



# A STATE-BY-STATE GUIDE TO OBTAINING ID CARDS

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# Introduction

The National Network for Youth is a non-profit membership organization focused exclusively on issues of youth homelessness. As the largest and most diverse network of its kind, NN4Y represents over 300 members and affiliates across the country. Together, we envision a future in which every young person has a safe place to call home.

During a January 2016 convening by the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Family & Youth Services Bureau, the National Network for Youth committed to publishing this resource. This document is designed to serve as a resource for youth experiencing homelessness on their own, or those assisting them, in understanding individual state requirements<sup>1</sup> for obtaining a valid government-issued photo identification or ID<sup>2</sup>. We have also provided information on how to obtain a birth certificate, since these are a uniform prerequisite in obtaining identification.

This document provides an overview of the issues related to minors obtaining an ID and related recommendations for policymakers. Specifically, it provides a general explanation of requirements and barriers, a summary of findings organized by specific barriers and exceptions and a quick reference guide to state specific barriers.

For the purposes of this document, we looked specifically at youth experiencing homelessness who are under the age of 18. This group, particularly if unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, often face the most barriers in obtaining an ID. However, this resource is also useful to young people who are over the age of 18 who often face similar barriers. We encourage anyone working with youth between 12 and 24 years of age to reference the appendix for additional, state specific information. All laws and regulations cited in this document were current as of August 2016. Readers should contact the relevant state agencies to verify requirements prior to attempting to secure an ID.<sup>3</sup>

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1 This includes the 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

2 For the purposes of this paper, ID will refer to a valid government-issued photo identification.

3 Links are embedded in the digital version for quick reference.

## IDENTIFYING THE IMPORTANCE OF ID

For all people in America, access to valid government-issued photo identification is critical to fully accessing daily needs. This can include regular tasks such as picking up a package or prescription, entering public and private buildings or using interstate transportation. Access to identification is also critical for certain tasks that are vital to the survival of youth experiencing homelessness, or that allow them to access support, such as: obtaining a job, applying for public benefits (such as SNAP), opening a bank account, establishing a mailbox, or enrolling in school or workforce programs.

Minor-aged youth experiencing homelessness face unique challenges in obtaining an ID. Because of the general transiency of their lives, many youth experiencing homelessness may not have access to an existing ID, or the documentation necessary to obtain one. Many youth experiencing homelessness on their own do not have a relationship with a parent or guardian that makes them available for youth when their consent or action is needed to sign necessary documents. Finally, many youth experiencing homelessness lack access to the Social Security card, birth certificate and/or government-issued identification card needed to enroll in programs or complete required tax forms. This lack of access is often linked to their homelessness status.

## OBTAINING IDENTIFICATION

The documentation that applicants are required to present in order to obtain an ID varies widely from state to state. The REAL ID Act of 2005 implemented new standards for state-issued driver's licenses and non-driver identification cards. These requirements are finally being fully implemented, but interpretation of the process and documentation required still varies even between states that offer ID in compliance with the REAL ID Act.

For those states that do align with the REAL ID Act, the following four basic elements must be met:

1. Proof of identity, including full legal name and date of birth;
2. Proof of lawful status in the U.S.;
3. Proof of Social Security number or verification that the person is not eligible for one; and
4. Proof of principal residence that includes the person's full legal name and address.

Other states generally require proof of name, date of birth, citizenship or immigration status, Social Security number and residency status. Presenting a birth certificate, Social Security card, passport and/or official immigration or visa documentation is typically the most straightforward route to prove identity, date of birth, citizenship status and Social Security number. For those individuals without a Social Security card or passport, most states also accept a combination of other documents, including an expired ID or driver's license, a court order, school transcript and ID, or W-2.

Most states require two proofs of residency to be presented in the form of a utility or bank bill, official mail, or proof of parent or guardian's address and relationship in lieu of a youth's ability to prove address through documentation. Some states allow for an affidavit certifying where a person lives to be presented in lieu of other documents. The requirements to acquire any one of these documentary proofs can be an additional barrier to a youth looking to obtain an ID because of cost, lack of an address and additional time to gather signatures and materials.

