

Driver Education FAQs for Montana Families

Traffic Education, Montana Office of Public Instruction

Why is there such a long wait to enroll my teen in driver education?

Much like everything in our world right now driver education classes have been impacted by mandatory closures due to COVID-19. [Montana state statute](#) requires that students under the age of 16 take a state-approved traffic education course, administered by school districts, if they wish to receive an early driver license at age 15. Districts are making careful decisions about whether to postpone or cancel driver education classes based on COVID-19 activity in their community. We ask that you please be patient with district personnel as they collaborate with local health officials to determine when to safely resume classes.

Can driver education be completed as an online course?

While many districts have switched to online learning for the classroom portion of their state-approved driver education courses, [state administrative rule](#) requires that an approved driver education program meet a minimum of six hours of behind-the-wheel instruction that must be done face to face with a state-approved traffic education teacher. This is a state law that would require legislative action to be changed. Other, web-based online “driver education” courses are not approved by the State of Montana.

Can my child take driver education somewhere else?

Districts usually fill their limited number of slots with in-district students first as they are required to provide traffic education to all age eligible students residing in their district. Occasionally a district will have space for an out-of-district student, so if you can find one that has openings your student would have the option to enroll. Again, there are no other options or alternatives for teens under the age of 16 to obtain a learner license. A state-approved driver education course is the only option at this time.

A Special Message from Tara Ferriter-Smith, OPI Traffic Education Director

We understand what an important milestone it is for a teen to receive their driver’s license and we want to continue to make this happen in as safe a manner as possible. I’m participating in national conversations, so please know that we are doing everything we can and that traffic education has been impacted across the nation due to COVID-19, not just here in Montana.

Families are encouraged to work with their local school districts to enroll their child in a driver education class. Please understand that school districts are making informed and careful decisions about how to proceed in their community based on local COVID-19 safety concerns. Our collective goal is to provide driver education to as many students as possible, but the cancellation and postponement of classes has caused most districts to have waitlists. Thank you for your patience as we all work together to ensure Montana roadways are safe.