

Child Endangerment Drunk Driving Laws

Background

Every child deserves a sober driver. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) believes that driving drunk with a child passenger in a vehicle is a form of child abuse. 47 states can charge additional penalties to drunk drivers who drive drunk with a child passenger in a vehicle with extra penalties. In all states, including the four without a law, prosecutors can charge the drunk driver with a separate crime such as child endangerment, that is not in the state statutes for traffic related penalties.

The Problem

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 2000 to 2009, 2,469 people under the age 15 were killed as passengers in the vehicle of a drunk driver. The CDC found that one in five deaths of child passengers are caused by drunk drivers who typically, 64 percent of time, are passengers in the vehicle. The CDC study found a correlation with no laws on DUI child endangerment and higher rates of child passenger deaths in DUI crashes.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2014, 209 children were killed in drunk driving related crashes. Of these deaths, 116 (56%) were occupants of vehicles with drivers who had blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or greater.

A child in a vehicle with a drinking driver is not only at risk from the impaired driver, but also from the lack of safety restraint use (like a seat belt or child safety seat), as drinking drivers are much less likely to make sure a child is properly restrained. Specifically, in fatal crashes, sober drivers had restrained their children 30.5 percent of the time, compared with only 18 percent for drinking drivers.

New York's Leandra's Law: A Model Child Endangerment Law.

In November 2009, New York enacted comprehensive DUI Child endangerment laws including making it a felony to drive drunk with a child passenger in a vehicle.

Key provisions of Leandra's Law

First time offenders driving while intoxicated or impaired by drugs while a child of younger than 16 years old is in the vehicle may be charged with a class E felony punishable by up to 4 years in State prison.

Individuals charged with driving with a blood alcohol level of .08 or greater and with a child under the age of 16 in the vehicle would automatically have their license suspended pending prosecution.

Courts must order all drivers convicted of a misdemeanor or felony DWI(regardless if child passenger was in the vehicle) to install and maintain an ignition interlock on any vehicle owned and operated by such driver for at least 6 months, in addition to any term imprisonment. The Department of Probation and Correctional Alternatives will issue regulations that will provide counties with different options for supervising the use of interlocks, so as to ensure that they can determine the most appropriate mechanism for their needs.

Drivers who drive while intoxicated or impaired by drugs and cause the death of a child younger than 16 in the car may be charged with a Class B felony, punishable by up to 25 years in State prison. Drivers who drive while intoxicated or impaired by drugs and cause serious physical injury to a child in the vehicle may be charged with the Class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in State prison.

Individuals who are a parent, guardian, custodian or otherwise legally responsible for a child who are charged with driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs while that child is a passenger in the car would be reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment by the arresting agency.



Overview of Drunk Driving Child Endangerment Laws

State	Child passenger Age definition	Criminal penalty
Alabama	Under 14 (driver must be over 21)	Misdemeanor
Alaska	Under 16	Felony
Arizona	Under 15	Felony
Arkansas	Under 16	Misdemeanor
California	Under 14	Misdemeanor
Colorado	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Connecticut	None	Misdemeanor
Delaware	Under 17	Misdemeanor
D.C.	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Florida	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Georgia	Under 14	Misdemeanor
Hawaii	Under 15 (Driver over 18)	Misdemeanor
Idaho	Minor (age is not defined) Driver must be over 18	Misdemeanor
Illinois	Under 16 (Driver over 21)	Misdemeanor
Indiana	Under 18	Felony
lowa	Under 14	Misdemeanor
Kansas	Under 14	Misdemeanor
Kentucky	Under 12	Misdemeanor
Louisiana	Under 13	Misdemeanor
Maine	Under 21	Misdemeanor
Maryland	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Massachusetts	Under 14	Misdemeanor
Michigan	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Minnesota	Under 16 (and 3 years younger than driver)	Misdemeanor
Mississippi	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Missouri	Under 17	Felony
Montana	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Nebraska	Under 17	Misdemeanor
Nevada	Under 15	Misdemeanor
New Hampshire	Under 16	Misdemeanor
New Jersey	Under 18	Misdemeanor
New Mexico	None	None
New York	Under 16	Felony
North Carolina	Under 16	Misdemeanor
North Dakota	Minor (Age is not defined)	Misdemeanor
Ohio	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Oklahoma	Under 19	Felony
Oregon	Under 18 (and passenger 3 years younger than driver)	Misdemeanor
Pennsylvania	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Rhode Island	Under 13 (Driver over 18)	Misdemeanor
South Carolina	Under 16	Misdemeanor
South Dakota	None	None
Tennessee	Under 18	Misdemeanor
Texas	Under 15	Felony
Utah	Under 16 or under 18 if driver is older than 21	Misdemeanor
Vermont	None	None
Virginia	Under 17	Misdemeanor
Washington	Under 16	Misdemeanor
West Virginia	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Wisconsin	Under 16	Misdemeanor
Wyoming	Minor (age is not defined) Driver must be over 18	Misdemeanor

