For those with limited upper body or head movement*, wide-angle and spotting mirrors can be used to increase range of vision. They can be placed both inside and outside the vehicle. Customized seat cushioning typically used for positioning and stability can raise a rider up to provide an improved field of view.

### Vehicle Considerations

Questions to ask:

- What type of vehicle is needed to accommodate all the equipment that needs to be installed, the wheelchair, the driver and passengers?
- Are additional adaptations necessary for safe operation?
- Will existing vehicle safety equipment have to be modified in order to install the adaptive equipment? Does the dealer carry professional liability insurance?
- Is there adequate parking space at home and/or work for the vehicle?
- Is there room for loading and unloading?

### Vehicle Modification Dealer Considerations

Questions to ask:

- What credentials does the dealer have?
- How much experience has the dealer had with vehicle modifications?
- Is the dealer a member of NMEDA (National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association)?
- Are references available from previous customers having similar modifications?
- What types of payment options are available?
- Is a prescription required? From whom?
- What is the time frame for the work?
- Will the individual need to be available for fittings?
- Does the dealer provide training? For how long; at what cost?
- Is there a warranty?
- Does the dealer perform ongoing service and maintenance?
- Do they stock replacement parts?