## BARRIERS TO OBTAINING IDENTIFICATION

For youth experiencing homelessness seeking to obtain valid government-issued photo ID, there are four common and critical barriers:

### **1. Obtaining Birth Certificate (or Other Valid Government-Issued Identification)**

Most agencies that issue identity documents require a birth certificate to access most other government-issued identity documents. It is also one of the only documents (along with Social Security card) that never expires; therefore, obtaining a copy of a birth certificate is highly recommended. However, many states require a copy of government-issued photo identification or notarized signature to obtain a certified copy of a birth certificate, which can be difficult for youth who do not already have identification documentation.

### **2. Age Limits and Parental Consent**

Most states have no minimum age for obtaining an ID, but many states do require parental consent if the applicant is under 18. Twenty states require the signature or presence of a parent or guardian to obtain a state identification card. Additionally, states have varying requirements for consent to obtain a birth certification. For many youth experiencing homelessness, parental, guardian or legal proxy signatures are often a distinct barrier due either to separation or estrangement from their families and/or the time and cost of arranging to receive consent.

### 3. Fees

Fees for ID range from \$5.00 (Maine, South Carolina) to \$72.00 (Washington Enhanced (federally compliant) ID). Some states have reduced or eliminated fees to obtain non-driver state identification for individuals who are experiencing homelessness, have documented disabilities or are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). However, even these states typically require additional steps to certify homeless, disability or income status, such as a form or affidavit signed by a social service agency or shelter, and may not eliminate the fee to obtaining a copy of a birth certificate, all of which can be additional barriers to obtaining identification for youth experiencing homelessness.

### 4. Proof of Residency

Most states do not account for the difficulty individuals experiencing homelessness may have in proving residency status. This may be a barrier to obtaining ID for youth 18 and over without a permanent residence or for youth under 18 who do not have access to a parent or legal guardian.

Given this combination of requirements and barriers, in only seventeen states can youth under the age of 18 obtain access to non-driver ID without the assistance of a parent or legal guardian. However, there are a number of actions states can take to reduce these barriers through policy changes or tailored exceptions to expand access for youth experiencing homelessness on their own.



## FEDERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security should issue guidance and, where possible, regulation that clarifies REAL ID Act requirements for the states. This guidance should encourage more consistency on the type and number of supporting documents required for obtaining REAL ID Act-compliant identification.

## STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For youth experiencing homelessness seeking to obtain valid government-issued photo ID, there are four common and critical barriers:

- **Reduce or eliminate fees for valid government-issued photo identification, as well as other necessary supporting documents such as birth certificates.**

Michigan, which already charges only \$10.00 for a standard identification or \$30.00 for a REAL ID-compliant enhanced identification, provides that a standard state identification should be free to those who can show “good cause”. The four “good cause” instances specified by the Michigan Department of State, outside of the statutorily defined instances, are receipt of benefits from the Michigan Family Independence Program, Michigan State Disability Assistance, SSDI, or Supplemental Security Income.

Information published by the District of Columbia’s Department of Motor Vehicles waives its \$20.00 fee for homeless individuals, upon certification by an approved social services provider (and defines homeless as an individual lacking a fixed, regular residence or someone who has a primary nighttime residence that is in a shelter, transitional housing or outside).

- **Provide alternative verification processes for proof of identity or residence.**

New York allows for a “Statement of Identity” form MV-45B for “disenfranchised, homeless youth”, certified by a state employee, to prove identity if they cannot meet other identification requirements.

Utah, in addition to its list of specific documents, allows residency to be proven by “other documents acceptable to the Division upon review” (if proof of identity is provided).

