

DRIVE TO THRIVE: SUPPORT DRIVER'S EDUCATION ACADEMIES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Prior to the pandemic, only 15% of teens received driver's education at school, compared to 95% in the 1970s. It was difficult for Opportunity Youth to attain driver's licenses pre-pandemic, but with the shifting world of work, it is even more imperative to obtain the driver's license as a needed employment credential and is critical to public safety.

SUPPORT DRIVE TO THRIVE: CREATING A COMMUNITY DRIVEN PILOT FOR DRIVER'S LICENSE ACADEMIES IN FOUR MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES—URBAN, RURAL, SUBURBAN AND TRIBAL.

Primary barriers to youth in obtaining their driver's license:

\$ Cost

We have moved the cost of the driver's license from the schools to the family.

Access

Young people need support in accessing courses and testing at times and locations that are convenient.

Structure

Opportunity Youth often lack the funds or support to navigate the system.

What about insurance?

We are working in coalition to address access to low-cost car insurance that would ensure youth have access to insurance products that meet their needs.

GET IN TOUCH:

3001 BROADWAY STREET NE SUITE 330, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55413 |
INFO@YOUTHPRISE.ORG | WWW.YOUTHPRISE.ORG | @YOUTHPRISE

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Priority Population

Opportunity Youth under the age of 25, including:

- Youth experiencing homelessness–
 - McKinney Vento,
 - Coordinated Entry,
 - State definitions of homelessness, directed by Homeless Youth Act;
- Young Parents on MFIP;
- Former Fosters;
- Young people in the justice system;
- Young people out of school and out of work aligned to a workforce program

WHY DOES IT MATTER IF YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE?

Public Safety & Legal Issues

Young people drive when necessary, even if they don't have a valid driver's license and even if they haven't completed all of the education requirements. This can lead to an increase in unsafe driving behavior, increased fines and fees and future suspension of their license.

Employment

Not being licensed can limit a young person's access to many jobs and apprenticeships. Many technical careers require a driver's license for on-the-job driving and/or because of location. Post-pandemic, many more jobs now require a license to meet new customer needs. Many flexible jobs (such as food delivery, grocery delivery, etc.) that might work well for youth balancing school or other jobs are also unattainable without a license. And, Individuals with a license are more likely to obtain higher paying jobs.

Housing

Lack of ability to drive limits the geographic options for housing, especially when factoring in their proximity to school or jobs. This also may impact their ability to find affordable housing. Without the ability to be flexible in choosing where to live and work, young people may be locked into high-cost, low-wage markets.

“We need driver's education programs that are accessible to all young people. Without these programs, their paths to success are restricted, which limits their potential and undermines our community.
Darius D. Co-President, World Youth Connect

Youthprise is requesting \$3.85 million over the 2026-27 biennium to support the development of a 2.5 year pilot for Driver's License Academies in four communities - urban, rural, suburban, and tribal.

In this pilot, eligible entities could apply to create and implement a referral system to ensure a community driven approach to ensuring eligible youth have access to complete the drivers license process. This includes the cost for eligible youth to participate in a private or public drivers education program (classroom, behind the wheel), permit and license fees, and possible assistance paying off previous fines and fees that are blocking them from legal driving.