# Driver Education

## Certain aspects of the driver's education program could be improved

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## Why we did this review

In response to fatal crashes among teenage drivers, Joshua's Law (2005) instituted requirements for driver's education courses, which must be approved by the Department of Driver Services (DDS). Joshua's Law also established the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) to maximize participation in driver's education and training.

This audit examined the extent to which DDS's driver's education program adheres to statutory and industry standards and improves safety outcomes. The audit also determined how GDEC funding for driver's education scholarships compares to course costs and demand.

## About DDS and GDEC

DDS was established in 2005 to replace the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety. In fiscal year 2023, DDS regulated approximately 860 programs, including more than 200 driver training schools. In fiscal year 2023, more than 85,000 students completed a driver's education course.

GDEC was established in 2005 and implemented its scholarship program in 2017 to offset the cost of driver's education courses. In fiscal year 2023, GDEC awarded more than 6,000 scholarships with a total redeemed value of $2.2 million.

# Driver's Education

## Certain aspects of the driver's education program could be improved

### What we found

We identified areas in which DDS could improve its driver's education program based on recommended standards. We also found that driver's education funding serves a small portion of teen drivers and that research on safety outcomes is mixed.

***Georgia's requirements are comparable to most other states but do not always meet recommended standards.***

Georgia's driver's education and training requirements were established in state law to improve safety outcomes. Though similar to other states, certain aspects of these requirements and DDS's program administration do not align with recommended standards.

- **Driver's education and training requirements** – Requirements related to classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel training, and supervised driving are less stringent than recommended standards but similar to other states. However, Georgia differs from most other states by allowing teens the option of completing the parent/teen driving guide (an activity workbook) in lieu of behind-the-wheel training with an instructor.

- **Virtual courses** – State law allows the classroom instruction portion of driver's education to be completed virtually, either synchronously (instructor-led, remote classroom) or asynchronously (self-paced course). Other states commonly allow for virtual driver's education, although some do not permit asynchronous courses. Recommended standards include requirements for asynchronous and synchronous virtual courses, some of which DDS lacks.

- **Driver's education curricula** – DDS has developed curricula standards and reviews providers' curriculum to ensure it adheres to those standards. DDS's standards

partially align with recommended standards, but they do not address some topics, such as vehicle safety technologies. Additionally, the curricula review process is lengthy, and approved curricula are outdated.

### Georgia designates funds for driver's education scholarships, but these scholarships serve a small portion of teen drivers.

GDEC offers scholarships for the more traditional driver's education method (classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel training); however, scholarships are subject to funding constraints, and recent program changes have generally limited eligible applicants. Prior to fiscal year 2023, all students were eligible for a scholarship, but priority was given to students meeting certain criteria. Beginning in fiscal year 2023, eligibility became primarily limited to those demonstrating financial need. Consequently, GDEC received fewer applications from eligible students (across all tiers) but funded a higher percentage of those applicants.

We found that GDEC's inability to retain funds limits the number of scholarships awarded. Scholarships are funded through the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF), a 3% surcharge added to traffic citations. GDEC is not allowed to retain unused funds at the end of the fiscal year, which creates challenges given the scholarship's life cycle—students have six to eight months to complete courses; if unused, GDEC may not be able to distribute to a new recipient before the fiscal year ends. Since fiscal year 2019, GDEC reported remitting $1.4 million in unused funds, which equates to approximately 3,400 additional scholarships.

### Research on the driver's education effectiveness is mixed; however, a Georgia study found better outcomes among teens who obtain classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel training.

Young driver related fatalities declined over several decades but have fluctuated in recent years. Fatality trends have likely been driven by many factors including teens waiting longer to obtain licenses, licensing restrictions, improved vehicle safety technology, and traffic law education and enforcement. Nationally, research on the extent to which crashes and fatalities are reduced by driver's education is mixed, with some studies finding no positive effects and others reporting modest positive impacts. In Georgia, a 2021 study conducted by the Strategic Research Group found that drivers completing in-person instruction and behind-the-wheel training with an instructor experienced better outcomes than drivers completing virtual courses and parent/teen driving guides.

## What we recommend

We recommend that DDS explore options to better align the driver's education program with recommended standards. Specifically, DDS should strengthen requirements for virtual courses and improve its curriculum standards and review process.

To maximize driver's education scholarship funding, we recommend additional advertising and continued monitoring of demand. We also recommend that the General Assembly consider establishing a driver's education fund that would prevent scholarship funds from lapsing.

See **Appendix A** for a detailed listing of recommendations.

*Agency Response: DDS disagreed with portions of the report—including the use of recommended standards and the impact of driver's education on safety outcomes—but agreed or partially agreed with several recommendations related to virtual courses and curriculum. GDEC also disagreed with the impact on safety outcomes but partially agreed with the findings related to course requirements and scholarships. Both DDS's and GDEC's responses included additional details pertaining to their points of disagreement, which are included at the end of each finding along with auditor responses.*

# Table of Contents

## Purpose of the Audit

This report examines the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) driver's education program. Specifically, our audit set out to determine the following:

- How does DDS ensure driver's education adheres to statutory and industry-standard content requirements?

- How does the funding allocation compare to driver's education course costs and demand?

- Does research indicate that driver's education courses are achieving the intended safety outcomes?

A description of the objectives, scope, and methodology used in this review is included in **Appendix B**. A draft of the report was provided to DDS and the Georgia Driver's Education Commission for their review, and pertinent responses were incorporated into the report.
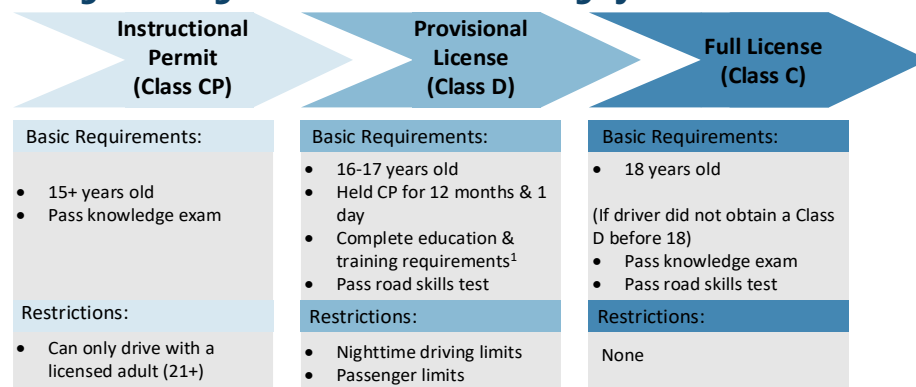
## Background

### Overview of Driver's Education

Young drivers face higher risks for motor vehicle accidents, and crashes are one of the leading causes of death for the group. To reduce this risk, states have implemented graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems and driver's education programs. A GDL system is a segmented approach to licensure that is typically broken into three phases—instructional, provisional, and unrestricted.

In Georgia, the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) was enacted in 1997, establishing the GDL system for drivers aged 15-18. Under the GDL requirements set in O.C.G.A. § 40-5-24, at age 16 teenagers may obtain a Class D provisional license that limits nighttime driving hours and the number of passengers in the car. At age 18, drivers are eligible to upgrade to a Class C license with full driving privileges, as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

### Exhibit 1

### Georgia has a graduated driver licensing system

| Instructional Permit (Class CP) | Provisional License (Class D) | Full License (Class C) |
|---|---|---|
| **Basic Requirements:** | **Basic Requirements:** | **Basic Requirements:** |
| • 15+ years old<br>• Pass knowledge exam | • 16-17 years old<br>• Held CP for 12 months & 1 day<br>• Complete education & training requirements[1]<br>• Pass road skills test | • 18 years old<br><br>(If driver did not obtain a Class D before 18)<br>• Pass knowledge exam<br>• Pass road skills test |
| **Restrictions:** | **Restrictions:** | **Restrictions:** |
| • Can only drive with a licensed adult (21+) | • Nighttime driving limits<br>• Passenger limits | None |

[1] Includes Joshua's Law requirements and a four-hour Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program

Source: State law

In 2005, Georgia's Joshua's Law amended TADRA by adding driver's education requirements to the existing GDL framework. TADRA then required 16-year-olds to complete a driver's education course approved by the Department of Driver Services (DDS) to obtain a Class D license. The course consists of 30 hours of classroom instruction and six hours of behind-the-wheel (BTW) training (known as the "30/6" model) and is in addition to the 40 hours of supervised driving already required by TADRA. In 2021, the law (O.C.G.A. § 40-5-22) was expanded to require driver's education for 17-year-olds.

As shown in **Exhibit 2**, there are four methods to complete driver's education in Georgia. Teens can take the 30-hour classroom portion either in person or virtually.[1] The 6-hour BTW training segment can be completed at a driving school with a certified instructor or can be replaced by the 40-hour parent-teen driving guide, a workbook of structured activities (e.g., parallel parking, driving in traffic, etc.) that must be completed under the supervision of a parent or guardian.

**Exhibit 2**

**Teens can choose among four methods to complete driver's education**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Method 1** | 30 hours classroom instruction ➕ | 6 hours behind-the-wheel ➕ | 40 hours supervised driving with parent |
| **Method 2** | 30 hours classroom instruction ➕ | Parent/teen driving guide (includes 40 hours supervised driving) | |
| **Method 3** | 30 hours virtual course ➕ | 6 hours behind-the-wheel ➕ | 40 hours supervised driving with parent |
| **Method 4** | 30 hours virtual course ➕ | Parent/teen driving guide (includes 40 hours supervised driving) | |

Source: DDS documents

As shown in **Exhibit 3**, driver's education in Georgia is offered by public and private providers. Most technical colleges offer driver's education; however, DDS does not oversee these programs. In fiscal year 2023, more than 85,000 students completed a driver's education course.

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[1] *The in-person option for the 30-hour classroom portion can be taken at a physical location or via synchronous, virtual instruction platforms (e.g., Zoom). The virtual option for Methods 3 and 4 refers to asynchronous virtual courses that are self-paced without an instructor.*

**Exhibit 3**

**Driver's education is offered through private and public providers**

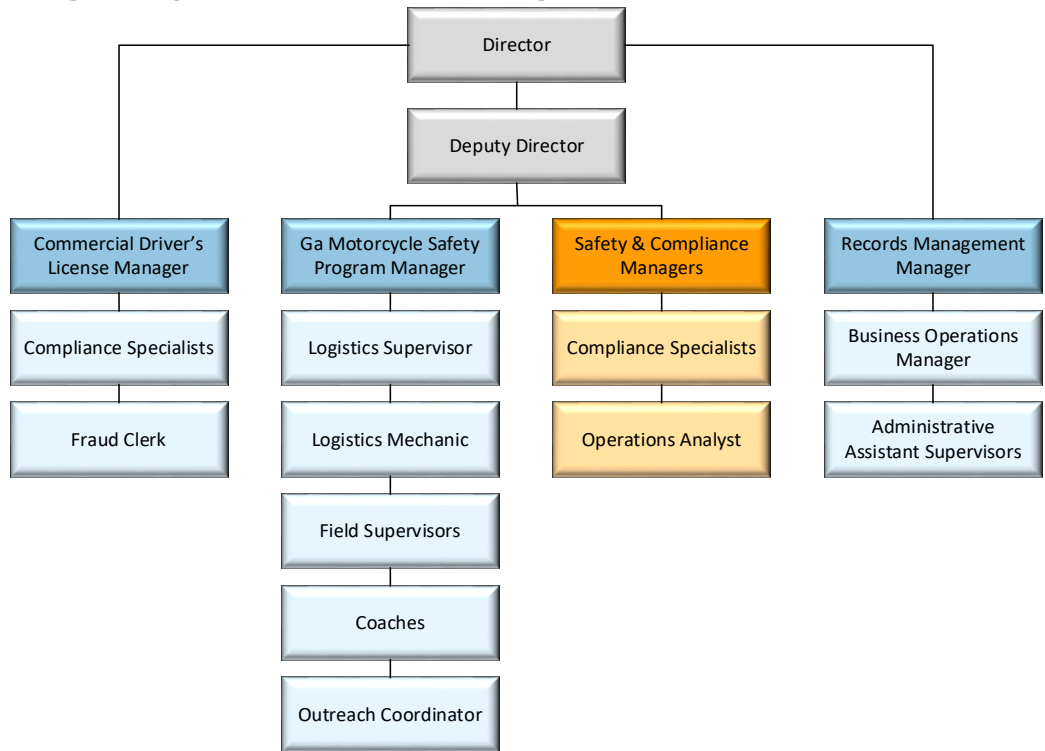| Provider Type | School Count |
|---|---|
| Private Company | 134 |
| High School | 83 |
| Asynchronous Virtual | 11 |
| Technical Colleges[1] | 55 |
| Sheriff's Offices | **3** |

[1] Includes satellite locations
Source: DDS documents

## Department of Driver Services

The Department of Driver Services (DDS) was created in 2005 to replace the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety and is responsible for issuing non-commercial, commercial, and motorcycle licenses. In addition, DDS investigates license and identification card fraud. DDS offers in-person services at its 67 customer service centers, as well as online services.

