

Driving and Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NLD)

AED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

Individuals with NLD have challenges with visual-spatial, motor and social skills. However, because individuals with NLD have strong verbal skills they are often overlooked for specialized driver training.

Warning signs:

- **Visual-cognitive skills** – Individuals with NLD have difficulty understanding and interpreting visual information. They may have difficulty:
 - Knowing how to react to a roadway hazard or changes in the traffic environment.
 - With navigation. For example, it may be challenging to find their way out of a large shopping mall parking lot or drive to routine destinations.
 - Recognizing how traffic flows through intersections. This may cause them to stop in the middle of intersection or drive through very slowly.
- **Social skills** – Individuals with NLD may have difficulty anticipating or interpreting the actions of other roadway users. These challenges may cause:
 - Delayed reactions to pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles.
 - Difficulty recognizing an aggressive driver.
- **Motor skills and visual spatial** – Individuals with NLD may have difficulty with motor coordination and visual spatial skills. This may cause difficulty with:
 - Maneuvering the vehicle for parking, backing or through turns, hills and curves.
 - Adjusting speed and managing space for lane changes.
- **Executive function skills** – Individuals with NLD may have difficulty solving problems that occur on the roadway. They may have difficulty:
 - Considering all the factors when managing a roadway emergency in order to get help and be safe.
 - Generalizing what they have learned in one situation to another.
 - Anticipating the consequences of their actions.
- **Learning differences** – Driver education can be challenging for individuals with NLD because they may experience:
 - Anxiety about driving or being with other students in a car.
 - Difficulty understanding instructions. Instructions need to support NLD learning preferences: concrete and verbal description of visual information.
 - Difficulty transferring knowledge from classroom to behind-the-wheel sessions.