

National Overview of Driver Education



DOT HS 811 591

"National Overview of Driver Education" (April 2008), available at www.nhtsa.gov/DriverEducationProgram, is a three-part document. The first part is a 6-page description and very general summary of the findings of the main element of the report. This was an investigation to collect information from the 50 States and the District of Columbia regarding their driver education requirements, delivery systems, teacher training, and licensing requirements for novice drivers under age 18. When available, information was obtained regarding funding for the programs.

All this data was collected through a comprehensive Web-based investigation, through personal interviews, and from document collection through mailings and electronic means. It resulted in some 1,475 pages of rough data, which was then condensed and developed into individual State summaries. Relevant documents were inserted into the summaries and further synthesized into individual State tables. A document was then developed that comprised three sections. The first contains a General Report on Findings. Section 2 contains one page charts covering various topics for each State. This information is a condensed version of Section 3. Section 3 holds multiple-page summaries about each State's driver education and driver licensing programs.

In the 1970s in all States and the District of Columbia, about 95 percent of eligible students received driver education coursework, usually in their high schools. Back then, most States had one to five staff members who were put in charge of supervising driver education programs, supporting and monitoring local school districts in the program's delivery. There were funds available for program delivery and effective monitoring. Now, there are minimal or no funds available for effective program management in States and jurisdictions. Of States that now offer driver education in their school systems, there are approximately only 17 State supervisors of driver education programs. The majority of the programs have only one person managing these programs in an entire State. Programs often lack monitoring. Many programs, in whole or in part, have been removed from the schools altogether, or are only offered after school, on weekends, or during summer vacation. Many have been turned over to for-profit commercial firms, or have transitioned into parent-taught programs.

The basic training system "back in the day" was the so-called "30 & 6" program that featured 30 hours of classroom education and only 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training. Now, only 20 States still have that basic methodology.

Also, most States have introduced graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs that require a three-step licensing process for novice drivers.