Within DDS, the Regulatory Compliance Division performs most of the work related to driver's education. Specifically, the division's seven Safety and Compliance specialists (see **Exhibit 4**) certify driver's education training schools and instructors, conduct audits, and approve curricula.

- **Certification** – Certification for new driver training schools is primarily based on compliance with requirements established in DDS's rules and regulations. Schools and instructors must apply for recertification every four years.

- **Audits** – The division annually audits driver training schools to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. For example, the audits ensure that no classes are conducted while licenses are expired, records and contracts are properly maintained, and insurance and safety requirements are met. If any deficiencies are identified, the school must submit a corrective action plan and a follow-up audit is conducted. A school's certification can be revoked as the result of an audit.

- **Curricula Approval** – DDS is responsible for developing curricula standards and approving curricula for driver's education. The division reviews classroom and virtual curricula to ensure they meet the 30-hour requirement and adhere to DDS's content standards. Currently, DDS has 4 approved classroom curricula and 11 approved virtual curricula.

**Exhibit 4**
**DDS Regulatory Compliance Division Organization Chart**

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                              ┌──────────────┐
                              │   Director   │
                              └──────┬───────┘
                                     │
                          ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                          │   Deputy Director   │
                          └──────────┬──────────┘
                                     │
   ┌──────────────┬──────────────────┼──────────────────┬──────────────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐       ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐
│Commercial│ │Ga        │       │Safety &  │      │Records   │
│Driver's  │ │Motorcycle│       │Compliance│      │Management │
│License   │ │Safety    │       │Managers  │      │Manager   │
│Manager   │ │Program   │       └────┬─────┘      └────┬─────┘
└────┬─────┘ │Manager   │            │                 │
     │       └────┬─────┘       ┌────┴─────┐      ┌────┴─────┐
┌────┴─────┐ ┌────┴─────┐       │Compliance│      │Business  │
│Compliance│ │Logistics │       │Specialists│      │Operations│
│Specialists│ │Supervisor│      └────┬─────┘      │Manager   │
└────┬─────┘ └────┬─────┘            │            └────┬─────┘
     │            │            ┌─────┴────┐       ┌────┴─────┐
┌────┴─────┐ ┌────┴─────┐      │Operations│       │Admin     │
│Fraud Clerk│ │Logistics │     │Analyst   │       │Assistant │
└──────────┘ │Mechanic  │      └──────────┘       │Supervisors│
             └────┬─────┘                         └──────────┘
                  │
            ┌─────┴────┐
            │Field     │
            │Supervisors│
            └─────┬────┘
                  │
             ┌────┴───┐
             │Coaches │
             └────┬───┘
                  │
          ┌───────┴──────┐
          │Outreach      │
          │Coordinator   │
          └──────────────┘
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Source: DDS documents

As shown in **Exhibit 5**, DDS's Regulatory Compliance Division expended approximately $964,000 in fiscal year 2023. This represents approximately 1% of DDS's total budget. Personal services account for most of the division's expenditures and has generally increased due to salary supplements for state employees.

**Exhibit 5**
**Regulatory Compliance Division Expenditures (FY 2021-24)**

|  | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Services | $745,629 | $871,306 | $873,835 | $897,957 |
| Regular Operating Expenses | $89,603 | $26,492 | $40,205 | $33,432 |
| Equipment | $- | $- | $- | $10,106 |
| Computer Charges | $693 | $51 | $1,862 | $16,234 |
| Telecommunications | $41,482 | $46,481 | $48,262 | $37,979 |
| Contracts | $- | $10,000 | $- | $- |
| Total | $877,407 | $954,330 | $964,164 | $995,708 |

Source: Budget Comparison Reports

### Georgia Driver Education Commission

Administratively held under the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), the Georgia Driver Education Commission (GDEC) was established in 2005 to maximize participation in driver's education and reduce motor vehicle crashes.
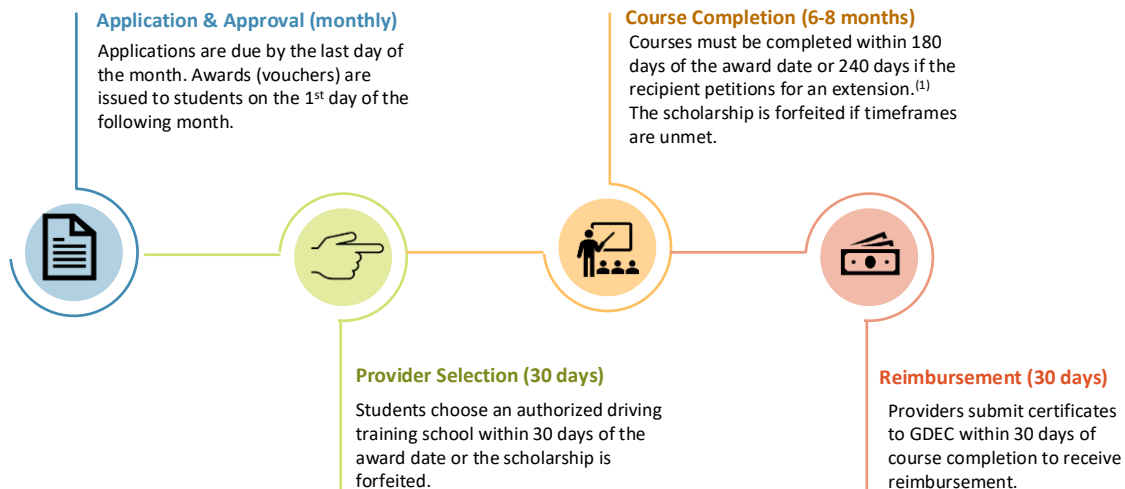
GDEC is composed of eight members—four appointed by the governor, two by DDS, one by GOHS, and one by the State Board of Education.[2]

Beginning in 2007, GDEC initially provided grants to public high schools and libraries to make driver's education more accessible throughout the state. Beginning in fiscal year 2017, GDEC began providing student scholarships for driver's education using a tier-based priority system. Scholarships cover up to $500 for teens to complete driver's education using Method 1 (30 classroom/6 BTW) through an authorized provider.

The GDEC scholarship currently has two eligibility tiers. Tier 1 consists of children of first responders who were disabled or killed in the line of duty or military members who were killed in action, as well as children in state custody. Tier 2 is based on financial need, where family income is less than 175% of the free and reduced meal program (e.g., $97,125 for a four-person household during the 2023-2024 school year). Prior to fiscal year 2023, GDEC had a third tier consisting of all other applicants.

As shown in **Exhibit 6**, GDEC scholarship recipients have six to eight months to complete a course. GDEC awards scholarships at the beginning of each month to eligible applicants. Applicants who were not awarded are entered into a reconsideration pool for the subsequent two months before being officially rejected.[3] Awardees have 180 days to complete the driver's education course (or 240 days with an extension) before the scholarship is considered forfeited.

## Exhibit 6
## GDEC awards scholarships monthly and allows 6-8 months for course completion

**Application & Approval (monthly)**
Applications are due by the last day of the month. Awards (vouchers) are issued to students on the 1st day of the following month.

**Course Completion (6-8 months)**
Courses must be completed within 180 days of the award date or 240 days if the recipient petitions for an extension.[1] The scholarship is forfeited if timeframes are unmet.

**Provider Selection (30 days)**
Students choose an authorized driving training school within 30 days of the award date or the scholarship is forfeited.

**Reimbursement (30 days)**
Providers submit certificates to GDEC within 30 days of course completion to receive reimbursement.

[1] Students can request a one-time 60-day extension to increase the timeframe to 240 days. During COVID-19, students could request an additional 90-day extension.
Source: GDEC documents

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[2] *In fiscal year 2023, there were two vacancies for governor-appointed members and one vacancy for the State Board of Education-appointed member.*
[3] *The reconsideration process began in August 2022. Previously, applicants were either approved or denied without the ability to reapply or be reconsidered.*

GDEC and its scholarships are funded through the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF), a surcharge added to traffic citations. Fees collected in one fiscal year are then appropriated to GDEC in the next fiscal year. The surcharge was originally 5% in 2005 before decreasing to 1.5% in 2013. The legislation authorizing the surcharge expired in July 2022, and the bill that would have increased the surcharge and eliminated the sunset provision did not pass. As a result, the surcharge was eliminated, and collections were effectively ceased during fiscal year 2023. Effective July 1, 2023, House Bill 242 reinstated the surcharge at 3%.

As shown in **Exhibit 7**, GDEC has awarded approximately $1.6-$2.2 million in scholarships between fiscal years 2019 and 2023. The total number of available scholarships largely depends on the amount of surcharge fees collected in the prior fiscal year. GDEC must remit any unused funds at the end of each fiscal year.

**Exhibit 7**
**GDEC Funds and Scholarship Activities (FY 2019-23)**

| FY | Surcharge Funds | Appropriations | Scholarship Value[1] | Redeemed Scholarships |
|----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2019 | $2,978,971 | $3,004,584 | $2,037,392 | 4,964 |
| 2020 | $2,649,639 | $2,978,971 | $1,806,168 | 4,296 |
| 2021 | $2,489,649 | $2,649,639 | $2,045,268 | 4,786 |
| 2022 | $2,785,080 | $2,489,649 | $1,653,417 | 3,867 |
| 2023 | $1,495,071 | $2,785,080 | $2,194,282 | 4,902 |

[1] Represents the value of all redeemed scholarships. Scholarships that were forfeited are not included.

Source: GDEC Annual Reports

## Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1:    Georgia's basic course and training requirements are comparable to most other states; however, also like other states, they do not align with all recommended standards.
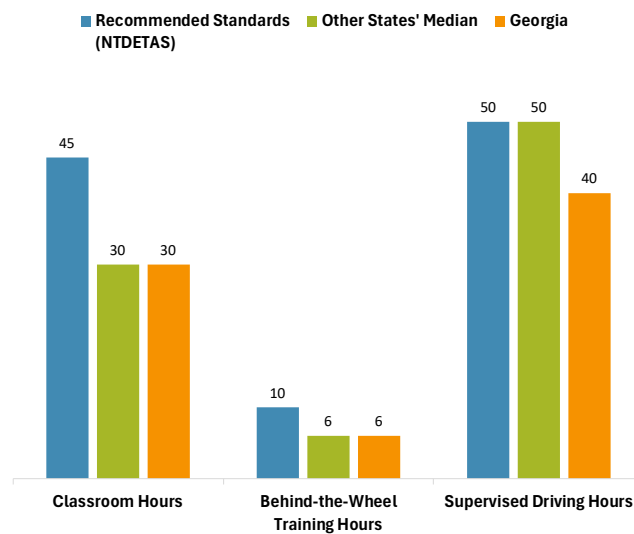
NTDETAS is approved by the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education (ANSTSE), a group of national stakeholders committed to improving driver education.

While NTDETAs recommends minimum hours and other course requirements, it is important to note that the impact of driver's education on safety outcomes is unclear (see page 24).

Georgia's requirements related to classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel training, and supervised driving are generally similar to most other states. However, the number of hours mandated and other requirements (e.g., class size) are less stringent than recommended standards. No other states reviewed met all the recommended standards.

