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ANNUAL REPORT



GEORGIA DRIVER'S EDUCATION COMMISSION
WWW.GAHIGHWAYSAFETY.ORG/GDEC
7 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DRIVE SUITE 643
404-656-2769

GDEC

Georgia Driver's Education Commission

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-21-181(b), the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) submits this report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and the committee chairpersons for the standing committees in the Senate and House of Representatives that are assigned issues related to motor vehicles. This report contains data regarding funds collected from the additional penalty imposed on traffic citations for driver's education for the previous three fiscal years, the amount of such funds appropriated to the commission for each corresponding year, and the manner and purposes for which such funds have been expended.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Georgia Driver's Education Commission is to maximize participation in driver's education and training to reduce motor vehicle crashes by making driver's training accessible and affordable to all Georgians.



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Commission Composition

Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 15-21-173, the Georgia Driver's Education Commission consists of eight (8) members who can serve four-year terms. The State Board of Education shall appoint one member of the commission and the Department of Driver Services shall appoint two members of the commission. The director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety shall appoint one member of the commission. The remaining four members of the commission shall be appointed by the Governor, two of whom shall be public school driver's education providers, and the other two shall be private driver's education providers. The Governor shall designate a chairperson of the commission from among the appointed members.



Allen Poole, Chairman
Director
Governor's Office of Highway
Safety
Appointed by the Governor's
Office of Highway Safety



Kathy L Watts
Owner, New London School of
Driving
Represents a Private Driver's
Education Provider



**Spencer R. Moore,
Vice Chairman**
Commissioner
Department of Driver Services
Appointed by the Department of
Driver Services



J. Barry Schrenk
Owner, Taggart's Driving School
Represents a Private Driver's
Education Provider



Malika Reed Wilkins
Sr. Principal, Transportation
Marketing Manager
Atlanta Regional Commission
Appointed by the Department of
Driver Services

Two (2) vacancies appointed by
the Governor representing a Public
Driver's Education Provider

One (1) vacancy appointed by the
State Board of Education

Problem Identification

According to the Georgia Young Adult Drivers Traffic Safety Facts¹, there were **215** young drivers (15-to-20 years of age) involved in fatal crashes on Georgia roadways in 2021. This is a **4% increase** (9 more young drivers) since the previous year. During this same period, the rate of young drivers involved in fatal crashes per 100,000 population also increased by 2% (from 23.2 to 23.7). This does not imply that young drivers caused the crash either by their actions or failure to act.

In 2021, young drivers represented 8% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes – a slight increase in comparison to previous years. Over the past decade, most young drivers involved in fatal crashes were 18-to-20 years of age (Figure 1). In 2021, 69% of all young drivers involved in fatal crashes were in the 18-to-20 age group.

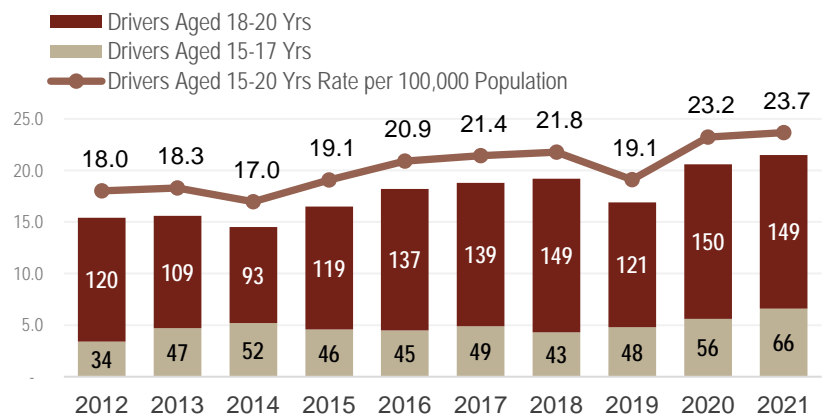
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention², teens are at a higher risk of being in a motor vehicle crash compared to any other age group. In 2021:

- **283.7** out of every **100,000** crashes involving drivers ages 15-to-20 were fatal
- **33.9** out of every **100,000** licensed drivers ages 15-to-20 were involved in a fatal crash
- **23.7** out of every **100,000** Georgia residents ages 15-to-20 were involved in a fatal crash

In 2021, there were 75,774 crashes that involved young drivers in Georgia—86% of all crashes involved other vehicles (multi-vehicle crashes), and 14% were single-vehicle crashes. The most common harmful event in single-vehicle crashes was a confirmed inattentive driver (distraction). In 2021, 27% of all young drivers involved in a traffic crash were confirmed or suspected of distracted driving. The top contributing factors among young drivers and other drivers involved in multi-vehicle crashes were following too closely and failure to yield. Crashes caused by these top contributing factors can often be avoided with the proper training.