- **Make information on requirements and processes for obtaining valid government-issued photo identification readily available and easily understood.**

It is often difficult for youth experiencing homelessness, or those assisting them, to determine what they need to do to obtain ID. Each state should clearly explain the specific process and requirements for obtaining an ID in a clear manner. This information should also be

made available both online, and in print materials that are distributed to locations where youth experiencing homelessness, and those assisting them, will be able to use them effectively.

## • • • PENDING CHANGES IN STATE LAWS & REGULATIONS

In 2016, just four states (Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington) had bills introduced that would reduce or eliminate the fee to obtain ID for individuals experiencing homelessness or individuals receiving public assistance. Additionally, in August of 2016, Hawaii and California have compiled and implemented regulations that eliminate fees for ID for individuals experiencing homelessness.

## CONCLUSION

Youth experiencing homelessness on their own who do not currently possess valid government-issued photo identification and do not have access to a parent or legal guardian will have the most difficult time obtaining a non-driver identification card. A full three fifths of states (31) require a parent or guardian signature on either a birth certificate or non-driver ID application for minors (one, Colorado, requires this for young adults under age 21). Even for those youth who can apply for non-driver ID, lack of access to supporting documents such as a birth certificate, passport or Social Security card mean that applicants must go through lengthy processes to secure these supporting documents.

While the REAL ID Act imposes several conditions on fully federally recognized ID cards, states can take the steps identified above to ensure that youth experiencing homelessness are easily able to obtain an ID card by reducing or eliminating fees (for both ID cards and other supporting documents such as birth certificates), providing for alternative verification processes (such as through schools or social services providers) and making information on requirements and processes readily available and easily understood.

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING STATE-ISSUED NON-DRIVER ID



<div> <div>\$</div> <div>FEES</div> </div>	
States that waive fees for non-driver ID for individuals experiencing homelessness (14):	Arizona, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia (reduced fee), Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland (reduced fee), Michigan, Nevada, New York (reduced fee), North Carolina, Vermont (reduced fee)
States that waive fees for non-driver ID for individuals with disabilities (15):	Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland (reduced fee), Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey (reduced fee), North Carolina (blind applicants only), Ohio (100% disabled veterans only), Tennessee, Texas (at least 60% disabled veterans only), Utah (reduced fee), Vermont (reduced fee), West Virginia (blind applicants only)
States that waive fees for non-driver ID for any identified population (32 - including voting-age individuals, individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, and individuals experiencing homelessness or poverty):	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California (reduced fee), Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia (reduced fee), Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland (reduced fee), Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York (reduced fee), North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Utah, Vermont (reduced fee)
States that waive fees for birth certificates for low income individuals (2):	Kansas, South Dakota

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING STATE-ISSUED NON-DRIVER ID



### Proof of Residency

States that require two proofs of residency to obtain non-driver ID (25):	Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico (only one proof required if under 18), North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington (to obtain an enhanced ID only), West Virginia, Wyoming
States that require one proof of residency to obtain non-driver ID (17):	Connecticut, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin
States that allow applicants to submit a signed affidavit as one proof of residence, regardless of homeless status (16):	Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey (if under 18, requires parent/guardian signature), New Mexico (requires parent/guardian signature), North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia (parent/guardian affidavit for 18 and under only), West Virginia
States that allow applicants to submit an affidavit or certification of homeless status as documentation of residency (17):	Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire (verification by parent or guardian), Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Wisconsin
States that allow school ID and/or transcript to be presented as proof of residency (or other documentation) (42):	Alabama*, Alaska*, Arizona*, Arkansas*, Connecticut**, Delaware*, District of Columbia*, Florida**, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho**, Illinois**, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana*, Maine*, Maryland (for proof of dependent status only), Massachusetts**, Michigan**, Minnesota*, Missouri, Montana**, Nevada, New Hampshire*, New Jersey**, New Mexico, New York*, North Carolina**, North Dakota, Ohio**, Oklahoma*, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee**, Texas**, Utah, Virginia**, Washington**, West Virginia, Wisconsin**  *allow school ID/transcript to be presented as secondary documentation ** allows school ID/transcript to be presented both as proof of identity and proof of residency
States that do not list school ID or transcript as allowable proof of identity or residency (9):	California, Colorado, Kentucky, Indiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wyoming



# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING STATE-ISSUED NON-DRIVER ID



### Minimum Age Requirements

States that set a minimum age to apply for non-driver ID (4):	District of Columbia (non-federally-compliant ID only), Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey
States that require parent or guardian signature on application for non-driver ID for applicants under 18 (23):	Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia (up to age 14), Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas (under 16 only), Kentucky (issues “child IDs” to youth under 15), Louisiana (under 17 only), Massachusetts, New York (under 16 only), Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina (allows emancipated minors to submit proof), South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas (under 16 only), Utah (under 16 only), Vermont, Virginia (issues “child IDs” to those under 15; requires parent/guardian signature for under 18), Washington, West Virginia (under 16 only).
States that require parent or guardian to be present to submit application for non-driver ID for applicant under 18 (7):	Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia (14 and under only), New York (under 16 only), Pennsylvania, Utah (under 16 only), Washington (exceptions apply if alternate documents can be provided)
States that issue “child ID” instead of non-driver ID to youth 15 and under (2):	Kentucky, Virginia



### Access to Birth Certificate

States that set a minimum age to apply for a birth certificate (14 - 18+ unless otherwise noted):	Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan (15+), Montana (14+), North Dakota (16+), Oregon(15+), Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wyoming
States that require the applicant to submit photo ID to obtain a copy of birth certificate (45):	Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado*, Connecticut*, Delaware, District of Columbia*, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho*, Illinois, Indiana*, Iowa, Kansas*, Louisiana*, Maine, Maryland*, Massachusetts, Michigan*, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana*, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire*, New Jersey*, New Mexico, New York*, North Carolina*, North Dakota*, Oklahoma*, Pennsylvania*, Rhode Island*, South Carolina*, South Dakota*, Tennessee*, Texas, Utah*, Virginia*, West Virginia*, Wisconsin*, Wyoming
	* also accepts some non-photo ID. See the state’s application for a complete list of acceptable ID.

# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

## BARRIERS FOR YOUTH SEEKING TO OBTAIN ID (BY STATE)

		Parent/ Guardian consent required (under 18 unless noted)	Does not offer fee waivers for individuals experiencing homelessness	School-issued documents not accepted as Proof of Identity or Proof of Residency	Proof of Residency required	Requires Photo ID to Obtain Birth Certificate	Age Restriction to Apply for Birth Certificate (18+ unless otherwise noted)
Alabama	AL		●				
Alaska	AK		●		●	●	
Arizona	AZ	●				●	●
Arkansas	AR	●	●			●	
California	CA			●		●	
Colorado	CO	●	●	●	●	●*	
Connecticut	CT				●	●*	●
Delaware	DE	●	●		●	●	
District of Columbia	DC				●	●*	
Florida	FL				●	●	●
Georgia	GA	●			●	●	
Hawai'i	HI	●			●	●	
Idaho	ID		●		●	●*	
Illinois	IL				●	●	●
Indiana	IN		●	●	●	●*	●
Iowa	IA	●	●		●	●	●
Kansas	KS	●	●		●	●*	●
Kentucky	KY	●	●	●	●		
Louisiana	LA	●	●			●*	
Maine	ME		●		●	●	
Maryland	MD	●			●	●*	
Massachusetts	MA	●	●			●	
Michigan	MI				●	●*	●
Minnesota	MN		●		●	●	
Mississippi	MS		●	●	●	●	

\* Non-photo ID also accepted. See application for list of allowable ID.