Georgia's driver education and training requirements are established in O.C.G.A. Title 40 Chapter 5. To evaluate Georgia's requirements, we reviewed the Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards (NTDETAS), which were developed by subject matter experts and sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safey Administration (NHTSA). NTDETAS provides recommendations for states to promote consistency and quality among driver education programs. We also compiled requirements for the other 49 states through a website review and interviewed five states[4] for more in-depth information. As shown in **Exhibit 8**, Georgia's requirements for classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel training, and supervised driving are generally similar to other states but fall short of the NTDETAS recommendations.

**Exhibit 8**

**Georgia's requirements do not meet recommended standards but are comparable to most other states[1]**



Legend: Recommended Standards (NTDETAS) — Other States' Median — Georgia

| | Classroom Hours | Behind-the-Wheel Training Hours | Supervised Driving Hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recommended Standards (NTDETAS) | 45 | 10 | 50 |
| Other States' Median | 30 | 6 | 50 |
| Georgia | 30 | 6 | 40 |

[1] Other states' median was calculated based on the states that had requirements in place.
Source: NTDETAS, state law, other states' websites

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[4] *The five states interviewed were North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, West Virginia, and Utah. These states were selected based on geographic proximity and best practices.*

- **Classroom Instruction** – Georgia's classroom instruction requirement is the same as most other states but do not meet recommended standards. NTDETAS recommends 45 hours of classroom instruction, but Georgia requires 30 hours. Similarly, most other states (34) require classroom instruction, with a median of 30 hours.[5] Of the 34 states, 5 require less than 30 hours, 26 require 30 hours, and 3 require more than 30 hours (none meet/exceed 45 hours).[6]

  NTDETAS also recommends that courses be limited to 30 students and distributed over a period of 30 or more days, with a maximum of 120 minutes of instruction per day.[7] Georgia's regulations establish a maximum class size of 40 students but do not include requirements for spreading out instructional time (we identified examples of courses conducted within a week or scheduled for eight hours on weekends). Of the five states we interviewed, three had limits related to spacing out classroom instructional hours and/or class size, but these did not necessarily meet the recommended standards. For example, one state limited in-person class sizes to 36 students and instructional time to 10 hours in a 7-day period, or 3 hours a day.

- **Behind-the-Wheel Training** – Georgia's requirement is the same as most other states but below recommended standards. NTDETAS recommends at least 10 hours of behind-the-wheel training with a certified instructor, but Georgia only requires 6 hours. Similar to Georgia, 31 other states require behind-the-wheel training—a median of 6 hours, with 1 requiring less than six hours, 23 requiring six hours, and 8 requiring more than six hours. However, Georgia is unique among most other states because it allows teens the option of completing the parent/teen driving guide instead of behind-the-wheel training. While the parent/teen driving guide option is more accessible, it may also be less effective (see text box on page 9).

  NTDETAS also recommends that behind-the-wheel training be limited to 90 minutes per day per student. Georgia does not have a limit, and many providers offer the training in two-hour segments. Three of the five states we interviewed had limits for behind-the-wheel training. For example, one state limited training to 30 minutes per session and one hour in a 24-hour period.

- **Supervised Driving** – Georgia's supervised driving requirements do not meet recommended standards and fall slightly below other states. NTDETAS recommends at least 50 hours, including 10 nighttime hours, and stipulate that supervised driving hours should not be reduced by driver's education completion. Georgia requires 40 hours of supervised driving, including 6 nighttime hours, regardless of driver education

In addition to 45 classroom and 10 behind-the-wheel hours, NTDETAS recommends 10 "flexible" hours that could include additional classroom time, in-car observation, range, etc. Most states do not require this.

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[5] *The 34 states do not include states that give teens the option between completing driver's education or supervised driving hours with parents.*
[6] *New Mexico requires 56 hours if the student did not take behind-the-wheel training. Montana requires 54 hours, but that could include up to 12 in-car observation hours in addition to classroom hours.*
[7] *Educational research indicates that spreading out learning over time improves retention.*

course completion. Most other states (45) also require supervised driving, with a median of 50 hours (33 states met or exceeded the recommended 50 hours, 8 states required 40-45 hours, and 4 states required 30 or fewer hours).

States vary in their requirements for documenting supervised driving hours. In Georgia, parents/guardians are required to sign an affidavit attesting to the completion of the 40 hours. Other states have a mix of documentation requirements—some require affidavits or similar forms while others require logs documenting information such as hours, time of day, weather conditions, and/or skills practiced. Several states allow supervised driving hours to be electronically monitored using an app.

## In Georgia, the parent/teen driving guide is often used instead of training with an instructor

Unlike most other states, Georgia statute allows teens to forgo behind-the-wheel training with an instructor by completing a parent/teen driving guide. The guide includes a workbook of activities such as parallel parking, driving in traffic, etc. In fiscal year 2023, 61% of teens completing driver's education requirements utilized the parent/teen driving guide.

The parent/teen driving guide provides a more affordable option for teens but creates additional risks. The guide is free, while instructor-led training typically costs $300-$500. However, because they are only required to sign an affidavit, parents/guardians may not actually complete the guide. DDS staff indicated that they used to require more documentation but felt that it did not provide additional assurance that the guide would be completed.

**Most teens use parent/teen driving guide**



Parent/Teen Driving Guide **61%**

Behind-the-Wheel Training **39%**

Source: DDS data

A 2021 study prepared for GDEC found that drivers who used the parent/teen guide were involved in more crashes and had more convictions compared to drivers completing behind-the-wheel training with an instructor. For example, the number of convictions among young drivers using Method 3 (virtual course and behind-the-wheel training) was 17.7% lower than young drivers using Method 4 (virtual course and parent/teen guide). Similarly, the number of convictions among young drivers using Method 1 (classroom course and behind-the-wheel training) was 17.3% lower than Method 2 young drivers (classroom course and parent/teen driving guide).

*DDS Response: DDS disagreed with this finding, emphasizing that no state meets all standards. DDS noted that it regularly communicates with other states and exchanges feedback through the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators and that it evaluates practices to ensure alignment with other states' standards. DDS also noted that the report does not provide data proving the need for additional requirements, that NTDETAS are only recommendations, and that the report focuses on 3 of 26 NTDETAS standards. DDS stated that none of the five states interviewed are in NHTSA region 4, which Georgia is more in line with.*

*DDS also stated that requirements and timeframes are not arbitrarily decided and are consistent with state law (a legislative change would be needed to increase). DDS reiterated that Georgia's classroom instruction*

*and behind-the-wheel training requirements are the same as most states reviewed (91% for classroom instruction and 75% for behind-the-wheel training). DDS indicated that it was unaware of data supporting class size restrictions or instructional time limits. Lastly, DDS noted that the option of completing the parent/teen driving guide is a statutory requirement and that costs and accessibility in rural areas create challenges.*

***GDEC Response:*** *GDEC partially agreed with this finding. GDEC agreed with using NTDETAS as recommended best practices for improving the quality of driver education and training programs but indicated concerns with the limited number of NTDETAS standards included. GDEC noted that the NTDETAS report includes 26 standards across five sections (program administration, education/training, training qualification, licensing, and parental involvement) but not all standards were used to draw conclusions.*

***Auditor's Response:*** *The finding compares Georgia's requirements to other states and NTDETAS recommendations. The NTDETAS were developed by subject matter experts and sponsored by NHTSA. For the other states comparison, we reviewed all other states, including NHTSA region 4, regarding hours required for classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel training, and supervised driving. For additional information on course requirements, we interviewed five states that were selected based on best practices, geographic location, and availability.*

*While this finding focused on the NTDETAS standards pertaining to basic course requirements and supervised driving, Findings 2, 3, and 4 include a review of curricula, virtual and online instruction, and funding using NTDETAS as criteria.*

**Finding 2:**   DDS should monitor the use of virtual driver's education courses and consider establishing additional requirements.

Unlike some other states, students in Georgia can complete driver's education courses virtually, which vary from instructor-led to self-paced courses. Although the virtual options are utilized more frequently than traditional in-person courses, DDS lacks some virtual requirements that are recommended by standards.

O.C.G.A. § 40-5-10 authorizes driver's education to be completed either in-person or virtually. Virtual courses can be either asynchronous (in which the student takes a self-paced course) or synchronous (led by an instructor in real time using a remote participation platform). DDS tracks the use of asynchronous courses, but synchronous courses are combined with in-person courses in its data. DDS recently developed guidelines requiring providers to note in the comments when a course is being taught remotely, but there is not a field that allows for easy tracking and analysis.

The use of asynchronous virtual courses has been increasing, as shown in **Exhibit 9**. Of the 63,000 teens completing the educational requirement in fiscal year 2019, approximately 35,000 (56%) chose an asynchronous course. By fiscal year 2023, the percentage had increased to 70%, with the number of teens choosing asynchronous courses totaling nearly 60,000.

**Exhibit 9**

**The use of asynchronous courses has increased**
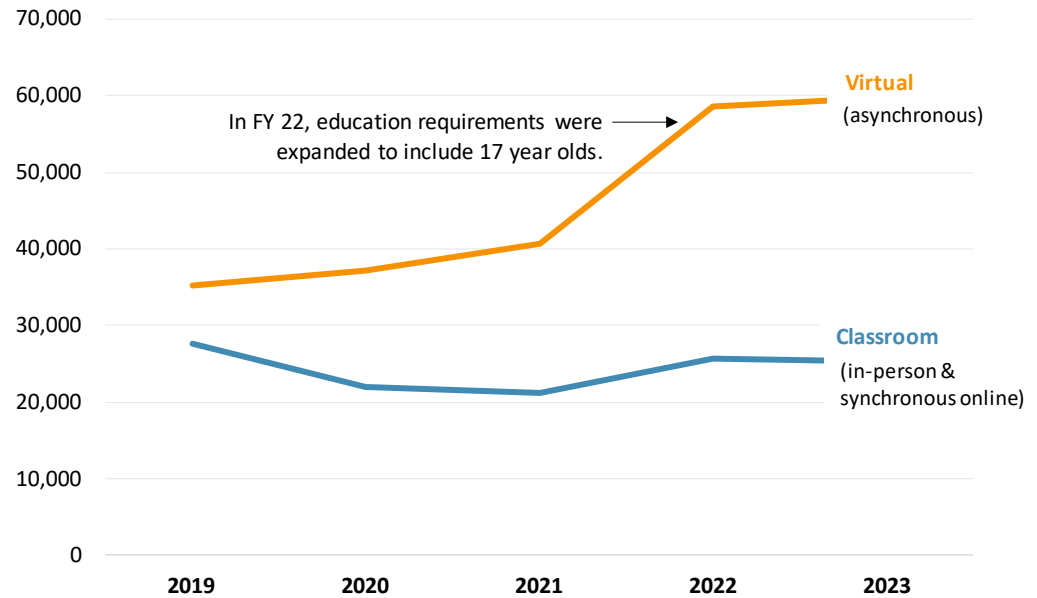


Source: DDS data

The increasing use of asynchronous courses may be because they are a more accessible and affordable option. As shown in **Exhibit 10**, some areas of the state have few, if any, driver's education providers. While teens from areas without driver's education providers may be able to take a synchronous virtual course with a provider in a different area, they might not be aware of this option (DDS does not track or identify these providers like it does for other provider types).[8] Asynchronous courses are also more affordable than in-person courses, with costs averaging $37 for asynchronous courses and approximately $150 for instructor-led courses.[9]

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[8] *DDS maintains a list of all certified driver's education providers on its website. The providers are organized by type (e.g., private, high school, asynchronous) so students can filter by their preferred type.*
[9] *The average cost for instructor-led courses is based on a sample of 39 providers. Cost information for synchronous online courses is not widely available because these courses are still considered traditional classroom courses.*