Fortunately, teen and young driver motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities are preventable, and there are proven strategies that can improve the safety of young drivers on the road through effective driver's education. While our highway safety partners across Georgia will focus on other techniques to reduce injuries and fatalities on our highways, fostering and facilitating strong driver's education remains a paramount and effective component in the fight to reduce crash injuries and fatalities among young Georgia drivers.

Figure 1. Number of Young Drivers (15-to-17 and 18-to-20 Years) Involved in Fatal Crashes



Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2012-2021

¹ Georgia Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System. (2023, August). Young Adult Drivers: 2021 data. (Georgia Traffic Safety Facts). Atlanta, GA: Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

² "Teen Drivers: Get the Facts." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 Oct. 2019, www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teen_drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html.

Young Driver Licensing

The Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) was enacted on July 1, 1997. TADRA established a Graduated Driver’s License program for young drivers ages 15-to-18 in Georgia. The law significantly changed how young motorists earn and maintain their driving privileges (Class D Provisional License).

The methods available to young drivers to obtain their license includes a combination of 30-hour course with instructors, behind-the-wheel training, supervised driving, and the use of the Parent-Teen Driving Guide. These methods are designed to gradually introduce young drivers to Georgia roadways and reduce high-risk driving situations. Young drivers can obtain their licenses using any of the four methods described below.

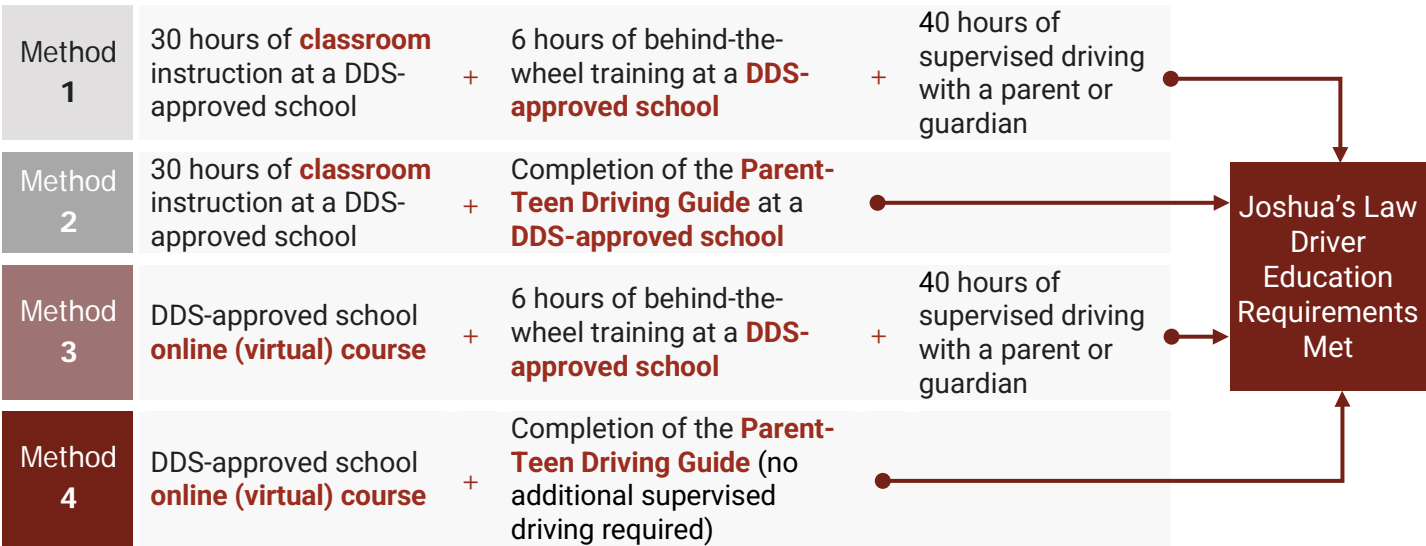


Figure 2 shows how young drivers obtained a Provisional License (Class D) across the various methods in FY2023. Despite, the public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution remained nearly the same as in previous fiscal years.