State	Law Description
Alabama	If passenger is under 14 and driver is over 21, sentenced to double the minimum sanctions that would be given if child not present. The offender's license will be suspended for 90 days, after which an ignition interlock will be installed in their car for 2 years. AL ST § 32-5A-191(n) and (p)
Alaska	A person commits the crime of endangering the welfare of a minor (under 16 years of age) in the first degree (a felony) if the person transports a child in a motor vehicle, aircraft, or watercraft while impaired. A person commits the offense of endangering the welfare of a child in the second degree if the person, while caring for a child under 10 years of age, (1) causes or allows the child to enter or remain in a dwelling or vehicle in which a controlled substance is stored in violation of AS 11.71; or (2) is impaired by an intoxicant, whether or not prescribed for the person under AS 17.30, and there is no third person who is at least 12 years of age and not impaired by an intoxicant present to care for the child. AK ST Sec. 11.51.100. &11.51.110.
Arizona	Person commits a class 6 Felony to drive drunk with a child under the age of 15 in a vehicle. Sanctions: Imprisonment -first offense- one year; with one prior felony conviction-one to 2.5 years, with two or more prior felony convictions-three to 4.5 years; fine-\$150,000. AZ Rev. Stat. Ann. §§13-604(A),(C) (U), 13-701(C), 13-801, 28-1383(A) (3), (F), (G) and (L) (2)
Arkansas	If Person Under 16 Years Old Is Passenger: First offense – Not less than 7 days or more than 1 year; Second offense (within 5 years) – Not less than 30 days or more than 1 year or no fewer than 60 days community service; Third offense (within 5 years of 1st offense) – Not less than 120 days or more than 1 year or no fewer than 120 days community service; Fourth offense (within 5 years of 1st offense) (Felony) – At least 2 years but not more than 6 years or not less than 2 years community service; Fifth or subsequent offense (within 5 years of 1st offense) (Felony) – At least 3 years but not more than 10 years or not less than 3 years community service. AR ST § 5-65-111; AR ST § 5-65-112
California	If passenger is under 14, the following jail sanctions are imposed: First offense-48 continuous hours. Second offense-10 days. Third offense-30 days. Fourth offense- 90 days. Cal. Vehicle Code §23572

State	Law Description
Colorado	Knowingly or recklessly committing an act that either kills or injures a child under 16 years old) is child abuse. If death results, it is a Class 2 felony, which carries a term of 8-24 years in prison and/or a fine of \$5,000 – \$1,000,000. If injury results, it is a Class 3 felony, which carries a term of 4-12 years in prison and/or a fine of \$3,000 – \$750,000. Mandatory parole is 5 years for both felonies. CO ST § 18-1.3-401; CO ST § 18-6-401(1), (2), (7)(a)(I), (III); People v. Deskins, 927 P. 2d 368 (Colo 1996).
Connecticut	For first-time offenders, prison for up to one year with a mandatory minimum of 30 days Probation required, including (1) 100 hours of community service; (2) submitting to an assessment of the degree of the person's alcohol or drug abuse, conducted by the Court Support Services Division (CSSD); (3) undergoing a treatment program, including chemical screening, if ordered by the court; (4) submitting to a DCF interview and evaluation to assess any ongoing risk the person poses to the child passenger; and (5) cooperating with any programming, treatment, directives, or plan that DCF may require. Fine of \$500 to \$2000. Public Act No. 16-126 of 2016
Delaware	If passenger is under 17: 1) 40 hours community service and \$230-\$1,150 fine. Subsequent convictions: 80 hours community service and \$575-\$2,300 fine. These sanctions do not apply to first offenders who are participating in the probation before judgment program. **Del. Code Ann. 21 \ \(\frac{9}{4177} \)(d) (5) 21 \ \(\frac{9}{4177} \)
D.C.	For any drunk-driving offense conviction where there was a passenger \leq 17 years old, the driver is subject to an additional fine of not less than \$500 or more than \$1,000 per minor and 5 days of incarceration if the child is properly restrained and 10 days if the child is not properly restrained $DCST \S 50-2201.05(b)(1)(D).$
Florida	If passenger is under 18: first offense: Up to nine months in prison and a fine range from \$1,000 to \$2,000. An ignition interlock is required for six months too. Second offense: up to 12 months in prison and \$2,000-\$4,000 fine. An ignition interlocks is required for at least two years.
Georgia	It is a separate offense to transport a child under the age of 14 years while driving under the influence. The sanctions for this offense are as follows: first or second offense (misdemeanor) – imprisonment for not more than 12 months and/or a fine of not more than \$1,000; third or subsequent offense (felony) – imprisonment for not less than I year or more than 3 years and/or a fine of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$5,000. This offense shall not be merged with the offense of driving under the influence of alcohol/drugs, for purposes of prosecution and sentencing. **GA ST § 16-12-1(d); GA ST § 40-6-391(l)**