**Exhibit 10**
**Driver's education providers are concentrated in metropolitan areas**
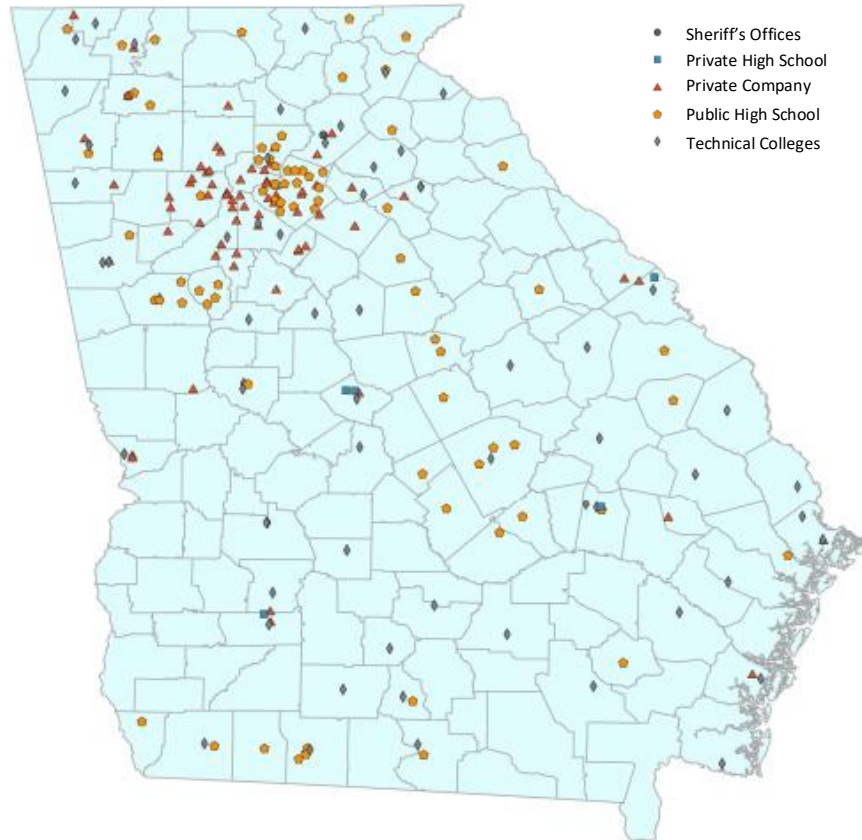


Source: DDS data

While asynchronous virtual courses may improve accessibility, the increasing use of such courses is worth further consideration because they may be less effective. In 2021, an evaluation of driver's education in Georgia found that teens using asynchronous courses had worse outcomes compared to teens completing classroom courses. For example, the number of convictions among students who had completed classroom instruction was 9% lower compared to students completing asynchronous courses.

Most other states we reviewed do not allow for asynchronous courses, with some noting concerns regarding effectiveness. Of the 20 states we reviewed, 15 allowed for virtual courses, but only 9 allowed for those courses to be asynchronous. Some states, such as Tennessee and Washington, allowed for virtual instruction during COVID but have since returned to only in-person instruction. Other states only allow virtual courses under certain conditions. For example, Utah[10] approves a student based on factors including academic performance and teacher/counselor

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[10] *Approval for online instruction is only applicable for teens taking driver's education offered in public high schools, which is overseen by the Utah Board of Education. Utah's Department of Public Safety regulates private providers and has approved curricula for asynchronous courses.*

recommendation, and Virginia only allows asynchronous courses to be offered through licensed, brick-and-mortar driver education schools.

NTDETAS allows for the use of virtual courses but recommend state agencies implement additional requirements. Standards cover both asynchronous and synchronous courses and are generally related to course technology and design to maximize student participation and prevent cheating. As discussed below, DDS lacks some of these recommended requirements.

- **Synchronous Courses** – NTDETAS recommends that states establish requirements that specify how to organize, communicate, and deliver curriculum. At a minimum, requirements should include verifying a student's identity for attendance, utilizing approved instructors trained in virtual driver's education, providing course information (e.g., expected response time), ensuring resources are accessible, and safeguarding confidential student information. Requirements should also address student engagement expectations, including cameras on, student-to-student interactions, active monitoring by the instructor, and policies for addressing student inactivity.

  DDS lacks some recommended requirements. For example, DDS requires instructors to be certified but does not mandate training specific to virtual education. DDS also does not have requirements for the technological design of synchronous virtual courses. DDS management stated that synchronous courses were not utilized until the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unexpected event forced a hurried implementation. As previously mentioned, DDS is currently developing guidelines for synchronous courses that would address some of these issues (e.g., cameras on), but the drafted guidelines do not cover all the recommended topics or only provide vague guidance (e.g., "instructors are responsible for monitoring and engaging students").

- **Asynchronous Courses** – NTDETAS recommends many of the same requirements for asynchronous courses, such as utilizing approved instructors with training in virtual driver's education, providing course information, ensuring accessibility, and protecting confidential student information. Standards also specify that instructors should monitor courses and facilitate student interaction through asynchronous modes such as message boards. Other recommended requirements include verifying student identity randomly throughout the course, tracking the amount of time logged in and work completed, and automatically logging students out after a specified amount of inactivity.

  DDS requires asynchronous providers to track students' time; however, other technological capabilities, such as automatically logging out students for inactivity, are not explicitly required. DDS indicated some providers may already have these capabilities in place, but without a requirement there is no assurance this occurs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DDS should improve its data system so the agency can identify and track participation in synchronous virtual courses and use this information to monitor accessibility.

2. As it begins to track synchronous virtual courses, DDS should consider the feasibility of providing this information to students on its website.

3. To better align with recommended standards, DDS should implement additional guidelines for both asynchronous and synchronous virtual courses.

*Agency Response: DDS partially agreed with this finding, noting that DDS allows driver's education providers to have flexibility in choosing whether to offer in-person, synchronous virtual, or hybrid courses. DDS indicated that this allows driver training schools the "flexibility to accommodate their customer base, serve more families, and expand their business opportunities."*

*Recommendation 2.1: DDS partially agreed with this recommendation, stating that it does not currently have the ability to track this information but is in the beginning stages of updating its system and will consider collecting relevant data on synchronous courses.*

*Recommendation 2.2: While DDS stated it disagreed with this recommendation, it indicated it will add a statement to the website directing customers to research schools for the types of classes that fit their needs. They indicated that schools often pivot between virtual and in-person courses based on customers and business interests and schools are responsible for marketing. DDS also noted that it currently lists all certified schools on its website, but it would be an administrative burden to track synchronous courses for more than 200 schools.*

*Recommendation 2.3: DDS partially agreed with this recommendation, noting the challenges that most states encountered by having to hurriedly implement remote classrooms during the pandemic. DDS developed Remote Classroom Training Guidelines that were initially planned for implementation in June 2024 but will be delayed to incorporate more recommended changes.*

Finding 3:    DDS could improve curricula standards and the processes for approving and monitoring curricula.

DDS's content standards partially cover the content included in recommended standards, but some topics are not required and DDS lacks guidelines for behind-the-wheel training. DDS reviews classroom curricula to ensure it is accurate and aligned with standards, but we identified process weaknesses related to guidance, documentation, and timeliness. Additionally, many approved curricula are outdated. Lastly, we found that DDS could take additional measures to better monitor course content delivery.

According to the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education (ANSTSE), states should maintain curriculum standards and a list of approved curricula to ensure that driver training schools provide consistent and quality instruction. ANSTSE further recommends that curricula meet or exceed "current nationally recognized curriculum content standards such as those provided by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) and the Driving School Association of the Americas (DSAA)."[11] Per O.C.G.A. § 40-5-10, DDS is responsible for developing curricula standards and approving curricula for driver's education (DDS also approves curricula for other programs, such as driver improvement programs). In addition, DDS is responsible for monitoring driver's education providers to ensure they comply with rules and regulations.

As discussed below, improvements are needed in DDS's driver's education curricula standards, as well as its process for approving and monitoring providers' curricula.

### Curricula Standards

DDS's standards for drivers' education curricula were developed more than 12 years ago and have not been updated since to reflect changes in the driving environment. For example, the standards do not include information regarding vehicle safety technology (e.g., vehicle warning systems, vehicle assistance systems). Additionally, DDS's curricula standards do not fully meet the nationally recognized standards developed by ADTSEA or DSAA, as recommended by ANSTSE. Limitations are discussed below.

- ADTSEA and DSAA standards are generally more specific than DDS's and include multiple components per standard. For example, while DDS standards have students identify distractions such as passengers and pets, the comparable ADTSEA standard has students identify distractions inside and outside the vehicle, identify personal factors causing distractions, and develop strategies to deal with distractions.

- DDS standards often include concepts outlined in ADTSEA and DSAA standards, but some recommended concepts are not covered. For

*Curriculum standards refer to the topics and information that courses are required to cover. See Appendix D for DDS's standards.*

*Curriculum is the specific program of instruction, which includes the materials used for the course.*

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[11] *ADTSEA is a nonprofit organization created to improve driver education and training by publishing policies/guidelines, developing educational materials, and conducting conferences, workshops, etc. DSAA is an association of driving school owners that encourages professional development, educational standards, and best practices within the industry.*

example, DDS standards do not require curricula to include topics such as parking maneuvers, traffic stops, advanced technological safety systems, or certain emergency responses (e.g., crash site responsibilities).

- ADTSEA and DSAA have also developed in-car standards for behind-the-wheel (BTW) training, which are designed to be taught concurrently with the theoretical classroom portion of the course. For example, BTW standards have students apply and practice skills related to basic motion control techniques. DDS does not have BTW guidelines that establish the minimum driving skills students must demonstrate, but management noted that teachers are trained on BTW instruction.

It should be noted that in addition to curricula standards, DDS maintains the Georgia Drivers Manual that covers some of the topics that the standards do not encompass and provides in-car driving tips (e.g., how to pass on two-lane road). However, it does not provide a comprehensive list of skills to ensure the in-car instruction portion of driver's education is correlated with classroom standards and encompasses the necessary driving maneuvers.

## Curricula Approval and Monitoring

According to ANSTSE, states should approve curriculum that is accurate, up to date, and aligned with state standards. DDS Regulatory Compliance staff review each submitted curriculum to ensure it contains accurate information and aligns with DDS standards. However, the review process is lengthy and does not ensure that curricula remain up to date.

Between 2015 and 2020, DDS reviewed and approved seven curricula, averaging more than one year for approval. According to DDS staff, the review process can be time consuming because staff must manually search a submitted curriculum (potentially 1,000 pages of material) to identify content that adheres to its standards. Staff also indicated that submissions often contain inaccurate information or are not fully functional, resulting in the curriculum being returned for corrections multiple times. DDS does not have guidance specific to curricula review, and management emphasized that limited staffing and competing priorities (audits, inspections, etc.) present challenges.

As shown in **Exhibit 11**, three of the four approved classroom curricula are more than 15 years old (the fourth classroom curriculum was last updated in 2020). Of the 11 approved virtual curricula, 4 are more than 12 years old. Outdated curricula may not include topics relating to the current driving environment, especially regarding technological advancements. Once DDS approves a curriculum, DDS does not periodically review it and providers are not required to update it. If a classroom curriculum provider chooses to update its curriculum, DDS does not review the update.[12]

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[12] *DDS does require virtual curricula to be reviewed again if updated. In 2018, one virtual provider updated its curriculum.*

**Exhibit 11**

**Nearly half of approved curricula are more than 10 years old**
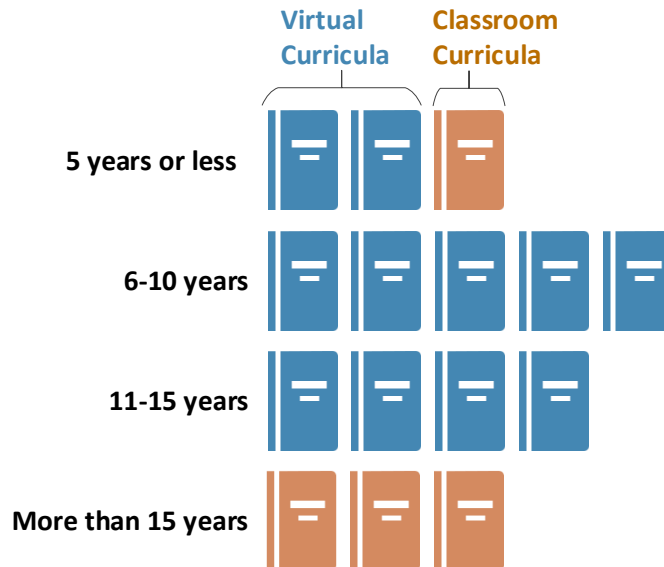


Source: Agency documents

Standards also recommend states monitor providers' instructional delivery methods based on established criteria. Such monitoring should include a post-course evaluation to be completed by participants to assess course effectiveness. DDS conducts annual compliance audits of driver's education providers and conducts instructor monitoring, but the audits do not focus on curricula. Additionally, DDS does not utilize post-course evaluations for driver's education.[13] Post-course evaluations could help ensure that providers are meeting the basic requirements (e.g., the mandated number of hours) and covering the necessary content.