- **11.0** out of every 20 young drivers (55%) used Method 4
- **6.8** out of every 20 young drivers (34%) used Method 1
- **1.4** out of every 20 young drivers (7%) used Method 3
- **0.8** out of every 20 young drivers (4%) used Method 2

According to the Georgia Driver’s Education Commission’s research study of Joshua’s Law, young drivers who use **Method 1** to complete the GDL requirement **demonstrated better and safer driver outcomes** in comparison to other methods. Method 1 young drivers had fewer crashes and crashes with serious injuries or fatalities compared to other young drivers who completed the GDL requirement using other methods.

Figure 2. FY2023 Class D Licenses Issued by GDL Method (July 2022- June 2023)

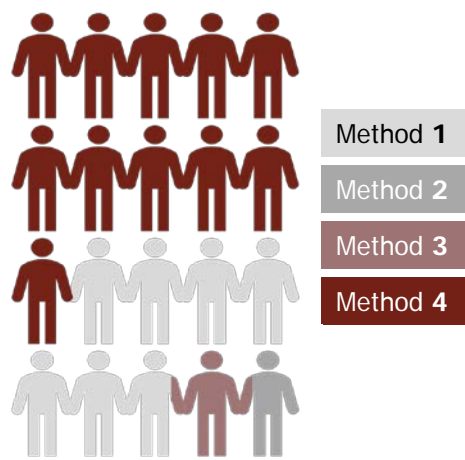


Figure 3 shows the percentage of young adults (15-to-20 years old) with an instructional permit, Class D provisional license, or Class C license by county. Young drivers generally obtain their licenses for the first time under a Graduated Driver Licensing program as they learn driving skills. In 2021:

- There were 8.0 million licensed drivers in Georgia, and young drivers (ages 15-to-20 years old) accounted for **7.9% (633,567) of all licensed drivers**.
- Across the state, **70% of all youth** (ages 15-to-20 years old) held either an instructional permit or driver's license.
- The percentage of young adults holding an instructional permit or driver's license in rural counties (76 percent) was higher than young adults in the Atlanta region or other urban counties³ (**68%** in both regions).

Figure 3. Percent of Young Adults (Ages 15-to-20 Years) with an Instructional Permit, Class D Provisional License, or Class C License⁴ by County, 2021

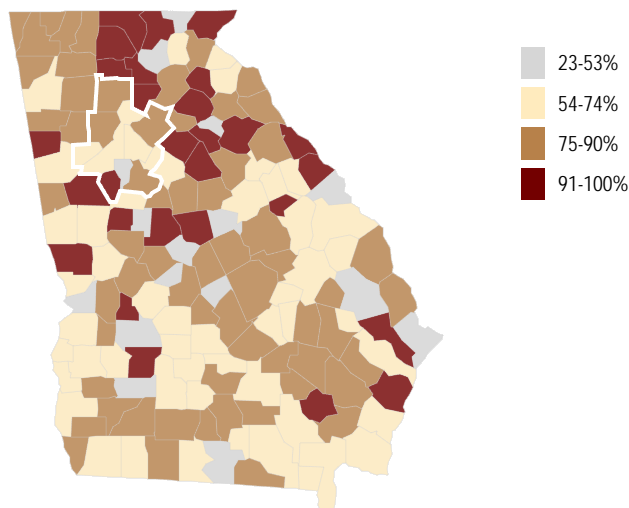
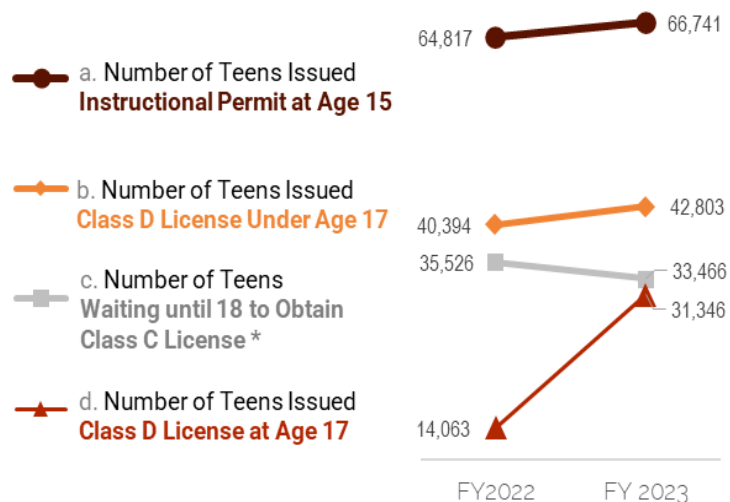