State	Law Description	
Hawaii	Offenders older than 18 years old who were operating a motor vehicle with a passenger younger 15 years old at the time of the offense are subject to the following additional mandatory sanctions: (1) A mandatory fine of \$500; and (2) 48 consecutive hours of imprisonment. However, the total imprisonment time imposed for first, second or third offenses cannot exceed the maximum term of imprisonment provided for first, second and subsequent DUI offenses. (1), (2), or (3). HI ST § 291E-61(b)(5)	
Idaho	It is an offense for a person older than 18 years old to operate a motor vehicle in violation of the drunk-driving laws while transporting a "minor." No injury/death (misdemeanor) – Not more than 6 months and may be fined not more than \$1000; Injury or death (felony) – Not more than 10 years (unless a more severe penalty is otherwise prescribed by law). ID ST § 18-113; ID ST § 18-1501(3)	
Illinois	Jail Sanctions are enhanced as follows if the driver was transporting anyone younger than age 16. A person age 21 or older convicted of DUI while transporting a person under the age 16 is subject to six months of imprisonment, an additional mandatory minimum fine of \$1,000, and an additional mandatory minimum 140 hours of community service which shall include 40 hours of community service in a program benefiting children. Second violations with no bodily harm within 10 years is a Class 4 felony, and is subject to one year imprisonment, 25 days of mandatory community service in a program benefiting children, and a mandatory fine of \$2,500. Penalties are increased if bodily harm to child under age 16 being transported by the person. The violation is a Class 4 felony and is subject to one year of imprisonment, a mandatory fine of \$2,500 and 25 days of community service in a program benefiting children. If repeated within 10 years, 18 months of imprisonment and mandatory fine of \$5,000, and 25 days of community service in a program benefiting children. The imprisonment or assignment of community service for any child endangerment violations is not subject to suspension, nor is the person eligible for a reduced sentence. 625 ILCS 5/11-501 (c-5)	
Indiana	Any person operating while intoxicated under is elevated to Class D Felony if at least one occupant is under 18 years old. This enhancement brings the misdemeanor charge to a felony. Indiana Code 9-30-5-3(a)(2)(c)	
lowa	If passenger is under 14: no injury: 2 years, fine not more than \$5,000; injury: not more than 10 years and \$1,000-\$10,000 fine. If there are more than 3 offenses with the same child in the same year with one offense resulting in an injury: up to 50 years. (case law)	
Kansas	If passenger is under 14 years; offender's punishment is enhanced by one month of imprisonment which must be served consecutively to any other minimum mandatory penalty imposed for a violation of this section or an ordinance which prohibits the acts that this section prohibits. During the service of the enhanced penalty, the judge may order the person on house arrest, work release or other conditional release. KS ST § 8-1567(h)	

