



NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR TEEN DRIVERS

by Lauren Sisneros

Driving fatalities are the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 20, according to the Colorado State Patrol. The legislature passed a law that created new provisions to Colorado's driver's licensing law, designed to give young drivers more experience behind the wheel before they can drive without restrictions. This issue brief summarizes measures enacted by the legislature in 2004 to address teen drivers: House Bills 04-1017 and 04-1199. During the 2004 interim, legislators discussed new bills to address this issue.

Requirements for Drivers Under the Age of 18

Driver permits. HB 04-1017 created an incentive for driver education by increasing the driving age for minors who do not participate in driver education programs. The new law, effective July 1, 2004, also changes the amount of time a minor driver must hold an instruction permit from 6 months to 12 months. The minor driver now has three available options.

- At the age of 15, drivers can hold an *instruction permit* if enrolled in a driver education course, which is a 30-hour program that includes six hours behind the wheel. The permit is available to drivers aged 15 years to 15½. The permit must be held for 12 months before obtaining a driver's license. A driver education course costs an average of \$365 and is offered by organizations approved by the Department of Revenue.
- A *driver awareness permit* can be obtained by drivers aged 15½ to 16 years by completing an

approved driving awareness program. The permit must be held for 12 months, which would allow a minor to obtain a license, at the earliest, at the age of 16½. The four-hour driving awareness classes range in cost from \$35 to \$95 and are offered through instructors approved by the Department of Revenue.

- Finally, if an underage driver chooses not to participate in a driver education or driving awareness course, the individual can obtain an *instruction permit* at the age of 16, hold the permit for 12 months, and obtain a driver's license at the age of 17. In addition, at the age of 18, an individual can obtain a license with no instruction permit, but must first purchase a \$10 instructions permit before taking a driving test.

Who can a permit holder drive with? If under the age of 16, while holding an instruction permit, a driver can only drive with a driver education instructor or the person who signed the affidavit of liability. The affidavit of liability states that the parent or guardian agrees to take legal responsibility for a minor's actions as a driver. While holding an instruction permit obtained by completing the driving awareness program, the driver can only drive with the person who signed the affidavit of liability. At the age of 16, the instruction permit holder can be accompanied by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years of age and is riding in the passenger seat.

Table 1 summarizes the changes HB 04-1017 made on the requirements for minor drivers to obtain driver's licenses.

Table 1: HB 04-1017 Changes

	Prior to HB 04-1017 (Time Required to Hold Permit: 6 months)		After HB 04-1017 (Time Required to Hold Permit: 12 months)	
Age*	Description	Earliest Age Possible to Obtain Driver's License	Description	Earliest Age Possible to Obtain Driver's License
15 to 15½	<i>Minor's instruction permit</i> available to individuals enrolled in a driver education course.	16 years. If permit is obtained at 15¼ years, licence can be obtained at 16 years old.	<i>Instruction permit</i> available to individuals enrolled in a driver education course.	16 years. If permit is obtained at 15¼ years, license can be obtained at 16¼ years old.
15½ to 16	<i>Temporary instruction permit</i> available to all individuals in age group.	16 years. If permit is obtained at 15¾ years, license can be obtained at 16¼ years old.	<i>Driver awareness permit</i> available to individuals by completing a driver awareness program	16 years. If permit is obtained at 15¾ years, license can be obtained at 16¾ years old.
16 to 18	<i>Temporary instruction permit</i> available to all individuals in age group.	16½ years. If permit is obtained at 16½ years, license can be obtained at 17 years old.	<i>Instruction permit</i> available to all individuals in age group.	17 years. If permit is obtained at 16½ years, license can be obtained at 17½ years old.

* Age groups represent the earliest age individuals can participate in educational programs. Individuals older than the ages listed for each category may also enroll.

Drivers Under the Age of 18 and Non-Felony Traffic Matters

Law enforcement, the courts, and the Department of Revenue (DOR) now have procedures to follow when dealing with non-felony traffic matters involving minors under the age of 18 and parental notification.

House Bill 04-1199 requires the courts to notify a minor's parent or legal guardian when a minor is brought before a county judge for traffic offenses or when a summons is issued to a minor. A notice to the minor indicating the minor's parents will be

notified and requiring the parent to appear in court with the minor is now issued for traffic offenses requiring a court appearance. For traffic offenses where a ticket is issued, a notarized signature by a parent or guardian must be provided when the ticket is returned with payment. If the returned ticket lacks a notarized signature, the minor and parent or guardian must appear in court on the date specified in the citation. The DOR must immediately suspend the license of any minor convicted of an offense involving forgery of a traffic-related ticket