Figure 4 compares the types of licensing obtained across various age groups between FY2022 and FY2023. Between FY2022 and FY2023:

- The number of teens issued an instructional permit at age 15 **increased by 3%** (Figure 4a, circle icons).
- The number of teens issued a Class D license under the age of 17 years **increased by 6%** (Figure 4b, diamond icons).
- The number of teens (16-17 years) waiting until 18 to obtain a full license (Class C) **decreased by 6%** (Figure 4c, square icons).
- The number of teens issued a Class D license at the age of 17 years **more than doubled (2.2 times)** (Figure 4d, triangle icons).

Figure 4. Young Driver Age by License Type (FY2022 - FY2023)



Note: Vertical axis is not drawn to scale

* Class C licenses are not required to complete driver's education

³ Rural counties are counties that have a residential population less than 50,000 persons. This is different than roadway classifications where urban road systems can be located in urban clusters (or metropolitan areas) of at least 2,500 persons within the rural counties.

⁴ Source: Drivers licenses information obtained from the Department of Driver Service (Dec 2019); Estimated young adult population obtained from Georgia's Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS)

Commission History

The timeline below describes the key historical milestones and events since the creation of the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) in 2005.

- JOSHUA'S LAW CREATES GDEC (2005)** Senate Bill 225 (2005), known as Joshua's Law, created the Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) for the purpose of recommending to the Governor and General Assembly changes in state programs, statutes, policies, budgets and standards relating to the provision of driver's education and training. Since its inception, the GDEC has worked to identify options for teen drivers to satisfy the driver's education requirements mandated by state law for young Georgians. Joshua's Law created a surcharge on all traffic citations in Georgia (originally 5% in 2005, then 1.5% in 2013, and zero percent effective July 1, 20223), to establish funding to support driver's education programs throughout Georgia.
- GOHS FACILITATES ALLOCATION OF GDEC FUNDS (2007)** In April of 2007, through an agreement between the Georgia Department of Driver Services and the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), GOHS facilitated the allocation of the GDEC funds by way of grant funding to support driver's education programs. During FY2007 through FY2010, 58 programs received grant funding to create or support existing driver's education programs at public schools and libraries.
- GDEC TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED (2011)** In FY2011, the grant program was suspended due to a lack of budget appropriation during the economic recession. The surcharge on traffic citations continued to be collected and appropriated to the State's general fund.
- SENATE BILL 231 REDUCES SURCHARGE COLLECTION (2013)** During the 2013 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly, Senate Bill 231 extended the sunset of the GDEC until June 30, 2016, and reduced the amount of the surcharge collection from 5% to 1.5%.
- BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS RESUMED (2015)** Budget appropriations resumed to the Commission in FY2015 and the Commission has since provided training to over 21,000 Georgia students. After budget appropriations resumed, the Commission continued support of existing driver's education programs at high schools and executed a contract with the Technical College System of Georgia to establish a scholarship program for driver's education.
- HB 806 ASSIGNS GDEC TO GOHS (2016)** HB 806, during the 2016 legislative session, extended the sunset to June 30, 2019, and assigned the GDEC to the GOHS for administrative purposes.



GDEC STARTS THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (2017) In FY2017, the Commission suspended the support of driver's education programs and launched the Georgia Driver's Education Commission Grant Scholarship Program in March of 2017. The program, open to the public (public high schools, technical colleges, universities, and other state-owned driver education programs) and privately owned entities (commercial, for-profit driving schools and non-profit organizations, and private schools), awards driver's education grant scholarships to students ages 15-to-17 years old who seek to complete a 36-hour driver's education program (also known as Method 1 that requires 30 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of behind the wheel instruction with an approved instructor). The Georgia Driver's Education Grant Scholarship Program was continued from FY2018 to FY2023 (using funds collected from surcharges applied before the discontinuation of the surcharge on citation effective July 1, 2022)



CITATION SURCHARGE EXPIRED (2022) The additional penalty imposed on traffic citations expired on July 1, 2022, after HB 202, which would have increased the surcharge from 1.5% to 3% and eliminated the sunset provision, died after the legislation failed to be considered on the Senate Floor on Sine Die. Unless the surcharge is reinstated or other appropriations are provided, the grant scholarship program will be suspended in future fiscal years.