DDS is considering process improvements to address these concerns. These include requiring providers to document where content standards are met and implementing a submission fee to deter providers from multiple submissions of problematic curricula. DDS is also considering more significant process changes such as requiring providers to submit curricula to ADTSEA for approval (i.e., outsourcing the review) or, alternatively, developing one standardized curriculum for the state.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DDS should develop behind-the-wheel instruction guidelines that establish the minimum skills students must demonstrate.

2. DDS should continue to explore alternatives to the current curricula approval process, including the development of a statewide curriculum.

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[13] *DDS indicated it utilizes post-course evaluations for its driver improvement programs but not driver's education.*

3. If DDS chooses to maintain its current process, DDS should:

    a. update its curricula standards;

    b. improve guidance and documentation of the curricula review process;

    c. require providers to document where curriculum standards are met; and

    d. require approved curricula to undergo subsequent periodic reviews.

4. DDS should implement a post-course evaluation for participants to complete.

**DDS Response:** *DDS disagreed with this finding and the comparison to ADTSEA's and DSAA's curriculum standards. DDS noted that the finding did not apply guidelines from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), which DDS considers to be the "unbiased, leading authority" on driver safety. According to DDS, its standards mostly align with AAMVA guidelines, as well as ANSTSE. In response to a lack of guidelines for BTW instruction, DDS noted that driver's education providers utilize the Georgia Driver's Manual in addition to curriculum materials and that guidance for BTW instruction is provided during a required driver training webinar.*

**GDEC Response:** *GDEC also disagreed with utilizing the ADTSEA and DSAA standards because they believe the recommendations are "inherently biased towards their members' interests" and not reflective of the "comprehensive delivery of driver's education services especially by public-serving entities." However, GDEC did agree with utilizing ANSTSE's standards, noting that they "provide a more balanced framework that incorporates input from various reputable organizations" and are "universally applicable."*

    **Auditor's Response:** *ANSTSE was the primary source for identifying recommended driver education standards. The audit team also reviewed ADTSEA and DSAA's curriculum standards because ANSTSE specifically referred to these standards as examples of "nationally recognized curriculum content standards." In addition, the NTDETAS document (ANSTES's standards) includes the ADTSEA and DSAA curriculum standards as attachments. The AAMVA guidance documents that DDS referred to include a model driver's license manual and best practices for graduated licensing programs but do not include curriculum standards, which are the focus of this finding.*

**Recommendation 3.1:** *DDS disagreed with this recommendation, noting that behind-the-wheel information is included in the Georgia Drivers Manual (e.g., sections on testing information, traffic laws, and teen driving laws).*

    **Auditor's Response:** *While the Georgia Drivers Manual provides useful information on testing and driving laws, the purpose of behind-the-wheel standards is to ensure that the in-car instruction portion of*

*driver's education is correlated with classroom standards and encompasses the necessary driving skills.*

**Recommendation 3.2:** *DDS agreed with this recommendation, stating that a "significant need for a complete revision of this process was identified" prior to this audit. DDS indicated its willingness to explore alternatives, including developing or approving a statewide curriculum, and that plans were being considered but progress was halted to complete this audit. DDS also noted that additional financial and human resources would be needed.*

**Recommendation 3.3:** *DDS indicated that its goal is to develop or approve a statewide curriculum.*

**Recommendation 3.4:** *DDS agreed with this recommendation and plans to explore the implementation of a post-course evaluation.*

**Finding 4:** GDEC scholarships help offset the cost of driver's education, but only a small portion of students are served.

GDEC's scholarships improve the accessibility of driver's education; however, the number of scholarships is limited, and recent program changes have generally limited eligible applicants. Many students may be unaware of the scholarship because it is not widely advertised. In addition, GDEC's inability to retain funds will prevent the commission from awarding more scholarships if demand exceeds supply in the future.

According to NTDETAS, states should provide funding or subsidies to make driver's education available for students, especially those who are underserved. As discussed on page 6, Georgia provides scholarships funded by the Driver Education and Training Fund, a 3% surcharge added to traffic citations. The maximum scholarship award is $500 and can be redeemed with any authorized public or private provider to complete driver's education using Method 1 (30 hours classroom/6 hours BTW), which was shown to be the most effective method in a 2021 study (see page 26). It should be noted that O.C.G.A. § 20-2-257 authorizes the State Board of Education to provide driver's education grants to school systems, subject to appropriations, but Georgia Department of Education staff indicated no appropriation had been made for this purpose.

Georgia's scholarship program is uncommon among other states, which fund driver's education through different methods. States vary in the type of driver's education provider funded (e.g., public schools, private schools, both), the funding source (e.g., education funds, specific fees, etc.), and the portion of the costs that are offset by such funding. For example, West Virginia requires public schools to offer the course without charging a fee. Virginia and Utah provide free or reduced-cost driver's education through public schools but not for private providers. Oregon uses licensing fees to reimburse public and private providers

up to $210 per student, and the course is free for foster care students and reduced cost for low-income students.

Georgia's scholarship program serves only a small portion of teens obtaining licensure, and recent changes have limited the number of eligible teens. GDEC awards approximately 5,000-6,000 scholarships annually, which represents 8%-12% of the 16- and 17-year-olds obtaining class D licenses. As shown in **Exhibit 12** and discussed below, changes in eligibility requirements in fiscal year 2023 limited the scholarship primarily to teens demonstrating financial need. Consequently, GDEC received fewer applications from eligible students, but funded a higher percentage of those applicants. It should be noted that fiscal year 2024 scholarships were impacted by a one-year lapse in fee collections (see the text box on page 21 for additional details).

- Tier 1 has the highest priority but has typically accounted for less than 1% of total applicants. Tier 1 includes children of first responders who were disabled or killed in the line of duty or children of military members who were killed in action. As of fiscal year 2023, Tier 1 also includes youth in foster care.[14] Between fiscal years 2019 and 2023, Tier 1 had 89 applicants, and all were approved.

- Tier 2 is based on the applicant's financial need. Between fiscal years 2019 and 2022, Tier 2 accounted for approximately 50%-60% of applicants, and most (80%-93%) were approved. In fiscal year 2023, eligibility was expanded from 125% of the free and reduced meal program to 175% (e.g., $97,125 income limit for a four-person household). As a result, the number of Tier 2 applications and scholarship awards increased. In fiscal year 2023, Tier 2 accounted for nearly all eligible applicants (6,617 of 6,682), and 92% were approved.

- Tier 3 included all other applicants who did not meet the criteria for other tiers; however, this tier was eliminated in fiscal year 2023. Prior to its elimination, Tier 3 applicants could receive funding if the total number of scholarships allotted in a given month exceeded the number of eligible Tier 1 and Tier 2 applicants.[15] The prioritization of Tier 1 and Tier 2 was in alignment with the recommended standard that states should provide funding to make driver education available for students, especially wards of the state and those who are underserved.
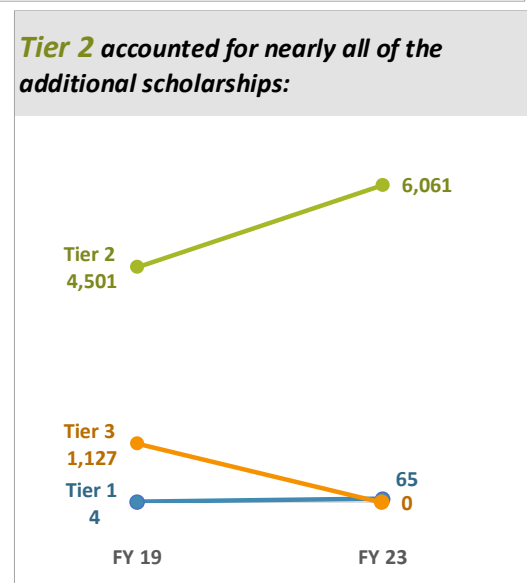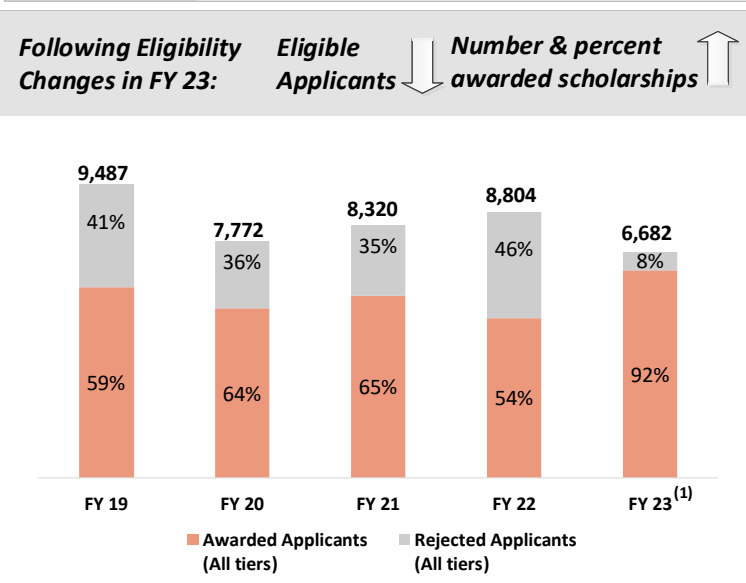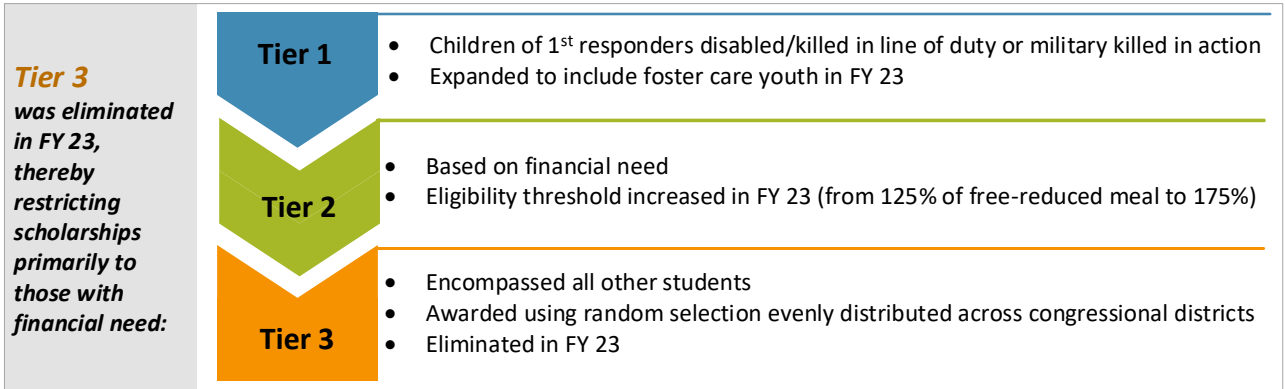
  Between fiscal years 2019 and 2022, 40%-51% of teens applied under Tier 3, and 25%-33% of applicants were approved. In fiscal year 2023, GDEC reported receiving approximately 2,500 applications that would have been considered under Tier 3 had it not been eliminated; these were automatically denied due to ineligibility.

GDEC awards approximately 5,000-6,000 scholarships annually, which represents 8%-12% of 16- & 17-year-olds obtaining licenses.