State	Law Description
Kentucky	Operating a vehicle while transporting a passenger under the age of 12 is an aggravating circumstance and the mandatory minimum prison term will be increased.
	KY ST § 189A.010(5)(a)-(d)
Louisiana	A DWI offender is subject to the following mandatory sanctions if a child age 12 or younger was a passenger in a vehicle driven by the offender at the time of the offense: First offense-10 days jail/\$125 fine; second offense-30 days jail/\$300 fine; third offense-30 days jail; fourth and subsequent offense-two years jail.
	LA R.S. § 14:98(J)
Maine	An offender with a passenger under the age of 21 shall have an additional 275 days of suspension. The licensing agency has the authority to suspend a driver's license for a longer period of time than indicated above for either an administrative per se violation or a drunk driving offense conviction.
	ME ST TI 29-A §§2411(5) (G) and 2451 (5)
Maryland	If passenger is a under 18 and driver is intoxicated per se, first offense: 2 years and \$2000 fine. Second offense: 3 years and \$3,000 fine. Third or subsequent: 4 years and \$4,000 fine. If passenger is a "minor" and driver is under the influence: 1) 6 months and \$1,000 fine 2+) 1 year and \$2,000.
	MD TRANS § 27-101
Massachusetts	If passenger is under 14: first offense, 90 days-2.5 years in jail and a fine between \$1000-\$5000. For repeat offenders, imprisonment for not less than six months nor more than 2.5 years and a fine between \$5000-\$10,000.
	MA ST 90 § 24(1)(a)(1); MA ST 90 § 24L; MA ST 90 § 24V; MA ST 274 § 1
Michigan	A person who commits a DUI while a passenger under the age 16 is in the vehicle must pay a fine of \$200 to \$1000 and are subject to a term of imprisonment of up to one year, 30 to 90 days of community service or both. A person who commits a second DUI with a passenger under 16 in the vehicle within seven years of a first convictions or within 10 years or two or more prior convictions for DUI is guilty of a felony. Offenders must pay a fine of \$500 to \$5000. Offenders are also subject to: a) a term of imprisonment of one to 5 years; or b) probation with imprisonment in a county jail for 30 days to one year and 60 to 180 days of community service. Mich. Comp. Laws. §257.625
	having a child under 16 in the motor vehicle at the time of the offense and such child is more
Minnesota	than 36 months younger than the offender is considered an aggravating factor or gross misdemeanor.
	MN ST § 169A.03
Mississippi	If passenger is under 16, an offender shall be fined not more than \$1000 and/or imprisoned not more than to twelve months. For a second conviction, an offender shall be fined not less than \$1000 or more than \$5000 and/or shall be imprisoned for one year. For a third conviction, an offender shall be charged with a felony and shall be fined not less than \$10,000 and/or shall be imprisoned not less than one year nor more than five years. If death or serious injury result, the offender shall be guilty of a felony and be punished with a fine of not less than \$10,000 and shall be imprisoned not less than five years nor more than twenty-five years $MS \S 63-11-30$

State	Law Description
Missouri	Driving drunk with a while a child less than seventeen years old present in the vehicle is a class A misdemeanor.
	MO § 568.045 and 568.050
Montana	If passenger is under 16, penalty of imprisonment for not less than 48 consecutive hours nor more than 20 consecutive days and a fine of not less than \$600 or greater than \$2000. For a Second Offense, the penalty not less than 14 days or more than 12 months and not less than \$1,200 or more than \$2,000. For a third offense, the penalty is not less than 60 days or more than 12 months and a fine of not less than \$2,000 or more than \$10,000.
	MT Code Ann. §61-8-714
Nebraska	It is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable separately from any other offense, to operate a vehicle under the influence if a passenger under the age of 17 is present in the vehicle. NE ST. §2 Section 28-101
Nevada	If passenger is under 15: court shall consider this an aggravating factor in sentencing.
	NV ST. §§484.3792(7) and 484.3795(4)
New Hampshire	If the DWI offender was transporting a person under 16 years old at the time of the offense, the offender must have their driving privileges revoked for the maximum time period provided by law.
·	NH ST § 265A-18(XI)
New Jersey	If passenger is 17 years old or younger, person is guilty of a "disorderly persons offense" and will incur for the first offense a fine between \$25 and \$100 and no jail, for a second offense no more than 90 days in jail, and community service for 5 days to 6 months.
	NJ ST § 39:4-50.15
New Mexico	None Individuals charged with driving with a blood alcohol level of .08 or greater and with a child
New York	under the age of 16 in the vehicle would automatically have their license suspended pending prosecution. Drivers who drive while intoxicated or impaired by drugs and cause the death of a child younger than 16 in the car may be charged with a Class B felony, punishable by up to 25 years in State prison. Drivers who drive while intoxicated or impaired by drugs and cause serious physical injury to a child in the vehicle may be charged with the Class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in State prison. Individuals who are a parent, guardian, custodian or otherwise legally responsible for a child who are charged with driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs while that child is a passenger in the car would be reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment by the arresting agency. N.Y. Vehicle and Traffic Law §11921. Subdivison 2-a
North	If passenger is under 16: 7 days-12 months, fine no more than \$2,000; with mitigating
Carolina	circumstances-30 days-24 months, fine no more than \$4,000.
	N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-179(c) If impaired driver is under 21 with "minor" in car: prison no more than 1 year, fine no more
North Dakota	\$1,000. NDCC § 12.1-32-01; NDCC § 39-08-01.4

