

Sixteen and No Wheels In Sight

Most teenagers dream of their sixteenth birthday and are overcome by the anxiety of parallel parking, a driving test, and their first car.

For U.S. high school students overseas, there is little hope in receiving a driver's license, unless the student has already been issued a valid state driver's license, because DoD Dependent Schools no longer offers Driver Education classes.

In a Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) policy memorandum dated 28 Jan 04, Dr. Joseph Tafoya announced the cancellation of Driver Education in DoDEA schools for SY 04-05. The document states: "Driver Education courses will no longer be offered as a course in the curriculum. Driver Education course DEE401 will be removed from the course offerings in all DoDEA schools."

In Germany, a teenager must be 17-years-old with a valid stateside driver's license, exclusive of any restrictions, in order to take the USAREUR driver's test. Restrictions on a driver's license include restricted driving times, required adult supervision, learner's permits, and participation in a graduated licensing program. The Driver's Testing and Licensing office does not allow for stateside learner's permits. A student may obtain a German driver's license but at a cost of between €1500 and €2000 euro and at their own expense. In the case of an international driver's license, a valid stateside driver's license is required along with a USAREUR license.

According to the European Commission on Transport regulations, the minimum ages for drivers in EU member states may grant exemptions and issue driving licenses from the age of 17 years, but do not stipulate for younger drivers. The regulations also stipulate that member states may refuse to recognize the validity in their territory of such licenses issued to drivers under 18 years of age.

A better option is to accomplish driver's education classes either by returning to CONUS to take the required classes and tests for the dependent's state of residence or by participating in an online driver's education class. There are many online courses either through the state transportation offices or through private brokers who provide state approved and endorsed licenses.

A majority of online driver's license services follow the same guidelines. Most states require a learner's permit before taking driver's education, proof of age, school attendance verification, and a parent or guardian escort. But recently, states are replacing traditional driver's license requirements with the Graduated Driver License (GDL). GDL eases beginning drivers into traffic by limiting their exposure to driving situations that have been proven to be particularly dangerous and places certain conditions on new teen drivers. There are several states that have a three-tiered licensing system with some components of a GDL. But, within the majority of states, the learner's permit period, if required, has minimal requirements and restrictions and a full unrestricted license can be acquired at a young age with minimal behind-the-wheel experience.



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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY
POLICY MEMORANDUM

Cancellation of Driver Education

It is the policy of the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) that effective the beginning of School Year 2004-2005, Driver Education courses will no longer be offered as a course in the curriculum. Driver Education course DEE401 will be removed from the course offerings in all DoDEA schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph D. Tafoya", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Joseph D. Tafoya
Director