

Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio

www.communitylegalaid.org

Need to get your dr

Need to get your driver's license back?

When you lose your license, you obviously lose the ability to drive. But you also lose a main form of identification, which can affect your ability to do daily tasks, like write a check, open a bank account, apply for a loan, get a job, apply for housing, or more. And because you have to pay fees in order to get your license back, it can be a difficult hurdle to overcome.

At Community Legal Aid, we want to help you understand your options for getting your license back.

This site will walk you through the information you need to know about getting your license back. You can read through all information, or skip to sections that are specific to your situation.

Always remember, if you have questions or want to apply for Legal Aid, you can call our Helpline at (800) 998-9454, or apply online 24/7 at www.communitylegalaid.org/apply.

How do I get my license back?

Generally, you have to do two things. First, you'll need to pay a fee to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), called a "reinstatement fee." Second, you have to pay off any debt you have with the court, like child support.

There was a new law passed in Ohio in summer 2020 that can help you with this. It waives or reduces what you have to pay. The law is called the Driver's License Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program.

Who qualifies for the amnesty program?

You'll usually qualify if you meet the following requirements:

- Your driver's license has been suspended (it only applies to regular licenses, not commercial licenses)
- You owe money for reinstatement fees
- The offenses that made you lose your license are on the list of "eligible offenses" (see below)
- At least 18 months have passed from at least one of your offenses
- You have financial need, meaning you receive at least one of the following: Medicaid, SNAP or food stamps, Ohio Works First, social security benefits, disability benefits, or veterans' benefits

What types of offenses are eligible for amnesty?

Generally, non-violent traffic offenses are eligible, including:

- Unruly child
- Delinquent child
- Juvenile traffic offender
- Theft of gasoline
- Incompetence by examination
- Operating vehicle without proof of insurance
- Failure to pay security deposit, or failure to request a hearing after receiving notice regarding a motor vehicle accident
- Default on a payment that was required by written agreement after a motor vehicle accident
- Nonpayment of a judgment
- Repeat traffic offender
- Violation of a municipal ordinance that is substantially similar to a statutory violation that imposes a suspension
- Suspension under the federal Assimilative Crimes Act
- Reckless operation
- Failure to appear or failure to pay a fine related to specific vehicle-related violations
- Incompetency adjudication
- Commission of specific motor vehicle offenses by a minor

- Habitual absence from school
- Wrongful entrustment of a motor vehicle
- Use of an electronic wireless communication device by a minor while driving
- Street racing
- Failure to stop for a school bus
- Failure to stop after an accident
- Failure to stop after a nonpublic road accident
- Trafficking in cigarettes or tobacco products with intent to avoid tax, when a motor vehicle was used in the offense

How do I apply for the amnesty program?

You actually don't have to apply for the program. If you are eligible, you will automatically get a letter in the mail, or an email, from the Ohio Department of Public Safety. They will tell you what to do from there. But if you think you are eligible, it may be a good idea to reach out to the BMV to make sure they have your most recent address and contact information, to make sure you get your letter.

You can check the status of your license [online here](#).

If you have a lot of court-related debt, it can be helpful to take care of this before you apply for the amnesty program. You may be able to get rid of some of this debt through bankruptcy or by working with the place you owe the money to. For more information on dealing with debt, visit www.communitylegalaid.org/debt.

Will the amnesty program mean my fees are waived entirely, or will I still have to pay something?

It depends on your situation. Some people may qualify to have all their fees wiped out, while others may be able to reduce what they owe. You can also enter into a payment plan. The best thing to do is to contact the Ohio Department of Public Safety or your local BMV to learn more about what your options are.

Do I need an attorney to get my license reinstated?

No. This process is mostly filing paperwork. You won't have to go to court at any point. Just be sure to keep good records and follow the instructions on the paperwork you get from the Department of Public Safety.

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