State	Law Description
Ohio	If passenger is under 18. First offense prison no more than 6 months and/or fine no more than \$1,000. First offense with serious injury: 6-12 months and/or fine no more than \$2,500; subsequent child endangerment offense with serious injury or serious injury where impaired driver has previous drunk driving offense convictions: 6-18 months and/or fine no more than \$5,000 and no more than 200 hours of community service and license suspension for 90 days.
	OH ST § 2919.22(C)(1), (E); OH ST § 2929.14; OH ST § 2929.18; OH ST § 2929.21.
Oklahoma	Any person age 18 or older who violates a DUI law while transporting or having any child less than 18 years old shall be subject to an enhanced penalty in the form of a doubled fine. Said driver may also be prosecuted for Felony Child Endangerment. OK ST TI 47 § 11-902(M); OK ST TI 21 § 852.1
Oregon	In addition to other penalties, if an offender commits a DUI while a passenger under the age of 18 is in the vehicle and minor passenger is at least three years younger than the driver, the maximum fine is \$10,000.
	OR ST §813.010
Pennsylvania	If the passenger is under 18; for first offense, fine not less than \$1000 and complete 100 hours of community service. For second offense, fine not less than \$2500 and one month to six months imprisonment. For third offense, six months to two years imprisonment PA Title 75 Section 3803(b)
Rhode Island	An offender who is over 18 years old is subject to an imprisonment term of not more than 1 year if he/she was transporting a passenger under 13 years old at the time of the offense. RI ST § 31-27-2(d)(4)
South Carolina	If driver is under 18 and drives impaired or had a death/serious bodily injury driving offense while transporting a child under 16: subject to additional jail and fine sanctions which are equal to not more than half maximum jail and fine sanctions for these offenses. Sanctions are mandatory if the jail or fine sanctions have been imposed for the original offense. Driving privileges must be suspended for 60 days.
	SC ST § 56-5-2947
South Dakota	None
Tennessee	If passenger is under 18: no injury or death 30 days-11 months 29 days; injury- 2-12 years, fine no more than \$5,000; death- 3-15 years, fine no more than \$10,000. Any convicted drunk driver is required to use an interlock if a child passenger under the age of 18 is in the vehicle upon DUI arrest.
	TN ST §40-35111(b), 55-10-403(a)(1)(B) and 37-1-403(d)(2)
Texas	If passenger is under 15 years of age—Not less than 180 days or more than 2 years and a fine of not more than \$10,000 may be imposed. This offense is considered a state jail felony. TX Penal § 12.35; TX Penal § 49.045
Utah	First or second DWI, where there 1) is an injury related to negligent action or 2) a passenger is younger than 16 (child endangerment) or 3) the driver is 21 or older and driving with a passenger younger than 18Class A misdemeanor-not more than one year in jail. UT ST §41-6-44, 76-3-203(3) and 76-3-204

State	Law Description
Vermont	None
Virginia	If passenger is under 17: \$500-\$1,000 fine and a mandatory minimum of five days in jail. Subsequent offense: mandatory fine of \$500 to \$1000 and community service of mandatory 80 hours benefiting children.
	VA ST § 18.2-270(D)
	If passenger is under 16: interlock for an additional six months and \$100 fine for a first
	offense, up to \$5000 for a second offense within seven years. For each child passenger under
Washington	16, an additional 12 months shall be added to a sentence for vehicular homicide.
	RCW 46.61.5055 and RCW 9.94A.533
West Virginia	If passenger is under 16, Not less than 2 days or more than 12 months (with 48 hours of actual confinement mandatory) and not less than \$200 or more than \$1,000.
	WV ST § 17C-5-2(i)
Wisconsin	If passenger is under 16 or an unborn child: maximum imprisonment and fine sanctions are doubled and the revocation period is 10 years. Driving drunk with a child passenger under the age of 16 is a criminal misdemeanor with a fine of \$350 to \$1,110 and imprisonment for not less than five days nor more than six months.
	WI ST § 343.31(3) (c) and 94.09(1b), 346.65(2) (f) and (3), 346.65 (2) (f) 1
Wyoming	If DUI offender is 18 years old or older with a child passenger, for a first offense, be imprisoned for up to a year, and fined up to \$750, or both
	WY ST § 31-5-233(m) and (i)