

## **Motor Vehicle Division Informational Memo # 21-16**

### **2021 Legislation – Parent taught driver’s education**

**DATE:** May 14, 2021

**FROM:** Sara Siedsma, Compliance Officer, MVD

**TO:** All Motor Vehicle Division staff, Iowa County Treasurers and County Treasurer’s staff that issue driver’s licenses and nonoperator’s identification cards.

#### **SUBJECT**

This informational memo explains legislation enacted during the 2021 legislative session which expands the parent-taught driver’s education program to any student currently attending a public school, accredited nonpublic school, or who is receiving homeschool education under chapter 299A. This memo is most applicable to MVD central programs bureau staff that administer the parent-taught driver’s education program and staff that perform driving examinations and issue driver’s licenses to students completing parent-taught driver’s education. ***While the Governor signed the bill on May 10, 2021, the new law expanding parent-taught driver’s education to all students does not become effective until July 1, 2021.***

#### **SUMMARY**

Senate File 546 expands the parent-taught driver’s education program to any student currently attending a public school, accredited nonpublic school, or who is receiving homeschool education under chapter 299A. The legislation removes the requirement for an approved parent-taught driver’s education course to include thirty clock hours of classroom instruction and reduces the behind-the-wheel driving instruction time from 40 hours to 30 hours. The legislation eliminates the required number of hours and minutes an approved course must spend instructing on the topics of substance abuse, distracted driving, and railroad crossing, although each of those subject areas must still be included in an approved course. Finally, the legislation lessens some of the requirements to obtain a certificate of completion from the department and also prohibits the department from requiring any sort of pre-approval process before a parent and student chooses to begin a parent-taught driver’s education program.

**The legislation is effective July 1, 2021.**

#### **LINK TO LEGISLATION**

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGE/89/SF546.pdf>

#### **CURRENT**

Under current law, only students receiving homeschool instruction are eligible to take parent-taught driver’s education. Any student attending public or private school must either complete a traditional driver’s education course through their school or through a private driver’s education company. Under current law, the department also requires anyone seeking to complete parent-taught driver’s education to seek pre-approval from the department to ensure the parent and student are actually eligible for the program. The current approved courses for parent-taught driver’s education also contain a certain

number of hours and minutes in various areas of instruction, some of which are being reduced or eliminated by the legislation. Under current law, a student completing parent-taught driver's education must obtain a certificate of completion from the department and must complete a driving examination at a driver's license service center or county location prior to being issued an intermediate driver's license.

### **NEW**

As mentioned above, the legislation expands the parent-taught driver's education program beyond just students who are receiving homeschool education under chapter 299A. While the legislation still requires parents to use a DOT approved curriculum, it also reduces or eliminates hours and minutes of instruction for certain topic areas and prohibits the department from requiring a pre-approval process to begin parent-taught driver's education. The legislation keeps intact the requirement for the department to issue a certificate of completion at the end of the course and also still requires a student completing parent-taught driver's education to complete a driving examination at a driver's license service center or county location prior to being issued an intermediate driver's license.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT**

This legislation is likely to significantly impact MVD central programs bureau staff that currently administer the parent-taught driver's education program. The legislation will also increase the number of students seeking appointments to complete a driving examination at a driver's license service center or county location.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

The following questions and answers provide additional information to you and to customers.

#### **WHEN WILL THE PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER'S EDUCATION PROGRAM BE AVAILABLE FOR NON-HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS?**

Parent-taught driver's education will not be available for all students until July 1, 2021. Until July 1, 2021, eligible homeschool students may continue to utilize the parent-taught program.

#### **WHY IS THE PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER'S EDUCATION PROGRAM BEING EXPANDED TO ALL STUDENTS?**

The legislature chose to pass this change to driver education policy to allow any parent to provide driver education to their child, rather than limiting this option to only those students who were homeschooled. This was not a change that was recommended by the department.

#### **IS PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER EDUCATION FREE TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS?**

No. We believe there is a misconception that the parent-taught driver's education program is free, which is not true. The online course portion of the parent-taught driver's education program ranges in cost anywhere from \$75 - \$260. Additionally, there are indirect costs of the parent's time and potential vehicle insurance rate changes for those who elect this option.

**WHY ARE THE CLASSROOM AND BEHIND-THE-WHEEL HOURS OF INSTRUCTION BEING REDUCED FOR PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER’S EDUCATION STUDENTS?**

We do not have a clear answer on why these hours were reduced by the legislature. The department still has the authority to define what constitutes an approved course for parent-taught driver’s education, so the same content will be required as is currently, we just can no longer require a certain number of hours or minutes to be completed.

**CAN A STUDENT STILL CHOOSE TO TAKE DRIVER’S EDUCATION THROUGH THEIR SCHOOL OR A PRIVATE COMPANY?**

Yes. Any student still has the choice to complete a traditional driver’s education course with their school or a private company, including homeschool students. One advantage to completing a traditional driver’s education course with the student’s school or a private company is that the student does not have to complete a driving examination with the department or the county as long as the driver’s education instructor does not require a driving examination prior to licensure. Additionally, traditional driver’s education is taught by driver education instructors who are required to complete regular training and receive up-to-date information from us through their certification as a behind the wheel instructor.

**ARE THERE ANY FEES TO COMPLETE PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER’S EDUCATION?**

Yes. As mentioned above, part of an approved parent-taught driver’s education course is to complete an online course developed by one of four DOT-approved vendors. Each of the approved courses charges a fee and the amount depends on the vendor selected and how the materials are delivered (i.e., written vs. online).

**WILL A PARENT AND STUDENT STILL NEED TO APPLY AND SEEK PRE-APPROVAL FROM THE DOT PRIOR TO BEGINNING A PARENT-TAUGHT DRIVER’S EDUCATION COURSE?**

No. Effective July 1, 2021, the law will no longer allows us to require an application and pre-approval process for a parent seeking to provide parent-taught driver’s education to their student. However, we strongly encourage any parent seeking to provide parent-taught driver’s education to voluntarily apply to us and go through the established pre-approval process in advance of starting the course to ensure they are truly eligible to provide the course.

One example of why ensuring eligibility to teach the course in advance is so important is because a parent who does not have a clear driving record or a valid driver’s license is not eligible to teach parent-taught driver’s education to their student. If the parent is not aware of this and does not reach out to us until the very end of the course, it could result in us denying issuance of a certificate of completion for the course.

We highly encourage any parent interested in providing parent-taught driver’s education to voluntarily apply to us and go through the pre-approval process prior to beginning a parent-taught driver’s education course. Details and instructions may be found on the [parent-taught](#)

[driver's education page](#) of the DOT website. Parents may also reach out to us at [parenttaught.de@iowadot.us](mailto:parenttaught.de@iowadot.us).

For parents who do not wish to voluntarily apply to us and go through the pre-approval process, we strongly encourage them to closely review the requirements on the [parent-taught driver's education page](#) of the DOT website to help avoid any unnecessary denials at the end of the program.

**WHAT DO A PARENT AND STUDENT NEED TO DO IF THEY CHOOSE TO USE THE PARENT TAUGHT DRIVER'S EDUCATION PROGRAM?**

Customers should be directed to the [parent-taught driver's education page](#) of the DOT website for complete details and instructions. The process for parents and students, approved courses, and frequently asked questions will continue to be updated with the latest information regarding the program and its requirements.