

# DRIVING

A guide to the importance of driving for youth in foster care and how adults can help them get on the road



**PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY**



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# WHY DRIVING IS CRITICAL FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



"A driver's license allows someone to go almost anywhere to find and create opportunities that wouldn't be possible otherwise, rather than waiting or hoping they come. Or hoping someone can drive them to them..."  
-Bradford youth, 21

## Transportation helps youth achieve their goals and is one of the largest barriers foster youth face

- It impacts every aspect of well-being! Lack of transportation is an impediment to meeting education and employment goals
- For youth who do not have access to safe and reliable public transportation options, obtaining a driver's license is critical to their future success
- Youth with licenses are **1.6x** more likely to have transportation to school and work, and to be enrolled in school
- Youth with licenses are **2x** as likely to be employed
- Youth with vehicles are **3x** more likely to have transportation to school and work

*Source: Opportunity Passport Participant Survey and Opportunity Passport Data System, 2010-2017*

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# DCF POLICY: NORMALCY AND DRIVING

**According to [Policy 75](#) and [Policy 160](#), DCF must support youth in foster care to prepare to drive**

- DCF acknowledges that obtaining a driver's license is a critical, normal, and healthy experience for foster youth
- Youth should be encouraged to obtain their learner's permit when they turn 15 and complete driver education
- DCF and caregivers should ensure youth are able to get their required driving practice hours, have access to a vehicle for the driving test, and have support in researching car insurance plans



"A driving license is important to me because I've realized that you need to have one to live a day to day life, especially living in a place like Vermont!"  
-Killington youth, 17

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# BARRIERS TO DRIVING

**Being in foster care presents many barriers to getting a driver's license. In Vermont, youth face these challenges:**

- Caregivers may be unable to provide support due to concerns about liability and insurance costs
- Youth may have trouble obtaining required identification and documentation through DCF to provide to the DMV
- DCF may not prioritize youth driving because of behavior concerns or perceived ability
- DCF may be unaware and need training about policy directives and the importance of youth becoming independent drivers
- Living situation changes disrupt the process (e.g., accessing driver education via a school waitlist)
- Youth living in group homes or residential treatment programs may face additional delays and challenges

"I want to be able to travel  
and get to work when I need  
to and not have to depend  
on others for a ride."  
Hardwick youth, 17







# WHAT YOUTH NEED

## TO GET THEIR LEARNER'S PERMIT, YOUTH:

- Must be at least 15 years old
- Under 18 must have a “clean” driving record for the previous 2 years
- Must have a valid Social Security number, proof of identification, and proof of Vermont residency
- Must have legal guardian's permission
- Should download the [driver's manual](#)
- Should check out the [interactive tutorial](#) to prepare for the permit test
- Must schedule an appointment and get more info about the DMV requirements [online](#) or by calling 802-828-2000
- Tests: vision and written
- Fees: exam \$32.00 + permit \$20.00

## With a learner's permit, youth can:

- Drive anywhere/anytime in VT with someone who is licensed, unimpaired, and in the front seat (parent, guardian, certified driver education instructor, or person over age 25)
- Sign up for driver education!

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# DRIVER EDUCATION

- Driver education is required for youth under 18 to get their license
- Youth in foster care often aren't able to get to the top of school waitlists, which are typically based on grade level
  - Sometimes youth have to switch schools when living situations change. They may have to stay back a grade
  - Youth may be older than their peers in the same grade, dropping them further down the waitlist
- Many youth in care attend alternative schools and aren't able to access driver education courses in public schools
- Private driver education courses are expensive! Although YDP can help with these costs, not all youth who have been in foster care are connected to YDP
- [A list of private driver education schools can be found here](#)



"Without a license I wouldn't be able to go to work, health appointments, or bring my son to school and his doctors appointments."  
-Middlebury youth, 21





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# WHAT YOUTH NEED

## TO GET THEIR JUNIOR DRIVER'S LICENSE, YOUTH:

- Must be at least 16 years old and have held a valid permit for at least 1 year
- Must have maintained a “clean” driving record in the previous 6 months
- Must have a valid Social Security number, proof of identification, and proof of Vermont residency
- Must have legal guardian’s permission
- Fees: exam + junior driver's license \$51
- Road test: use of a vehicle that is clean, has a valid inspection sticker, is in good mechanical condition (emergency brake must work), and has a valid insurance policy and registration