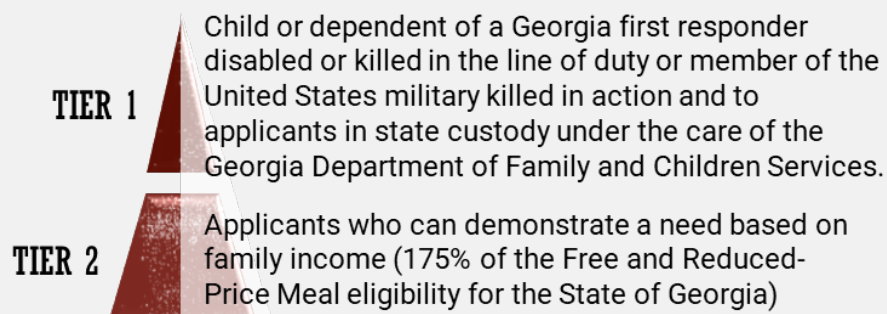


CITATION SURCHARGE REINSTATED (2023) The additional penalty imposed on traffic citations, which expired on July 1, 2022, was reinstated with the passage of HB 242. The surcharge was reinstated at 3% and was effective for traffic citations issued on or after July 1, 2023. Funds collected in Fiscal Year 2024 will, subject to appropriations, be allocated to the Commission during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget on July 1, 2024.

GDEC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SELECTION PROCESS

For scholarship applications submitted between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, scholarships were awarded on a tiered priority system. First priority (**Tier 1**) is given to grant scholarship applicants who are a child or dependent of a Georgia first responder disabled or killed in the line of duty or member of the United States military killed in action and to applicants who are in state custody under the care of the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services. Second priority (**Tier 2**) is given to scholarship applicants who can demonstrate a need based on family income. All of the first-priority level applicants are awarded before any of the second-priority level applicants are awarded. Additionally, if there are insufficient scholarships for all applicants in any given priority level, scholarship recipients are determined at random by computer selection without human selection, and scholarships are evenly distributed among Georgia's United States Congressional Districts. The date of application submission does not affect the outcome of the scholarship award. Scholarships are awarded on the 1st day of each month by 11:59 pm. Notification of award or denial is sent by email. If awarded a scholarship, the award date of the scholarship must be prior to the first day of Instruction or class by the driver training school.

Students are only eligible to apply for a grant scholarship one time. However, if a student's application is rejected, the application will be reconsidered for the following two months and given priority over new applicants in their respective priority level. No action is needed to be reconsidered. The applicant will be notified by email on the first day of the following month by 11:59 pm with the outcome of the application on the second consideration.



As of July 1, 2022, the grant scholarship tier selection was altered.

PRIORITY TIERS

GDEC Scholarship Program Selection Process

Fiscal Year 2023 Activities

July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

In FY2023, 9,125 applicants applied for the Georgia Driver's Education Grant Scholarship program, and the Commission awarded 6,279 driver's education scholarships — 6.8 out of every 10 applicants were awarded a scholarship. Compared to the previous fiscal year, the number of GDEC scholarships awarded increased by 33% and appropriated funding increased by 12% (approximately \$295,000 more than the FY2022 funding). Of the 6,279 scholarships awarded, 1,377 students forfeited their scholarships or chose not to complete driver's education through an authorized provider in the program. The remaining 4,902 students (78%) who redeemed their driver's education represent a value of \$2,194,281.99 paid in driver's education grant scholarships.



6.8 out of 10 applicants

were awarded a scholarship in FY2023
(6,279 out of 9,125 applicants)



Scholarships
awarded through the
GDEC Scholarship
program



Student scholarship
recipients compared
to FY22



Students redeemed
their scholarships at
an authorized
provider
(4,902 out of 6,279
students)



Awarded in driver's
education grant
scholarships

CHALLENGES IN FY2023

- **GDEC Providers Continue to Address Backlog**

In FY2023, GDEC providers continued to address the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency response. At the peak of the COVID response (FY2020-FY2021), most providers made significant changes to when and how the driver’s education curriculum and training were delivered which often resulted in a backlog of students waiting to complete their training. With the support of the Commission (e.g., temporarily allowing student to request a 150-day extension (normally 60-day) to complete the driving course), GDEC providers made great stride is reducing their backlog.

