



Driver's License Suspensions as a Workforce Barrier



**SAN
FRANCISCO**

Office of Economic & Workforce Development



I. The Importance of a Driver's License in the World of Work

- Employer requirements as a precondition to employment
- In combination with a vehicle, increased access to jobs
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee:

Mothers with young children on welfare and in subsidized child care are twice as likely to find sustained employment if they had a driver's license. For this population, having a driver's license is more important for finding steady work than a high school diploma.

I. The Importance of a Driver's License in the World of Work

Rutgers University Survey of Suspended Drivers:

- 42% of survey respondents with a history of suspensions lost their jobs when they had their driving privileges suspended
- 45% of those that lost their job because of a suspension could not find another job
- Of those that were able to find another job, 88% reported a decrease in income
- 46% of survey respondents reported lacking a form of identification after the driver's license suspension

II. The Rise of Driver's License Suspensions for Non-Driver Safety Reasons

- From 1913, the year Henry Ford instituted the first moving assembly line for automobile manufacturing, to the mid-1930s, vehicular deaths in the United States rose from 4,079 to over 34,000 per year.
- In response, by 1940 46 states had adopted driver's license laws. The intent of these laws was to improve public safety by ensuring a basic level of driving proficiency on the roadways. Driver's license suspensions and revocations were mechanisms to remove unsafe drivers from behind the wheel.
- In 1996, Congress gave states the authority to suspend driver's licenses of people who failed to make child support payments.

II. The Rise of Driver's License Suspensions for Non-Driver Safety Reasons

- Currently in California, a person's driver's license can be suspended for failure to appear (FTA) in court to pay a ticket, failure to pay a fine (FTP) resulting from a FTA, driving without insurance, failure to pay child support, vandalizing public property, prostitution, and more.
- Minors may have their license suspended or revoked for being a habitual truant from school, or being convicted of possessing alcohol, drugs, a concealable weapon, or live ammunition.
- In California, a 2002 study of license suspensions showed that the largest subgroup of suspended/revoked drivers, at 37%, were those drivers whose violation was failure to appear for a court hearing.

III. The National Growing Movement to Reduce Driver's License Suspensions

- New Jersey Motor Vehicles Affordability and Fairness Task Force: “. . . license suspensions often have serious, albeit unintended, consequences especially for low-income drivers.”
- American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators: “legislatures [should] repeal laws requiring the suspension of driving privileges for non-highway safety related violations.”
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area: high fees and limited due process in California courts have resulted in millions of driver's license suspensions, with often disastrous consequences for a person's ability to obtain employment, maintain good credit, and stay out of poverty.

III. The National Growing Movement to Reduce Driver's License Suspensions

- 1998 Milwaukee, Wisconsin Study:
 - 58% of Milwaukee County adults (and 93% of teens) with suspension orders on file were suspended solely for non-payment of fines and civil forfeitures
 - More central city males ages 15-55 had suspension orders on file than had a valid driver's license
 - Single parents with a valid driver's license were much more likely to leave welfare
- Milwaukee Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE) established in 2007:
 - Public-private partnership that includes Wisconsin Community Services, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the City of Milwaukee Municipal Court
 - Direct case management, legal aid services, and advocacy

IV. Current Activities

- California 18-month Amnesty Program
 - Effective October 1, 2015
 - For unpaid traffic and non-infraction tickets
 - Provides for driver's license reinstatement and, under certain circumstances, a reduction of unpaid bail/fines/fees of up to 80%
- City Inter-Departmental Working Group
 - DMV Data: Over 10,000 FTA suspensions of San Francisco drivers, March 2012-March 2015
 - Prep for Amnesty Program: (1) Provider survey (2) Coordination with Judicial Council and Superior Court (3) Case Mgmt/Funding
 - Long-Term: San Francisco Driver's License Recovery Program
 - Long-Term: State legislative action to reduce the use of suspensions as a penalty for non-driver safety violations