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[14] *GDEC indicated that foster care applicants have other means of obtaining free driver training through the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.*
[15] *GDEC indicated that Tier 3 applicants were awarded scholarships using a random selection method evenly distributed across congressional districts.*

**Exhibit 12**

**Changes in scholarship criteria narrows the applicant pool (FY 2019-2023)**



*Tier 3*
**was eliminated in FY 23, thereby restricting scholarships primarily to those with financial need:**

**Tier 1**
- Children of 1st responders disabled/killed in line of duty or military killed in action
- Expanded to include foster care youth in FY 23

**Tier 2**
- Based on financial need
- Eligibility threshold increased in FY 23 (from 125% of free-reduced meal to 175%)

**Tier 3**
- Encompassed all other students
- Awarded using random selection evenly distributed across congressional districts
- Eliminated in FY 23

**Following Eligibility Changes in FY 23:** **Eligible Applicants** ⇩ **Number & percent awarded scholarships** ⇧



FY 19: 9,487 — 41% / 59%
FY 20: 7,772 — 36% / 64%
FY 21: 8,320 — 35% / 65%
FY 22: 8,804 — 46% / 54%
FY 23 [1]: 6,682 — 8% / 92%

■ Awarded Applicants (All tiers)    ■ Rejected Applicants (All tiers)

**Tier 2** *accounted for nearly all of the additional scholarships:*



Tier 2: FY 19 = 4,501 → FY 23 = 6,061
Tier 3: FY 19 = 1,127 → FY 23 = 0
Tier 1: FY 19 = 4 → FY 23 = 65

[1] In fiscal year 2023, about 2,500 additional applicants were ineligible. The percentage of total applicants awarded scholarships (including those ineligible) was 69%.

Source: GDEC documents

## The Impact of the Reinstated DETF is Currently Unknown

When GDEC began its scholarship program in fiscal year 2017, the DETF surcharge was 1.5%. The legislation authorizing this fee expired in July 2022; consequently, the surcharge was eliminated, and collections ceased in fiscal year 2023. Because fees in one fiscal year are appropriated to GDEC in the next fiscal year, the lapse in fee revenue resulted in fewer fiscal year 2024 scholarships. In the first half of fiscal year 2024, 900 of 3,121 applicants (29%) were awarded scholarships. However, fee collections resumed when House Bill 242 reinstated the surcharge at 3% for any traffic citations issued on or after July 1, 2023. GDEC staff indicated that it could be several years before it sees the full impact of the fee increase because of the time required to adjudicate cases and collect the revenue.

Most scholarships are redeemed with private providers, and the award typically covers the full cost of driver's education. In fiscal year 2023, scholarship amounts ranged from $275 to $500, with a median amount of $400 and a total value of $2.2 million. Of the $2.2 million, $1.7 million (78%) was redeemed with private

providers (29 businesses). More than $400,000 (18%) was redeemed with technical colleges, and $87,100 (4%) was redeemed with six school systems. See **Appendix C** for a complete listing of scholarships by provider.

In future years, GDEC may have more funding with a potentially smaller applicant pool, which could necessitate additional advertising. In addition to eligibility criteria being further restricted in fiscal year 2023, the DETF surcharge doubled from 1.5% to 3% in fiscal year 2024. GDEC indicated that it has not widely advertised the scholarship because the number of applicants has historically exceeded the number of available scholarships. With the surcharge doubling, however, it will become increasingly important to ensure that students are aware of the scholarships.

GDEC could also further maximize scholarship funding if it were authorized to retain funds. The DETF enabling legislation does not permit GDEC to retain unused funds at the end of the fiscal year, which creates challenges given the scholarship's lifecycle. As discussed on page 5, scholarships are awarded monthly, and each recipient has up to eight months (including extension time) to complete driver's education. If the student does not complete the driver's education course, the scholarship funding can be re-allocated to another student within the same fiscal year as the initial award. If the 240-day timeframe extends into the subsequent fiscal year without the student completing the driver's education course, then GDEC must remit the funding to the treasury. Since fiscal year 2019, GDEC reported remitting a total of $1.4 million in unused funds, which equates to approximately 3,400 additional scholarships (see **Exhibit 13**).[16]
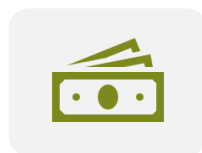
**Exhibit 13**
**GDEC's remitted funds result in 3,400 scholarships lost (FY 2019-2023)**
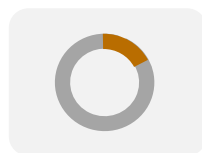
**18% Scholarships Forfeited**
because the recipient did not complete the course within the required timeframe.

**$1.4M Funds Remitted**
to the state treasury because funds from forfeited scholarships could not be retained by GDEC.

**3,400 Additional Students**
could have been awarded driver's education scholarships if GDEC was able to retain and reallocate funding to other recipients.

Source: GDEC documents

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[14] *This includes remitted funds reported by DDS for fiscal years 2019-2023, but fiscal year 2023 data is not yet complete.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. GDEC should increase advertisement of the scholarship.

2. GDEC should continue to monitor demand based on application volume and analyze trends. If the eligible applicant pool becomes insufficient in future years, GDEC should consider strategic programmatic changes, such as adjusting eligibility requirements.

3. The General Assembly should consider establishing a driver's education fund that would prevent scholarship funds from lapsing.

**GDEC Response:** *GDEC partially agreed with this finding. GDEC emphasized that the program improves traffic safety outcomes and should be expanded to more underserved students. GDEC also indicated that recent eligibility changes prioritize students from low-to-moderate income families (Tier 2), which aligns with NTDETAS recommendation that "States should provide funding or subsidies to all providers to make driver education and training available for students, especially wards of the State and those who are underserved and would otherwise not receive services." GDEC noted that the changes were "implemented to be more inclusive and supportive of students from low-to-moderate income families" and that "potential FY 23 Tier 3 applicants would not have been awarded a scholarship under the revised criteria because there was not enough funding available." Lastly, GDEC stated that Exhibit 12 should have focused on the change in applications by priority tier and the proportions of scholarships awarded within each tier over time and that including potential Tier 3 applicants is important because these were still processed and reviewed.*

*GDEC indicated that it will consider conducting an evaluation of the challenges scholarship recipients incur when accessing driver's education to better understand why recipients forfeit scholarships and help better support students.*

**Auditor's Response:** *The finding does not draw any conclusions regarding the appropriateness of the eligibility changes, aside from stating that the elimination of Tier 3 limits eligible applicants. However, it should be noted that the previous eligibility criteria did prioritize students demonstrating financial need (Tier 2) over other students (Tier 3), which is consistent with the NTDETAS recommendation. Exhibit 12 does show the change in applicants by priority tier between fiscal years 2019 and 2023; Tier 3 applicants were not included in fiscal year 2023 because they were no longer eligible (prior fiscal years also only included eligible applicants).*

**Recommendation 4.1**: *GDEC agreed that many students may not be aware of the program because it is not widely advertised. However, GDEC disagreed with this recommendation in its entirety, noting that "potential ethical concerns must be addressed when using a targeted marketing approach." GDEC also noted that social media may be the most effective advertisement method, but some platforms restrict targeting based on income; if not targeted based on income, GDEC is concerned about a*

*potential increase in applications from ineligible students. Following the draft audit report, GDEC staff indicated that an advertising campaign proposal was presented to the Commission but was not approved.*

**Recommendation 4.2***: GDEC agreed with this recommendation and stated it follows the practices already in place.*

**Recommendation 4.3***: GDEC agreed that the General Assembly should establish a driver's education fund to prevent funds from lapsing.*

**Finding 5:**     The extent to which driver's education improves safety outcomes is unclear.

Young driver related fatalities declined over several decades but have fluctuated in recent years. Nationally, research on the extent to which crashes and fatalities are reduced by driver's education is inconclusive. In Georgia, a 2021 study compared the different driver education methods and found that drivers completing classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel training with an instructor experienced better outcomes than drivers completing virtual courses and parent/teen driving guides.

As shown in **Exhibit 14**, the number of young drivers aged 15-20 involved in fatal crashes increased from 154 to 192 (25%) between 2012 and 2022. The most significant increase occurred between 2019 and 2021 (169 drivers to 218 drivers). However, in 2022, the number young drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased to 192 (12%).  Nationally, the number of young drivers involved fatal crashes also increased between 2012 and 2022 but to a lesser extent compared to Georgia (13% vs. 25%).

**Exhibit 14**

**Young drivers involved in fatal crashes increased between 2012 and 2022**
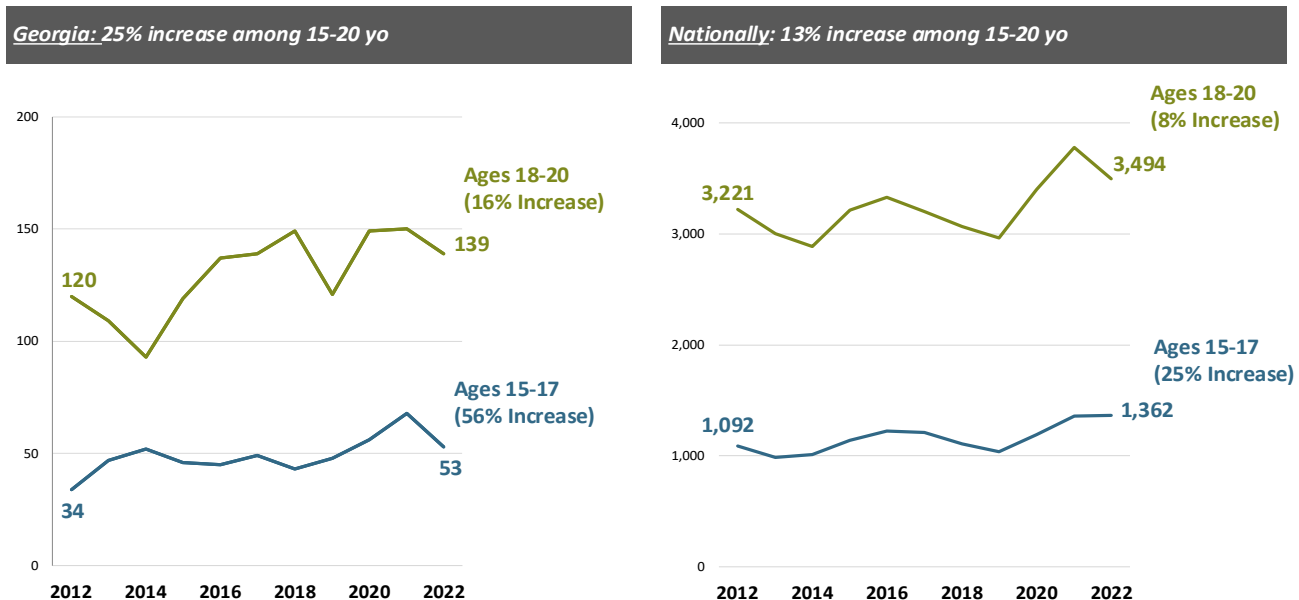


Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System

Fatality trends have likely been driven by many factors including teens waiting longer to obtain licenses, licensing restrictions, improved vehicle safety technology, and traffic law education and enforcement. The extent to which driver's education specifically has contributed to fatality declines is unclear. Some studies on driver education found no positive impacts on the risk of citations, crashes, injuries, or death. This includes a 1980's study in DeKalb County, which found reduced crashes in the first six months of licensure were offset by earlier licensing. More recent studies in Oregon[17] and Nebraska[18] found modest positive safety effects on traffic citation and crashes. For example, the 2015 Nebraska study found that the cohort completing driver education had fewer citations and crashes than the cohort completing a supervised driving log. However, neither study controlled for selection bias; teens self-selecting to take a driver's education course may have different personality traits compared to those who do not choose the course.

Based on the current research, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has categorized driver education as an approach that is "unproven or in need of further evaluation." NHTSA indicated that a sizable reduction in crashes may be an unreasonable expectation given the content and focus of driver education courses. While courses may improve knowledge of driving rules and practices, teens also crash due to risk-taking behavior and inexperience. In contrast, NHTSA found that other measures intended to improve teen safety outcomes, such as restrictions on nighttime driving and passengers, have been demonstrated to be effective by high-quality evaluations with consistent results.