## 16 and 17 year-old youth must:

- Pass a state-approved driver education and training course consisting of 30 hours of classroom study and 6 hours of behind the wheel training/observation
- Complete (and provide documentation of) 40 hours of driving practice, with at least 10 hours at night and 5 hours in traffic

[Click here](#) to read all the DMV requirements for a junior driver's license. Download the practice driving log [here](#).

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# WHAT YOUTH CAN DO WITH A JUNIOR DRIVER'S LICENSE

- During the first 3 months, youth can only have passengers if there is someone over 25 in the car who is licensed, unimpaired, and in the front seat
- During the second 3 months, youth can have passengers who are family members
- After 6 months, there are no restrictions on who youth can have in the car
- Must have a junior driver's license for at least 1 year before operating a vehicle as part of employment (e.g. food delivery)



"A driver's license can make someone's life better because it can open up certain doorways like freedom and independence."  
-Townshend youth, 18



**Reminder: it is illegal and unsafe to use electronic devices while driving!**





# WHAT ARE THE TESTS LIKE?

## **Vision Test:**

- If youth do not pass, they will be referred to an eye doctor for further testing

## **Knowledge Test:**

- 20-question (multiple choice) computer test
- Must answer at least 16 questions correctly
- Accommodations available (listening on headphones, read aloud by examiner, use of interpreter or dictionary)
- If youth fail the test, they must wait at least 1 day before taking another one
- If youth need help, ask the DMV examiner

## **Road Test:**

- Must pass vision and knowledge test
- Youth must follow the directions of the examiner who will be riding in vehicle
- Youth will be expected to handle the vehicle with skill, drive at proper speeds, and follow rules of the road
- No one other than the youth and the examiner may be in the vehicle
- If youth fail the test, they must wait at least 1 week before taking another test

"I cant travel outside my very small community or run my own life without it."

-St. Johnsbury youth, 21

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# CAR INSURANCE FAQs

## **How much does car insurance cost for the average 16–18 year-old?**

There are a lot of factors that go into the rate for car insurance (age, driving record, type of vehicle, annual mileage, number of drivers in the household and their driving records, and the Consumer Insurance Score).

## **How does participation in a driver education course impact the availability/cost of insurance?**

Insurance companies require driver education for youth under 18 and may offer a discount.

## **How does insurance work for a youth who has their permit and no license? Do they need to be added to a household policy?**

This varies by insurance company, but most allow a youth with a permit to drive the vehicle without affecting the rate.

## **If a volunteer from outside the household assists a youth with a permit to practice driving and there is an accident, whose insurance would pay?**

The insurance for the vehicle owner would have primary liability.

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# CAR INSURANCE FAQs

## **If a foster parent adds a youth to their insurance policy, what can they expect (in terms of liability and increased costs)?**

They can expect their premium to increase. They should contact their insurance company or consider comparing rates from multiple companies.

## **How does a youth having their own car impact foster parent costs and liability?**

Youth will need to get their own insurance, unless the vehicle is co-owned with the foster parents. It greatly reduces the liability risk of the foster parents.

## **Is it possible for a youth under 18 to secure their own insurance?**

Yes, it is possible for them to get their own car insurance, particularly if they own their own vehicle.





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# RESOURCES

## Support for Youth

[Youth Development Program](#)

[DCF Adolescent Services](#)

[DCF Policies](#)

## DMV Guidance

[Interactive tutorial for permit test](#)

[Driver's manual](#)

[General info about learner's permit](#)

[General info about junior driver's license](#)

## Driver Education

[List of private driving schools](#)

## Adaptive Driving Supports

- Adaptive Driving Associates, White River Junction
  - [adapt-driving@vermontel.net](mailto:adapt-driving@vermontel.net)
  - (802) 296-2004
- [UVM Driver Rehabilitation Program, Colchester](#)
  - (802) 847-3140