



NORTHWEST WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

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CAN I GET MY DRIVER'S LICENSE BACK?

If your driving privileges have been suspended, this memorandum can help you understand how to start the process of applying to get your license back.

I. The first step is to go to your local Department of Licensing (DOL) and ask "What do I need to do to get my license?" If the only reason your license has been suspended is for failure to pay fines, you should be able to get your license immediately because of a recent Supreme Court case. If you are instructed to contact the Department of Licensing (360-902-3900 or drivers@dol.wa.gov), do so; they may be able to help.

At the present time, your unpaid fines should not cause your license to be suspended. This does not mean you don't owe the fines; simply that license suspension is not a consequence. This will probably be changed in the next legislative session, so you should get relicensed now, and do what you can to deal with your outstanding fines.

If you don't know to which courts in Washington you need to pay fines, the DOL can send you a printout of unresolved citations, including the addresses and telephone numbers of the courts. Many courts contract with a collection agency that will allow you to work out a payment plan. In some cases, people are allowed to perform community service instead of paying the fines.

II. However, some suspensions require you to go back to court and/or clear other problems before you can receive your license. These may include failure to pay child support, being liable for an uninsured accident, being convicted of a serious traffic offense, or not having an SR-22 insurance certificate (proof that you have insurance) on file with the Department of Licensing when required.

There are two legal agencies in Washington State that may be able to assist you.

A. In the Seattle Area

You may contact The Defender Association Relicensing and Car Recovery Program in Seattle. They can offer advice on how to proceed. They may also be able to assist if your car has been impounded. They have limited hours. You may call 206-447-3900, ext. 642 from 9:00 to 1:00 on Mondays for a telephone consultation. You may consult with a legal representative in person at the Seattle Justice Center, 600 5th Ave., on Wednesday afternoons on the 9th floor and from 8:30 to 10:30 A.M. Friday mornings at the Court Resource Center, Room 235. This program will be discontinued December 31, 2004, unless funding is restored.

Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) in Seattle also helps people with restoration of their driving privileges. A class is held the 3rd Tuesday of every month. Call 206-812-4940 to get on the list.

The Relicensing Project at the Northwest Labor and Employment Law Office (LELO) provides educational services regarding driving suspended in the third degree. At each orientation, the staff will provide you with a current Department of Licensing abstract, and individuals will receive one-to-one counseling sessions to work out a strategy to recover the individual's driver's license. You may contact LELO at (206) 860-1400 Ext. 2 or Drivetosurvive2003@yahoo.com for an orientation schedule. The LELO Relicensing Program also writes letters and contacts courts and collection agency(s) on behalf of individuals. Appointments can be made if additional assistance is needed.

B. In the Spokane Area

The Center for Justice in Spokane also has a driver's license program for people in the City of Spokane area. In order to be considered for assistance, you must:

- 1) take care of all outstanding warrants;
- 2) provide a copy of your current driving abstract (get this from the Driver's License Examiners office at 6519 N. Lidgerwood or 12801 E. Sprague in Spokane for a \$5 fee);
- 3) provide a copy of your Defendant Case History (get this from the Spokane District or Spokane Municipal Court Cashier window in the Public Safety Building on 1100 W. Mallon in Spokane -- there is no charge);
- 4) provide documentation of all unpaid traffic tickets (you can also get this at the Public Safety Building; you need a copy from each court that you have outstanding tickets in -- there is no charge).
- 5) provide paperwork for outstanding tickets in other counties.

Once you have gathered all of this paperwork, you can call 509-835-5211 between 8:30 and 5:00 to make an appointment. They charge a \$10 administrative fee if you are accepted into the program.

C. If your driving record shows that your license was suspended outside Spokane or King County, you may contact the Defender Association in Seattle (see above) to get advice on what your options are.

III. There are now expanded opportunities to obtain an occupational license. These require an application that can be found on the Department of Licensing (DOL) website. An SR-22 insurance certificate will be required for an occupational license to be issued.

Prepared by Kristine Kay Smith, October 2004, revised by Mary Wolney November 2004.