



Bioptic Driving in Alabama Information for Doctors, Patients, and Families

What is Bioptic Driving?

Bioptic Driving is operating a vehicle with the assistance of specialized telescopic/biopic eyewear, often called a biopic. This device allows some drivers with low vision to meet the minimum acuity standards for licensing. During driving, biopic devices are typically used briefly to see details such as road signs. Most of the vision used while driving will be through the person's regular eyewear, sometimes called the carrier lens. It is important to keep in mind that although biopic eyewear may improve visual acuity, a driver's visual field will be reduced while looking through the biopic device.

The State of Alabama now allows biopic driving under some circumstances, and important information about this is below.

Visual Criteria for Biopic Driving in Alabama

The following are the basic criteria that help to establish whether a person is a candidate for biopic eyewear while driving:

- Visual condition must be stable
- 20/200 in each eye with the carrier lens (this is the regular lens in the eyeglasses).
- 20/60 with a biopic telescopic lens (magnification on the telescope can be no greater than 4X).
- 110° of horizontal field of vision and 80° vertical field of vision.

Steps to Becoming a Bioptic Driver

If a patient does not already have a bioptic, a bioptic can be prescribed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist who specializes in low vision rehabilitation. For more information on how to obtain a bioptic in Alabama, contact your own eye care specialist or feel free to contact us at the UAB Driving Assessment Clinic, phone (205) 325-8646 or driving@uab.edu.

Once a patient has a bioptic, those interested in becoming bioptic drivers must contact the Alabama Department of Public Safety in Montgomery to obtain a bioptic driving packet. Call Lt. Terry Chapman or Sgt. Hollifield at (334) 242-3427 and request a bioptic driving packet be mailed to you. The packet contains the following information:

1. Checklist for Bioptic Driving Candidates.
2. Certificate of Vision Examination to be completed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
3. A list of Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialists (CDRS) in Alabama, and a list of Registered and Licensed Occupational Therapists (OTR/L) in Alabama who are Low Vision Certified and have been working in low vision for at least one year.
4. Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) Assessment form to be completed by a CDRS.
5. Bioptic Lens Waiver to be completed by your local Department of Public Safety Driver Licensing office.
6. Certification of Completion of Adequate Training in Use of Bioptic to be completed by an Occupational Therapist (OTR/L).

After receiving the Bioptic Driving packet from the Alabama Department of Public Safety, THE PATIENT SHOULD CARRY ALL THE FORMS IN THE PACKET TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENTS. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL INTERFERE WITH THE PATIENT'S ABILITY TO GET ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION NEEDED TO BECOME A LICENSED DRIVER.

1. Schedule a visit with an ophthalmologist or optometrist who will evaluate and record the results from the visual acuity testing and visual field testing on the vision form in the packet. The patient needs to get a copy of their visual field print-out from their doctor to add to their packet. In addition, the patient should make sure that the doctor has recorded the visual acuity with the carrier lens and the bioptic on the vision form. If the patient does not meet the above mentioned "Visual Criteria for Bioptic Driving", the patient may not drive with the bioptic in Alabama and there is no need to proceed with steps 2-5 below.
2. Schedule an appointment with an occupational therapist (see list from the Alabama Department of Public Safety). During this visit the occupational therapist will provide training on skills needed for safe bioptic driving. This may take several visits. After the patient has successfully completed training in the use of the bioptic, the occupational therapist will complete and sign the bioptic training form. The patient must wait 6 months after getting their bioptic, in order to get familiar with using it, before they can participate in on-road training (see step 4 below). It is a good idea to go ahead and schedule the on-road training with a Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist as soon as you know you qualify for bioptic use based on Step #1, since these Specialists are typically booked up months in advance.

3. Go to your local Driver Licensing office. The patient should make sure he or she brings the vision form and bioptic training form with you. Here the patient will take the written driver license exam. If the patient passes the written test, the Alabama Department of Public Safety will sign the Bioptic Lens Waiver form indicating permission to drive. The patient will need to have this permission from the Alabama Department of Public Safety before he or she is able to begin on-road training with the bioptic.
4. Schedule an appointment with a Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) to begin driver training with the bioptic. There is a list of Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialists in Alabama in your packet. The patient should make sure to bring the Bioptic Lens Waiver form granting permission to drive in Alabama for the purpose of the bioptic driver training sessions. After successful completion of on-road bioptic training and evaluation, the Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist will sign the Certification of Completion of Adequate Training in Use of Bioptic form.
5. After all the above training is complete and all forms are signed, take all completed forms to a local Alabama Department of Public Safety Driver Licensing Office where the on-road test for licensure will be taken. It is advisable to contact Sgt. Hollifield ahead of time in the Driver Licensing office of the Alabama Department of Public Safety at (334) 242-3427 to ensure that the appropriate personnel will be available at the office you are going to.

This information sheet is available on our web site as a document for download. It is also available in a large print version on the web site.

Go to:

www.eyes.uab.edu/driving