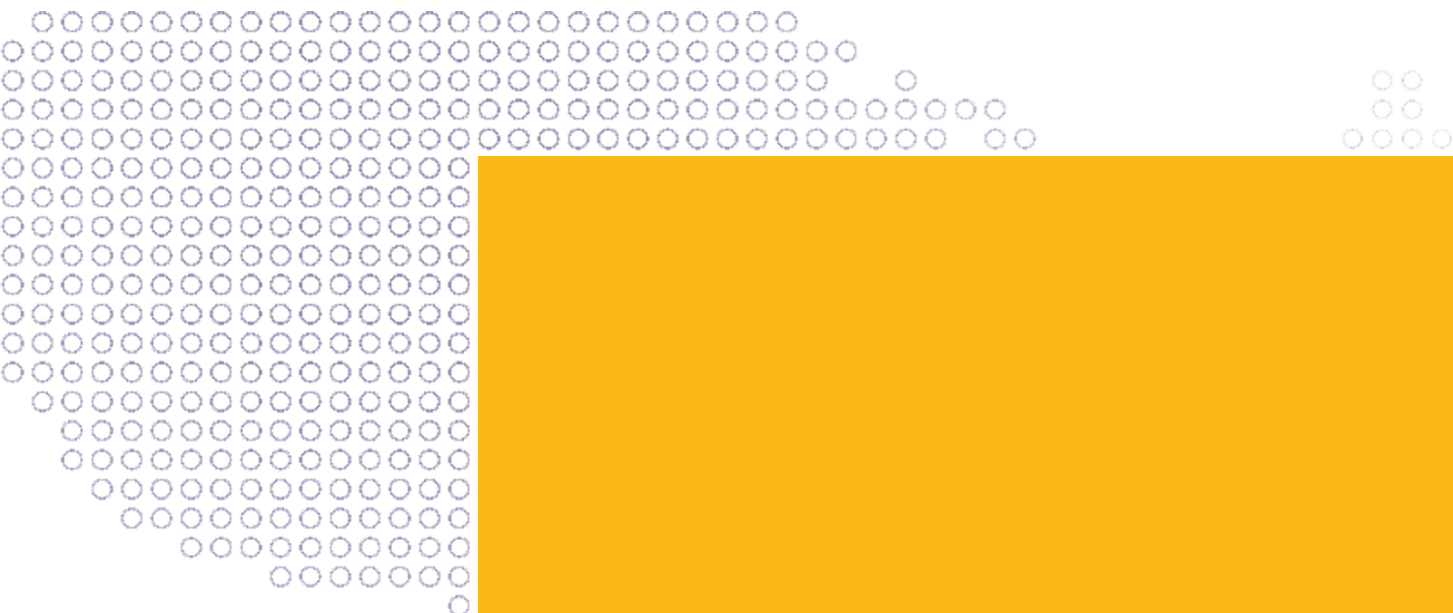
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Missouri	MO		●		●	●	
Montana	MT		●		●	●*	● (14+)
Nebraska	NE		●	●	●	●	
Nevada	NV				●	●	
New Hampshire	NH		●		●	●*	
New Jersey	NJ		●		●	●	
New Mexico	NM		●		●	●	
New York	NY	●				●*	
North Carolina	NC				●	●*	
North Dakota	ND		●		●	●*	● (16+)
Ohio	OH	●	●		●		
Oklahoma	OK	●	●			●*	
Oregon	OR		●		●	●	● (15+)
Pennsylvania	PA	●	●	●	●	●*	●
Rhode Island	RI		●		●	●*	
South Carolina	SC	●	●		●	●*	●
South Dakota	SD	●	●		●	●*	
Tennessee	TN	●	●		●	●*	
Texas	TX		●			●	
Utah	UT	●	●		●	●	
Vermont	VT	●		●	●		
Virginia	VA	●	●		●	●*	
Washington	WA	●	●				
West Virginia	WV	●	●		●	●*	
Wisconsin	WI		●		●	●*	
Wyoming	WY	●	●	●	●	●	●

\* Non-photo ID also accepted. See application for list of allowable ID.

The mission of the National Network for Youth is to mobilize the collective power and expertise of our national community to influence public policy and strengthen effective responses to youth homelessness.



collaborate • advocate • transform