

OLDER DRIVER LICENSING POLICIES AND PRACTICES DATABASE UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety conducted a nationwide review of state licensing policies and practices related to older and medically-at-risk drivers. The review covered topics such as vision and other license renewal requirements, reporting of medically-at-risk drivers, the medical review process, restrictions that could be placed on a driver's license, license examiner and staff training, and public outreach efforts to older drivers. The information gathered in the review was used to create the online Driver Licensing Policies and Practices (DLPP) database, which contained details on each state's policies and practices. The information in the database has not been thoroughly updated since the completion of the project in 2009. The objective of this project was to document current, relevant driver licensing practices and policies for all 50 states and the District of Columbia in order to update and expand the DLPP database.

RESULTS

Individual state responses can be found at <http://lpp.seniordrivers.org/>. Highlights of the findings for all 50 states and the District of Columbia are provided below. Any use of the term "state" applies to all 51 jurisdictions.

- States have a variety of renewal cycle lengths ranging from every year to every 12 years. Twenty-one states currently have shorter renewal cycles (required or optional) based on the age of the driver.
- In-person renewal at a licensing office is required by 45 states. Fourteen of these states require that every renewal be in person, 29 states require every other renewal be in person, and two states require every third renewal be in person. Sixteen states have policies in place requiring older drivers to renew in person more frequently than their younger counterparts.
- On-site visual acuity testing is conducted by 37 states for drivers of all ages during routine in-person license renewal, while four states only test visual acuity when drivers reach a prescribed age.
- Twenty-three states perform visual field testing during in-person license renewal for all ages, while three states only conduct such testing for older drivers.
- No states reported testing contrast sensitivity during routine in-person license renewal.
- Forty-seven states ask an applicant to self-report medical conditions during license renewal regardless of age. Of these, 17 ask an applicant to self-report irrespective of whether the renewal is in person, online, or via mail, while the other 30 only inquire if the renewal is in person.

ABOUT

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a nonprofit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.AAAFoundation.org for more information.

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- All states allow physicians to report a medically-at-risk driver, and six states also have circumstances under which physicians are required to report such drivers.
- Forty-six states allow family members to report a medically-at-risk driver, with slightly fewer (38) allowing friends or acquaintances to report a driver.
- Nearly all states accept law enforcement reports of medically-at-risk drivers.
- A Medical Advisory Board is currently active in 35 states.
- Nearly all states can impose some form of driving restriction(s) on the license of a medically-at-risk driver.
- In 45 states, medical review staff make decisions about imposing restrictions or conditions on licenses of medically-at-risk drivers. Seventeen states indicated that central licensing office staff can make decisions related to restrictions. Local examiners can make decisions about imposing restrictions on medically-at-risk drivers in 30 states, but their level of discretion varies depending on the state.
- Twenty-five states have specialized examiners who complete training specifically on older and/or medically-at-risk driver issues. Another eight states provide some form of specialized training to all local examiners.
- Twenty-four states provide information about general health and driving fitness in their state driver licensing handbook. Other topics covered less frequently include aging and driving (11 states), how to report and at-risk driver (11 states), the decision to stop driving and surrender a license (4 states), and driving alternatives (3 states). Twenty-four states maintain a website with information specifically for older drivers, and 20 maintain a website with information for medically-at-risk drivers.

METHODOLOGY

The basic study approach involved using the 2009 DLPP database as the stimulus material for an online survey of state licensing personnel that was supplemented with telephone or email follow-ups by the study staff. Rather than providing all new information, the respondent simply had to verify the accuracy of existing DLPP information. If the information was no longer accurate, the respondent was asked to specify the change and to provide updated information. Information was collected between January and April 2019.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Graham, L.A., Darrah, J.R. & Thomas, F.D. (2020). Older Driver Licensing Policies and Practices Database Update. Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

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