In order for states to assess the effectiveness of their own programs and identify improvement areas, ANSTSE recommends the collection and analysis of driver education data. For example, ANSTSE recommends that states assess the availability of driver's education to identify gaps in service areas and collect data on the type of provider (e.g., public, private, parent-taught) to evaluate the effectiveness of each type. ANSTSE also recommends that states review crash and traffic data to identify needed curriculum changes.

Most of the states we interviewed have limited data analytics, monitoring, and evaluation. Evaluating driver education programs can be difficult because random assignment is not possible if a state requires the course for licensure (like Georgia) and selection bias is an issue if the state does not require driver education. In addition, safety outcomes can be correlated with other variables including geographic location, length of driving experience, and socio-economic factors that would need to be controlled to assess driver education.
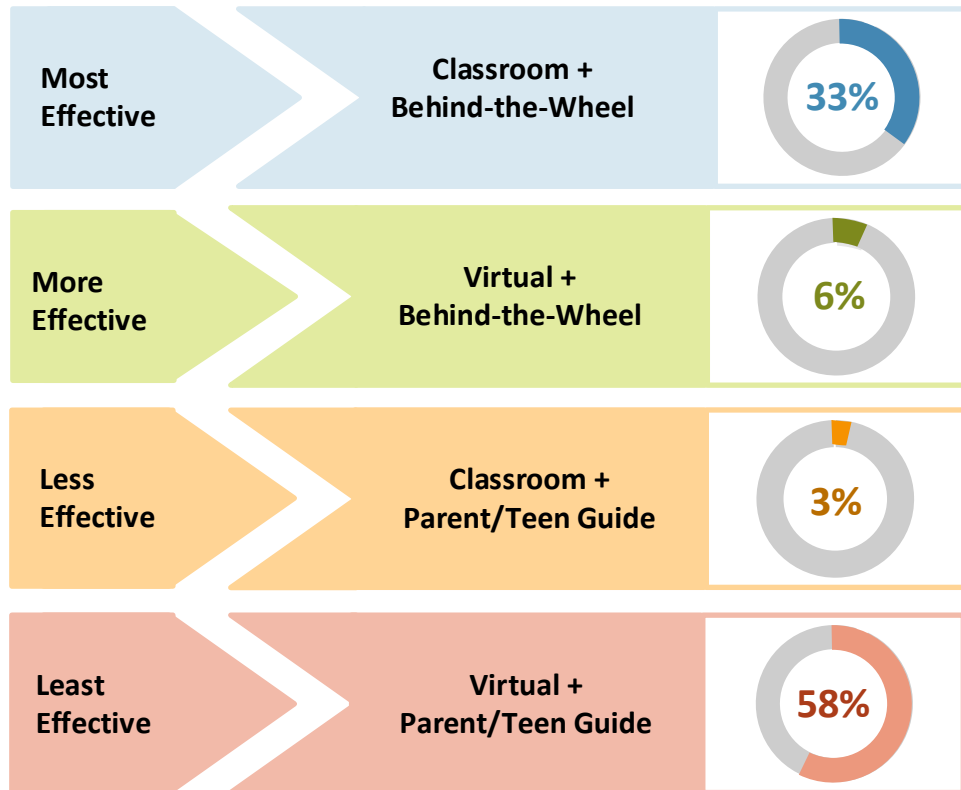
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[17] Mayhew, D., Marcoux, K., Wood, K., Simpson, H., W. Vanlaar, W., Lonero, L., & Clinton, K. *Evaluation of Beginner Driver Education Programs: Studies in Manitoba and Oregon. 2014. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Washington, D.C.*
[18] Shell, D. F., Newman, I. M., Cordova-Cazar, A. L., & Heese, J. M. *Driver Education and Teen Crashes and Traffic Violations in the First Two Years of Driving in a Graduated Driver Licensing System, 2015. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 82, 45-52.*

In Georgia, the Strategic Research Group[19] conducted an evaluation of driver's education for GDEC in 2021. The evaluation analyzed crashes, convictions, and fatalities and serious injuries; it found that drivers completing virtual courses and the parent/teen driving guide (the most common method) had the worst outcomes compared to other methods (See **Exhibit 15**). Conversely, drivers completing classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel training experienced the best outcomes. For example, the number of serious injuries and fatalities among drivers using this method was 35% lower compared to drivers completing virtual courses and parent/teen driving guide. It should be noted that drivers self-selected their methods, which could introduce group differences that cannot be controlled. The evaluation also found that provider type (private business, public school, technical college) did not impact safety outcomes, but that GDEC scholarship recipients had lower crash rates compared to non-GDEC students.

## Exhibit 15
## Study found that the most common education method is also the least effective

### Most to least effective method with percent utilized in FY 23



| Most Effective | Classroom + Behind-the-Wheel | 33% |
| More Effective | Virtual + Behind-the-Wheel | 6% |
| Less Effective | Classroom + Parent/Teen Guide | 3% |
| Least Effective | Virtual + Parent/Teen Guide | 58% |

Source: Strategic Research Group's 2021 study and DDS data

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[19] *The Strategic Research Group conducts research and evaluations for federal, state, and local agencies.*

***DDS Response:*** *DDS disagreed with including this finding in the report. DDS indicated that it works with other agencies for the Georgia Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation Systems (CODES) to annually compile teen traffic safety facts and that it also recently hired an epidemiologist to analyze data including crash reporting. DDS also stated that it will be difficult to see significant safety outcome improvements without additional funding and resources.*

***GDEC Response:*** *GDEC also disagreed with including this finding, stating that the finding is "universal knowledge" and "applies nationally." GDEC also emphasized that Method 1 requiring classroom education and behind-the-wheel training with an instructor is most effective for improved traffic safety outcomes. GDEC indicated that this "provides justification for the promotion of Method 1 over other methods, in addition to contributing to the pool of evidence and best practices used in driver safety education." GDEC further noted that the evaluation findings were shared with key stakeholder groups at traffic safety conferences. Lastly, GDEC emphasized its role in working with the CODES to annually produce the "Young Adult Driver Georgia Traffic Safety Facts."*

***Auditor's Response:*** *While the finding may be universal knowledge to those in the field, it was included in the report to ensure that the general public and legislators are informed. DDS's hiring of an epidemiologist should provide additional Georgia specific information that may be useful to decision makers.*

# Appendix A: Table of Findings and Recommendations

| | Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree | Implementation Date |
|---|---|---|
| **Finding 1: Georgia's basic course and training requirements are comparable to most other states; however, also like other states, they do not align with all recommended standards. (p. 7)** | **DDS – Disagree GDEC – Partially Agree** | **N/A** |
| 1.1  No recommendations | | |
| **Finding 2: DDS should monitor the use of virtual driver's education courses and consider establishing additional requirements. (p. 10)** | **DDS - Partially Agree** | **N/A** |
| 2.1  DDS should improve its data system so the agency can identify and track participation in synchronous virtual courses and use this information to monitor accessibility. | Partially Agree | FY 2026 |
| 2.2  As it begins to track synchronous virtual courses, DDS should consider the feasibility of providing this information to students on its website. | Disagree | |
| 2.3  To better align with recommended standards, DDS should implement additional guidelines for both asynchronous and synchronous virtual courses. | Partially Agree | December 2024 |
| **Finding 3: DDS could improve curricula standards and the processes for approving and monitoring curricula. (p. 15)** | **DDS - Disagree** | **N/A** |
| 3.1 DDS should develop behind-the-wheel instruction guidelines that establish the minimum skills students must demonstrate. | Disagree | |
| 3.2 DDS should continue to explore alternatives to the current curricula approval process, including the development of a statewide curriculum. | Agree | FY 2026 |
| 3.3 If DDS chooses to maintain its current process, DDS should:<br>    a. update its curricula standards;<br>    b. improve guidance and documentation of the curricula review process;<br>    c. require providers to document where curriculum standards are met; and<br>    d. require approved curricula to undergo subsequent periodic reviews. | N/A | |
| 3.4 DDS should implement a post-course evaluation for participants to complete. | Agree | December 2024 |
| **Finding 4: GDEC scholarships help offset the cost of driver's education, but only a small portion of students are served. (p. 19)** | **GDEC - Partially Agree** | **N/A** |
| 4.1  GDEC should increase advertisement of the scholarship. | Disagree | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4.2 GDEC should continue to monitor demand based on application volume and analyze trends. If the eligible applicant pool becomes insufficient in future years, GDEC should consider strategic programmatic changes, such as adjusting eligibility requirements. | Agree | N/A |
| 4.3 The General Assembly should consider establishing a driver's education fund that would prevent scholarships from lapsing. | N/A | |
| **Finding 5: The extent to which driver's education improves safety outcomes is unclear. (p. 24)** | **DDS – Disagree GDEC - Disagree** | **N/A** |
| 5.1 No recommendations | | |

# Appendix B: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

## Objectives

This report examines driver's education. Specifically, our review set out to determine the following:

1. How does DDS ensure driver's education adheres to statutory and industry-standard content requirements?

2. How does the funding allocation compare to driver's education course costs and demand?

3. Does research indicate that driver's education courses are achieving the intended safety outcomes?

## Scope

This audit generally covered activity that occurred between fiscal years 2019 and 2023, with consideration of earlier or later periods when relevant. Information used in this report was obtained by: reviewing relevant laws, rules, and regulations; interviewing staff from Department of Driver Services (DDS) and the Georgia Driver Education Commission (GDEC); analyzing agency data and documents; reviewing recommended standards and research studies; and reviewing other states' information. Additionally, we obtained and analyzed data from DDS databases:

- **Online Certification Reporting Application (OCRA)** – OCRA is a web-based program developed by DDS that tracks participation in driver's education courses. The data includes information on driver training schools and courses including school type (public school, privately owned, etc.), location, course type, and instructor name. The data also includes student-level information, such as name, date of birth, and course enrollment. In addition, OCRA generates the standard certificate of completion.

- **Driver Record and Integrated Vehicle Enterprise System (DRIVES)** – DRIVES was developed and implemented using the FAST Enterprises commercial-off-the-shelf application. DRIVES provides driver licensing, vehicle registration, and titling system information. We used the DRIVES data primarily to obtain information on the completion of the parent/teen driving guide.

We identified some limitations during our data reliability assessment, including duplicate participant entries and redundant course combinations. However, we determined that the data from these systems was sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our analysis.

Government auditing standards require that we also report the scope of our work on internal control that is significant within the context of the audit objectives. We assessed internal controls to a limited degree, as discussed in the methodology below.

## Methodology

**To determine the extent to which DDS adheres to statutory and industry-standard content requirements**, we reviewed state laws, rules and regulations, and standards developed by the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education (ANSTSE). ANSTSE's Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Standards (NTDETAS) includes 26 standards in five areas – program

administration, education/training, instructor qualifications, coordination with driver licensing, and parent/guardian involvement. We focused primarily on the education/training standards, including course requirements, curricula, virtual and online instruction, and behind-the-wheel training because these were the most relevant to the audit objectives, but we included standards in other sections when pertinent (e.g., funding processes within program administration). We also compared DDS's curriculum standards to standards developed by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) and the Driving School Association of the Americas (DSAA) because both of these were referenced as "nationally recognized curriculum content standards" in the NTDETAS.

We interviewed DDS staff regarding its curricula approval process, and we conducted a site visit to review currently approved curricula. We requested documentation for curricula approvals and used this documentation to determine the length of time needed for DDS staff to review curricula and to determine the age of virtual curricula. To determine the age of classroom curricula, we reviewed publication dates found online.

We also compared Georgia's driver's education requirements to those of other states. We reviewed other states' laws regarding driver's education and reviewed state governmental agency websites. We interviewed five other states (Oregon, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, and Utah) for additional information regarding their driver's education programs.

