

January 1 Brings New Requirements For Georgia Teen Drivers

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The following information is being provided to help clarify the new law affecting any Georgia student who will be 16 years old in 2007 and chooses to apply for a Class D Driver's License.

What is "Joshua's Law"?

Senate Bill 226, also known as "Joshua's Law," was passed during the 2005 General Assembly. Beginning Jan. 1, 2007, all 16-year-olds applying for a Class D driver's license must complete an approved driver education course AND complete a total of 40 hours of supervised driving, six hours of which must be at night, with a parent or guardian's sworn verification that these driving requirements have been met.

Any Georgia student who has not completed an approved driver education course must wait until age 17 to be eligible for a Class D driver's license. He or she must still complete a total of at least 40 hours of supervised driving, including at least six hours at night. The same verification in writing by a parent or guardian is required.

With the passage of Joshua's Law by the 2005 Georgia General Assembly, the Georgia Driver Education Commission was created. The Commission has been meeting on a regular basis to review various methods of driver training for a comprehensive accessible, affordable and effective method of driver education available for state students. Some of the potential methods of driver education the Commission has reviewed in addition to the current 30 hours of classroom and six hours of behind-the-wheel training offered at private and public schools are partnerships such as:

Public/Private School

- (30 hours) classroom (virtual or instructor) and (six hours) private behind the wheel training (students will also need an additional 40 hours of supervised driving)
- (30 hours) classroom (virtual or instructor) and parent taught behind the wheel (the parent taught is a 40-hour comprehensive driving course)

Virtual

- (30 hours) classroom and (six hours) private behind the wheel training (students will also need an additional 40 hours of supervised driving)
- (30 hours) classroom and (40 hour) parent taught behind the wheel (The parent taught is a 40-hour comprehensive driving course)

All Students

- Must have six hours supervised driving at night.
- The traditional driver training courses approved by the Department of Driver Services (DDS) are currently offered by various high schools and private driving schools. DDS is currently reviewing virtual online programs. More information will be available on the DDS website after Oct. 15, 2006.
- Students do not need a learner's permit for the classroom course or the virtual program; however, they will need to hold a learner's permit for one year and one day prior to being issued a Class D license. A learner's permit is required for behind-the-wheel driving. Students can complete their supervised driving hours concurrent to taking a driver's education class, provided that they have a learner's permit.

For further information, visit the DDS website at www.dds.ga.gov, or www.gateendrivereducation.com.