

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in August 1999, contains the results of our performance audit* of Driver Safety Programs, Department of Education and Department of State.

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Education developed and administers the State's Driver Education Program*. As part of its responsibilities, the Department of Education approves new driver education instructors; monitors the continued eligibility of driver education instructors; processes student driver education certificates and parent driving permits; approves requests for driver education programs* at public* and private* driver training schools*; provides consultant services to students, parents, school officials, legislators, and other traffic safety related agencies; monitors public and private driver training schools for compliance with laws and administrative rules; investigates reported program violations; and secures compliance with program regulations.

The Department of State initiates many of the State's driver improvement actions*. Using information recorded on the State's master driver records*, the Department of State monitors the driving performance of Michigan motorists. The Department of State identifies drivers with the greatest likelihood of being in an accident*; intervenes with information, education, and disciplinary actions to reduce unsafe driving habits; and revokes licenses of drivers who are unable to improve their driving to ensure a reasonable level of safety for others. The courts also initiate driver improvement actions.

**AUDIT OBJECTIVES
AND CONCLUSIONS**

Audit Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of the State's Driver Education Program in educating individuals in the safe operation of motor vehicles.

Conclusion: We concluded that the State's Driver Education Program was generally effective in educating individuals in the safe operation of motor vehicles. Also, responses to our surveys of new drivers and parents of driver education students indicated a general level of satisfaction with their driver education programs. However, we noted one material condition* related to evaluating the effectiveness of the driver education programs:

- The Department of Education had not established a continuous quality improvement process to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the State's driver education programs (Finding 1).

The Department agreed with the need for a continuous quality improvement process.

Audit Objective: To determine if driver improvement actions were effective and efficient in educating problem drivers in the safe operation of motor vehicles and in reducing traffic accidents and related injuries and offenses.

Conclusion: We determined that driver improvement actions were generally effective and efficient in educating problem drivers in the safe operation of motor vehicles and in reducing traffic accidents and related injuries and offenses. However, we noted one material condition related to evaluating the effectiveness of driver improvement actions:

- The Department of State had not developed a process to evaluate the extent to which driver improvement actions improved the driving performance of problem drivers (Finding 2).

The Department agreed with the corresponding recommendation.

Audit Objective: To determine if the Department of Education and the Department of State were effective and efficient in ensuring compliance with applicable statutes and program requirements related to certifying and monitoring driver training instructors and driver training schools.

Conclusion: We concluded that the Department of Education and the Department of State were reasonably effective and efficient in ensuring compliance with applicable statutes and program requirements related to certifying and monitoring driver training instructors and driver training schools. However, we noted reportable

conditions* related to centralizing driver education administrative activities and monitoring driver training instructors (Findings 3 and 4).

AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY

Our audit scope was to examine selected Department of Education and Department of State records for the purpose of evaluating driver education programs and driver improvement actions. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

Our methodology included interviewing Department of Education and Department of State staff and management. Also, we reviewed applicable State statutes, policies, and procedures to gain an understanding of the driver education programs and the driver improvement actions.

For our first objective, we evaluated the public and private driver training schools' driver education programs that were in place prior to April 1, 1997. We evaluated the performance of each driver training school based on the average number of accidents per student and the average number of convictions* per student. Our testing was performed to evaluate the effectiveness of driver education programs and to establish benchmarks for a future comparison to the graduated licensing program. In addition, we surveyed new drivers and parents of driver education students to determine their level of satisfaction with the driver education programs.

For our second objective, we selected four samples to test the effectiveness of four types of driver improvement actions.

Our four samples consisted of drivers who were analyzed because during the 25-month period January 1, 1994 through January 31, 1996 their records contained one or more of the following actions: driver improvement correspondence, a re-examination*, a suspension*, or a revocation*. We reviewed the master driver records for each driver in our four test groups and determined the number of accidents and citations resulting in conviction during the 24 months preceding and following the selected driver improvement action. We analyzed the drivers for changes in driving performance as measured by the number of accidents and the number of citations resulting in convictions.

For our third objective, we reviewed the processes of approving driver training schools, approving driver training instructors, and following up on complaints. We also reviewed the Department of Education's and the Department of State's efforts to monitor driver training schools for compliance with statutory requirements.

AGENCY RESPONSES

Our audit report includes 4 findings and 4 corresponding recommendations. The Department of Education agreed with the findings and recommendations addressed to it. The Department of State agreed with the findings and recommendation addressed to it.