In FY2023, the student extension period complete driving training returned to the 60-day period, and GDEC providers continued to address their backlog as a result of the COVID-19 response. The full impact of COVID-19 on the GDEC Driver’s Education program cannot be determined at the time of this report.

- **Future Budgetary Concerns (Reduced Budget FY2024)**

As a result of temporary suspension of surcharge on traffic citations between July 1, 2022 (when the GDEC legislation was not passed under HB 202) and July 1, 2023 (when the GDEC legislation was reinstated with HB 242), the amount of funding collected in FY2023 to support the GDEC program in FY2024 decreased significantly. The funding amount collected in FY2023 was nearly half (46%) of the amount collected in FY2022—a reduction of nearly \$1,290,000. This drastic reduction to the FY2024 budget will have great impact on the number of scholarships that can be rewarded—approximately 2,580-3,100 fewer scholarships that will be available in FY2024.⁵

GDEC AUTHORIZED PROVIDERS AND SCHOLARSHIPS REDEEMED

In FY2023, 55 authorized GDEC providers served 4,902 scholarship recipients⁶ across 139 locations. The total value of the scholarships redeemed in FY2023 valued \$2,194,281.99. The median cost per scholarship recipient across the GDEC authorized providers in FY2023 was \$400, with the average cost ranging from \$275 to \$500 per provider.

Table 1 below provides a listing of the driver’s education providers participating in the program, with the number of training locations operated by each provider, the number of scholarships redeemed by each provider, the financial value of the scholarships redeemed, and the average cost per recipient for each FY2023 provider.

⁵ Calculations based on maximum scholarship award amount (\$500) and median cost per scholarship across the GDEC providers (\$400) FY2023.

⁶ The measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Georgia resulted in an increase in requests for 60-day or 150-day extensions to complete their driver’s training among the GDEC student scholarship recipients. In FY2023, GDEC providers continued to address the backlog of GDEC student drivers redeeming their scholarship awards at the driving schools.

Table 1. Number of Scholarships Redeemed, Value of Scholarships Redeemed, and Average Cost Per Recipient by Authorized GDEC Provider, FY2023

FY2023 Authorized GDEC Provider	Number of Locations	Number of Scholarships Redeemed	Value of Scholarships Redeemed	Average Cost Per Recipient
A-1 Driving School, Inc.	21	785	\$ 383,625	\$ 489
West Metro Driving School	2	427	\$ 211,365	\$ 495
Barber's Driving School, Inc.	1	333	\$ 157,680	\$ 474
New London School of Driving Inc.	1	226	\$ 111,870	\$ 495
A+ Driving Services, Inc.	6	164	\$ 81,180	\$ 495
Advance Driving Academy	1	146	\$ 62,850	\$ 430
South Cherokee/Jasper Driver Improvement Clinic Inc.	2	124	\$ 58,900	\$ 475
1st Stop Georgia Driving Academy	1	118	\$ 52,982	\$ 449
Kennesaw Driving School	2	107	\$ 52,965	\$ 495
The Wiser Driver	1	119	\$ 51,170	\$ 430
1 Act Driving Schools, LLC	1	93	\$ 44,947	\$ 483
Brock's Driver Education School, Inc.	1	87	\$ 43,500	\$ 500
A Driving Advantage	1	87	\$ 43,065	\$ 495
Taggart's Driving School	3	85	\$ 42,500	\$ 500
Augusta Technical College	1	110	\$ 41,850	\$ 380
Collins Driving School	1	81	\$ 40,500	\$ 500
Savannah Technical College	4	107	\$ 40,100	\$ 375
Central Georgia Technical College	2	105	\$ 38,275	\$ 365
DriveSmart Georgia	3	74	\$ 36,926	\$ 499
Gwinnett County Board Of Education	17	106	\$ 36,570	\$ 345
Southeastern Regional Driving and Safety Academy Inc	1	92	\$ 36,340	\$ 395
Georgia Driving School, Inc.	1	82	\$ 34,850	\$ 425
Marietta City Board of Education	1	70	\$ 34,370	\$ 491
Just Driver Training	1	60	\$ 30,000	\$ 500
North Georgia Technical College	3	76	\$ 28,000	\$ 368
Georgia Northwestern Technical College	6	73	\$ 27,750	\$ 380
Pinnacle Pointe DUI & Driving Schools	1	81	\$ 26,565	\$ 328
Southern Regional Technical College	4	71	\$ 24,850	\$ 350
Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	4	70	\$ 24,500	\$ 350
AA Academy of Action Driving School	1	48	\$ 24,000	\$ 500
Coastal Pines Technical College	4	66	\$ 23,925	\$ 363