**To determine how the funding allocation compares to driver's education course costs and demand,** we interviewed GDEC staff regarding its scholarship program and process for awarding funds. We reviewed state law on the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF) to understand changes made to the fee. We reviewed appropriations acts and GDEC annual reports to determine how much funding was generated from the fee and appropriated to GDEC. To determine how many scholarships were awarded using this funding, we reviewed GDEC meeting minutes which show the number awarded each month. We also reviewed the meeting minutes data to identify trends in scholarship applications and determine demand. Lastly, we reviewed GDEC financial reports to determine the amount of funds remitted to the state treasury.

To determine the cost of driver's education for private providers and public high schools, we reviewed individual provider websites and school system websites for course information. To determine the costs for technical colleges, we interviewed staff from the Technical College System of Georgia.

**To determine the extent to which driver's education courses improve safety outcomes,** we reviewed various research studies. We reviewed findings from the 2021 GDEC evaluation on the effectiveness of Joshua's Law methods in Georgia. In addition, we reviewed studies from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, and the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse. We also reviewed resources and driver's education factsheets from organizations such as ANSTSE, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Governors Highway Safety Association, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lastly, we obtained crash and fatality data from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System to analyze trends in Georgia and across the nation.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

If an auditee offers comments that are inconsistent or in conflict with the findings, conclusions, or recommendations in the draft report, auditing standards require us to evaluate the validity of those comments. In cases when agency comments are deemed valid and are supported by sufficient, appropriate evidence, we edit the report accordingly. In cases when such evidence is not provided or comments are not deemed valid, we do not edit the report and consider on a case-by-case basis whether to offer a response to agency comments.

## Appendix C: Authorized GDEC Providers (FY 2023)

| Authorized GDEC Provider | Number of Locations | Scholarships Redeemed | Value of Scholarships Redeemed | Average Cost Per Recipient |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A-1 Driving School, Inc. | 21 | 785 | $383,625 | $489 |
| West Metro Driving School | 2 | 427 | $211,365 | $495 |
| Barber's Driving School, Inc. | 1 | 333 | $157,680 | $474 |
| New London School of Driving, Inc. | 1 | 226 | $111,870 | $495 |
| A+ Driving Services, Inc. | 6 | 164 | $81,180 | $495 |
| Advance Driving Academy | 1 | 146 | $62,850 | $430 |
| South Cherokee/Jasper Driver Improvement Clinic, Inc. | 2 | 124 | $58,900 | $475 |
| 1st Stop Georgia Driving Academy | 1 | 118 | $52,982 | $449 |
| Kennesaw Driving School | 2 | 107 | $52,965 | $495 |
| The Wiser Driver | 1 | 119 | $51,170 | $430 |
| 1 Act Driving Schools, LLC | 1 | 93 | $44,947 | $483 |
| Brock's Driver Education School, Inc. | 1 | 87 | $43,500 | $500 |
| A Driving Advantage | 1 | 87 | $43,065 | $495 |
| Taggart's Driving School | 3 | 85 | $42,500 | $500 |
| Augusta Technical College | 1 | 110 | $41,850 | $380 |
| Collins Driving School | 1 | 81 | $40,500 | $500 |
| Savannah Technical College | 4 | 107 | $40,100 | $375 |
| Central Georgia Technical College | 2 | 105 | $38,275 | $365 |
| DriveSmart Georgia | 3 | 74 | $36,926 | $499 |
| Gwinnett County Board of Education | 17 | 106 | $36,570 | $345 |
| Southeastern Regional Driving and Safety Academy, Inc. | 1 | 92 | $36,340 | $395 |
| Georgia Driving School, Inc. | 1 | 82 | $34,850 | $425 |
| Marietta City Board of Education | 1 | 70 | $34,370 | $491 |
| Just Driver Training | 1 | 60 | $30,000 | $500 |
| North Georgia Technical College | 3 | 76 | $28,000 | $368 |
| Georgia Northwestern Technical College | 6 | 73 | $27,750 | $380 |
| Pinnacle Pointe DUI & Driving Schools | 1 | 81 | $26,565 | $328 |
| Southern Regional Technical College | 4 | 71 | $24,850 | $350 |
| Wiregrass Georgia Technical College | 4 | 70 | $24,500 | $350 |
| AA Academy of Action Driving School | 1 | 48 | $24,000 | $500 |
| Coastal Pines Technical College | 4 | 66 | $23,925 | $363 |
| Lanier Technical College | 5 | 60 | $22,700 | $378 |
| Nathan's Driving School, Inc. | 3 | 43 | $21,500 | $500 |
| Albany Technical College | 2 | 55 | $20,600 | $375 |

| Authorized GDEC Provider | Number of Locations | Scholarships Redeemed | Value of Scholarships Redeemed | Average Cost Per Recipient |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ogeechee Technical College | 2 | 55 | $19,900 | $362 |
| Southern Crescent Technical College | 4 | 44 | $16,500 | $375 |
| Georgia Piedmont Technical College | 1 | 33 | $12,250 | $371 |
| Atlanta Technical College | 1 | 33 | $12,150 | $368 |
| Duluth DUI and Driving School | 1 | 24 | $11,880 | $495 |
| FB Driving, Inc. | 1 | 27 | $11,475 | $425 |
| 1EZ DUI School, LLC | 1 | 24 | $11,144 | $464 |
| Oconee Fall Line Technical College | 3 | 28 | $10,650 | $380 |
| West Georgia Technical College | 1 | 30 | $10,500 | $350 |
| Athens Technical College | 1 | 22 | $8,150 | $370 |
| Safe America Foundation, Inc. | 1 | 16 | $7,584 | $474 |
| Oconee County Board of Education | 1 | 18 | $7,200 | $400 |
| South Georgia Technical College | 2 | 20 | $7,175 | $359 |
| Southeastern Technical College | 2 | 19 | $6,925 | $364 |
| Southern Defensive Driving School | 1 | 16 | $6,320 | $395 |
| Dickerson Driving School, Inc. | 1 | 10 | $5,000 | $500 |
| Columbus Technical College | 1 | 13 | $4,550 | $350 |
| Gordon County Board of Education | 2 | 15 | $4,425 | $295 |
| Classic VIP Driving School, LLC | 1 | 8 | $3,200 | $400 |
| Calhoun City Board of Education | 1 | 9 | $2,610 | $290 |
| White County Board of Education | 1 | 7 | $1,925 | $275 |
| **Total** | **139** | **4902** | **$2,194,283** | **$448** |

Source: GDEC FY23 Annual Report

# Appendix D: DDS Curriculum Standards

| Driver Training Curriculum Standards (DTCS) | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 1 | The student will demonstrate an understanding of Georgia traffic laws, licensing procedures, teen driving laws and other responsibilities associated with the driving privilege. |
| | Key concepts include: |
| a | licensing requirements and types of licenses |
| b | the motor vehicle section of the Code of Georgia |
| c | requirements outlined in TADRA (Teen and Adult Driving Responsibility Act) and Joshua's Law |
| DTCS 2 | The student will demonstrate an understanding of basic vehicle operating procedures. |
| | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | pre-driving procedures |
| b | starting procedures (automatic and manual transmissions) |
| c | vehicle information, warning, and control devices |
| d | vehicle securing procedures |
| DTCS 3 | The student will recognize the effects of momentum, gravity, and inertia on vehicle control and balance, and the relationship between kinetic energy and force of impact. |
| | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | seating and hand position |
| b | steering, braking, and acceleration |
| c | compensating for shifts in vehicle load (from side to side, front to rear, and rear to front) that affect vehicle performance |
| d | types of collisions - head-on, near-frontal, broadside, rear-end, rollover, sideswipe |
| DTCS 4 | The student will demonstrate the ability to manage visibility, time, and space to avoid conflicts and reduce driving risks. |
| | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | synthesizing information visually from the driving environment, using a space management process |
| b | following interval concepts |
| c | selecting gap and judging distance |
| d | estimating passing time and space needs |
| DTCS 5 | The student will demonstrate appropriate adjustments when approaching controlled and uncontrolled intersections, curves, railroad crossings, and hills with line-of-sight or path-of-travel limitations. |
| | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | roadway signs, signals, and markings |
| b | right-of-way rules |
| c | slope/grade of terrain |
| d | vehicle position |
| DTCS 6 | The student will identify the characteristics of an expressway and apply risk-reducing expressway driving strategies. |

|  | Key concepts/skills include: |
|---|---|
| a | entering, merging, integrating into, and exiting from traffic flow |
| b | managing interchanges |
| c | selecting vehicle position and changing lanes |
| **DTCS 7** | The student will demonstrate the ability to communicate presence and intentions with other highway transportation users. |
|  | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | vehicle position and driver action |
| b | vehicle communication devices |
| **DTCS 8** | The student will analyze and describe the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol and other drugs and their impact on a driver's awareness of risks and involvement in collisions. |
|  | Key concepts include: |
| a | prescribed and over-the-counter medications |
| b | illegal drugs |
| c | effects of alcohol and other drugs on vision and space management |
| d | synergistic effects of drugs |
| e | alcohol elimination factors |
| **DTCS 9** | The student will identify and analyze the legal, health, and economic consequences associated with driving and using alcohol and other drugs. |
|  | Key concepts/skills include: |
| a | positive and negative peer pressure |
| b | Implied Consent and Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels for adults and teens |
| c | school attendance and school conduct infraction violations |
| d | loss of license, licensing restrictions, and other costs |
| **DTCS 10** | The student will recognize the consequences of aggressive driving and other emotions that influence driving behaviors. |
|  | Key concepts include: |
| a | stress and anxiety |
| b | anger management |
| c | the relationship between aggressive driving and road rage |
| **DTCS 11** | The student will analyze the effects of fatigue and other physical conditions on driver performance. |
|  | Key concepts include: |
| a | short and long term physical and mental disabilities |
| b | chronic health conditions |
| c | circadian rhythms |
| d | sleep deprivation |
| **DTCS 12** | The student will identify distractions that contribute to driver error. |
|  | Key concepts include: |
| a | passengers and pets |
| b | passenger restrictions for provisional license |
| c | vehicle accessories |
| d | cell phones and other portable technology devices |

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 13 | The student will identify changes in the environment that affect visibility and traction and demonstrate an understanding of appropriate driver reaction to these risks. |

Key concepts/skills include:
a  driving at night
b  smoke and weather-related conditions
c  road conditions and construction
d  vehicle stability and traction control systems

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 14 | The student will demonstrate an understanding of the proper use of vehicle occupant protection features and analyze how they reduce injury severity and increase collision survival. |

Key concepts/skills include:
a  active restraint systems
b  passive restraint systems
c  child restraint systems
d  highway safety design

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 15 | The student will identify and evaluate emergency response strategies to reduce collision severity or avoid a collision in high-risk driving situations. |

Key concepts/skills include:
a  evasive maneuvers, using brake and steering combinations
b  off-road recovery
c  front and rear traction control

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 16 | The student will identify and describe the performance characteristics of other road users and apply problem solving skills to minimize risks when sharing the roadway with: |

a  pedestrians and animals
b  bicycles and motorcycles
c  tractor trailers, trucks, and construction vehicles
d  sport utility vehicles, recreation vehicles, and trailers
e  emergency vehicles
g  funeral processions
g  passenger and school buses
h  farm machinery and horse drawn vehicles

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 17 | The student will compare vehicle braking systems and explain proper braking techniques for various weather and roadway conditions. |

Key concepts/skills include:
a  small and large vehicle conventional brake systems
b  two and four-wheel anti-lock brake systems (ABS)

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 18 | The student will analyze how preventive maintenance reduces the possibility of vehicle failures and recognize the warning signs that indicate the need for maintenance, repair, or replacement. |

Key concepts/skills include:
a  vehicle warning devices

b   lights and signals

c   steering and suspension systems

d   tires and braking systems

e   fuel and ignition electronics

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 19 | The student will identify and describe the legal aspects and calculate the financial responsibilities associated with purchasing, operating, maintaining, and insuring a motor vehicle. |

Key concepts include:

a   insurance coverage

b   title and vehicle registration

c   Clean Air Force requirements

d   crash involvement

| | |
|---|---|
| DTCS 20 | The student will demonstrate competency in map reading and trip planning skills. |

Key concepts/skills include:

a   destination driving

b   trip planning techniques

Source: DDS Agency Documents

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