

Article 14.

Driver Education.

§ 115C-215. Administration of driver education program by the Department of Public Instruction.

(a) In accordance with criteria and standards approved by the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction shall organize and administer a standardized program of driver education to be offered at the public high schools of this State for all physically and mentally qualified persons who (i) are older than 14 years and six months, (ii) are approved by the principal of the school, pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, (iii) are enrolled in a public or private high school within the State or are receiving instruction through a home school as provided by Part 3 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, and (iv) have not previously enrolled in the program. The driver education program shall be for the purpose of making available public education to all students on driver safety and training. The State Board of Education shall use for this purpose all funds appropriated pursuant to subsection (f) of this section to the Department of Public Instruction and may use all other funds that become available for its use for this purpose.

(b) The driver education curriculum shall include the following:

- (1) Instruction on the rights and privileges of the handicapped and the signs and symbols used to assist the handicapped relative to motor vehicles, including the "international symbol of accessibility" and other symbols and devices as provided in Article 2A of Chapter 20 of the General Statutes.
- (2) At least six hours of instruction on the offense of driving while impaired and related subjects.
- (3) At least six hours of actual driving experience. To the extent practicable, this experience may include at least one hour of instruction on the techniques of defensive driving.
- (4) At least one hour of motorcycle safety awareness training.
- (5) Instruction on law enforcement procedures for traffic stops that is developed in consultation with the State Highway Patrol, the North Carolina Sheriff's Association, and the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police. The instruction shall provide a description of the actions that a motorist should take during a traffic stop, including appropriate interactions with law enforcement officers.

(c) The State Board of Education shall establish and implement a strategic plan for the driver education program. At a minimum, the strategic plan shall consist of goals and performance indicators, including the number of program participants as compared to the number of persons projected to be eligible to participate in the program, the implementation of a standard curriculum for the program, expenditures for the program, and the success rate of program participants in receiving a drivers license as reported by the Division of Motor Vehicles. The strategic plan shall also outline specific roles and duties of an advisory committee consisting of employees of the Division of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Public Instruction and other stakeholders in driver education.

(c1) If a local school administrative unit does not comply with any reporting requirements imposed on the unit for the purposes of implementing the strategic plan established by the State Board of Education pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, the Department of Public Instruction may withhold up to five percent (5%) of the State funds allocated to a local school administrative unit for driver education until the unit reports the information required by the Department.

(d) The State Board of Education shall adopt a salary range for the delivery of driver education courses by driver education instructors who are public school employees. The salary range shall be based on the driver education instructor's qualifications, certification, and licensure specific to driver education.

(e) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to permit local boards of education to enter contracts with public or private entities to provide a program of driver education at public high schools. All driver education instructors shall meet the requirements established by the State Board of Education; provided, however, driver education instructors shall not be required to hold teacher certificates.

(f) The clear proceeds of the newly established motor vehicle registration late fee charged pursuant to G.S. 20-88.03, as enacted by S.L. 2015-241, shall be used to provide a dedicated source of revenue for the drivers education program administered by the Department of Public Instruction in accordance with this section and shall be appropriated by the General Assembly for this purpose for the 2016-2017 fiscal year and subsequent fiscal years thereafter.

(g) Of the funds appropriated to the Department of Public Instruction each fiscal year pursuant to subsection (f) of this section, the Department may use up to one hundred sixty-four thousand six hundred ninety dollars (\$164,690), as adjusted to reflect legislative salary increments, retirement rate adjustments, and health benefit adjustments, for the direct costs for the statewide administration of the program, including any necessary positions. (1953, c. 1196; 1955, c. 1372, art. 23, s. 4; 1959, c. 573, s. 16; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1991, c. 689, s. 32(b); 2011-145, s. 28.37(a); 2011-334, s. 1; 2015-241, ss. 5.3(c), 8.39(a); 2016-94, ss. 5.2, 8.5; 2017-95, s. 2; 2018-5, s. 7.11(b); 2023-134, s. 7.33.)