FY2023 Authorized GDEC Provider	Number of Locations	Number of Scholarships Redeemed	Value of Scholarships Redeemed	Average Cost Per Recipient
Lanier Technical College	5	60	\$ 22,700	\$ 378
Nathan's Driving School, Inc.	3	43	\$ 21,500	\$ 500
Albany Technical College	2	55	\$ 20,600	\$ 375
Ogeechee Technical College	2	55	\$ 19,900	\$ 362
Southern Crescent Technical College	4	44	\$ 16,500	\$ 375
Georgia Piedmont Technical College	1	33	\$ 12,250	\$ 371
Atlanta Technical College	1	33	\$ 12,150	\$ 368
Duluth DUI and Driving School	1	24	\$ 11,880	\$ 495
FB Driving, Inc.	1	27	\$ 11,475	\$ 425
1EZ DUI School, LLC	1	24	\$ 11,144	\$ 464
Oconee Fall Line Technical College	3	28	\$ 10,650	\$ 380
West Georgia Technical College	1	30	\$ 10,500	\$ 350
Athens Technical College	1	22	\$ 8,150	\$ 370
Safe America Foundation, Inc.	1	16	\$ 7,584	\$ 474
Oconee County Board of Education	1	18	\$ 7,200	\$ 400
South Georgia Technical College	2	20	\$ 7,175	\$ 359
Southeastern Technical College	2	19	\$ 6,925	\$ 364
Southern Defensive Driving School	1	16	\$ 6,320	\$ 395
Dickerson Driving School, Inc.	1	10	\$ 5,000	\$ 500
Columbus Technical College	1	13	\$ 4,550	\$ 350
Gordon County Board of Education	2	15	\$ 4,425	\$ 295
Classic VIP Driving School, LLC	1	8	\$ 3,200	\$ 400
Calhoun City Board of Education	1	9	\$ 2,610	\$ 290
White County Board of Education	1	7	\$ 1,925	\$ 275
FY 2023 TOTAL	139	4,902	\$ 2,194,282	\$ 400 Median Avg. Cost

Funding History

According to O.C.G.A. § 15-21-181, it is the intent of the General Assembly that, subject to appropriation, an amount equal to such proceeds received from such fines in any fiscal year shall be made available during the following fiscal year to the Commission. In other words, **the amount of funds collected in any fiscal year is appropriated to the Commission for the following fiscal year.**

The GDEC legislation was not passed in the 2022 Georgia legislative session, and the surcharge on traffic citations was **not** collected for citations issued on or after July 1, 2022. In the 2023 legislative session, the surcharge was reinstated with the passage of HB 242 and was effective for traffic citations issued on or after July 1, 2023. As a result of this temporary suspension, the amount of funding collected in FY2023 decreased by nearly half compared to FY2022. In FY2023, the funding amount collected was \$1,495,070.98—a **46% decrease (\$1,290,000 less)** compared to the \$2,785,079.85 collected in FY2022. This equates to approximately **2,580-3,100 fewer scholarships that will be available in FY2024.**⁷

Table 2 shows the funds collected and appropriated to the Commission from FY2019 to FY2023.

Table 2. Amounts of Funds Collected and Appropriated to the Commission by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Amounts of Funds Collected	Amount of Funds Appropriated to the Commission
FY 2019	\$ 2,978,971.10	\$ 3,004,583.70
FY 2020	\$ 2,649,638.73	\$ 2,978,971.10
FY 2021	\$ 2,489,649.40	\$ 2,649,638.73
FY 2022	\$ 2,785,079.85	\$ 2,489,649.40
FY 2023	\$1,495,070.98	\$ 2,785,079.85

⁷ Calculations based on maximum scholarship award amount (\$500) and median cost per scholarship across the GDEC providers (\$400) FY2023.





Georgia Driver's Education Commission

7 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 643

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

(404) 656-2769