



Mandatory Ignition Interlocks Devices for All Convicted DUI Offenders

One of the most effective countermeasures available to jurisdictions to separate drinking from driving is the alcohol ignition interlock. The interlock requires a DUI offender to blow into the device, which is connected to the starter or other on-board computer system, in order to start the vehicle. If the breath sample registers a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above a defined pre-set limit (typically .02), the vehicle will not start. The device also requires repeated breath tests (commonly referred to as running or rolling retests) while the vehicle is in use to ensure the DUI offender remains sober throughout the duration of his/her trip.

Interlock technology is sophisticated and is specific to the detection of ethyl alcohol which means that the devices do not produce false positives when there are other environmental contaminants. The technology is seamless and reliable and is constantly evolving. The interlock records all actions (e.g., start attempts, lockouts, rolling retests, vehicle miles traveled, etc.) and this data is stored in the device. Offenders are required to report back to a service center on either a monthly or bi-monthly basis to have the device calibrated and data downloaded. This information is sent to the designated monitoring agency who usually has the authority to act on any violations or circumvention attempts. Monitoring agencies vary by state and can include licensing authorities (e.g., Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent), appointed court monitors, or community supervision agencies.



Ignition interlocks are highly effective in reducing recidivism among both repeat (high-risk) and first-time DUI offenders, while the devices are installed. Interlocks have the most potential to reduce recidivism and change behavior when paired with other effective interventions such as assessment and treatment.

Research Highlights:

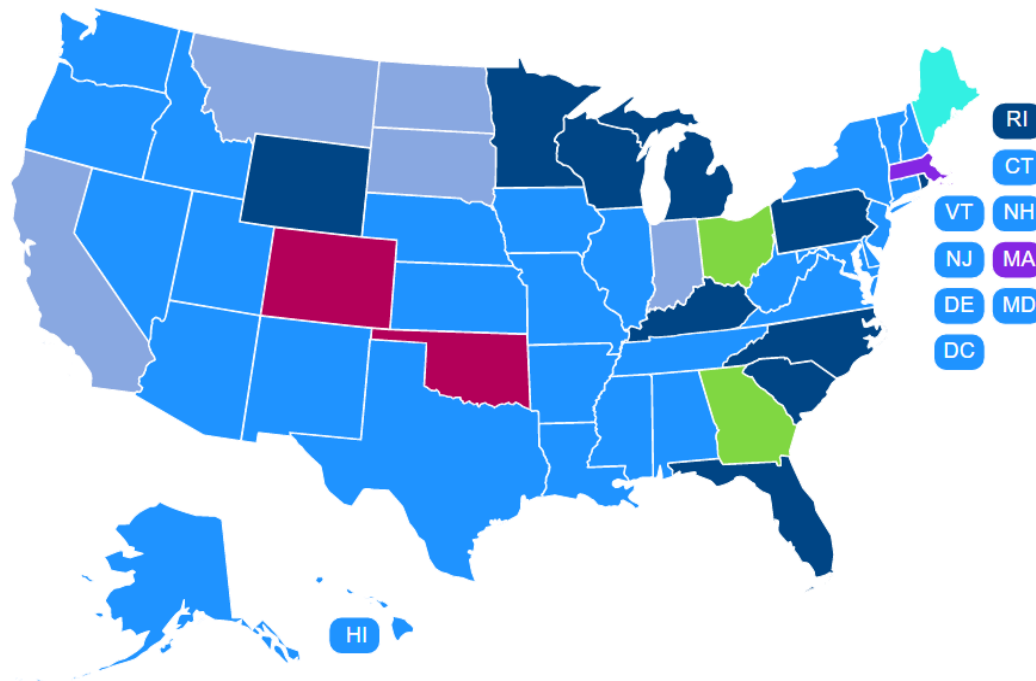
- More than 10 evaluations of interlock programs have reported reductions in recidivism ranging from 35-90% with an average reduction of 64% (Willis et al., 2004).
- A recent study commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that involved a systematic review of 15 peer-reviewed studies on interlocks revealed that, while the devices were installed, the re-arrest rate of offenders decreased by a median of 67% compared to groups who never had an interlock installed (Elder et al., 2011).
- A study of New Mexico's interlock program (Marques et al., 2010) found that first offenders who participated in the program had a 61% lower recidivism rate while the device was installed and a 39%

lower recidivism rate following the removal of the interlock when compared to offenders who never installed the device.

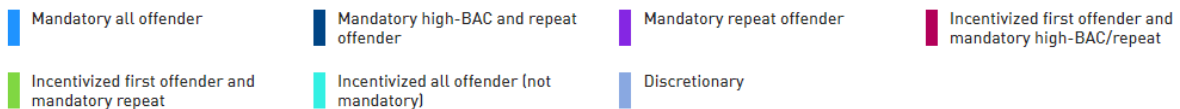
- A study by Kaufman and Wiebe (2016) examined the impact that the passage of all offender interlock laws have on alcohol-involved crashes (defined as any crash involving at least one driver who had a blood alcohol concentration above .00) in 18 states. The authors found that requiring all drivers convicted of DUI to install an interlock was associated with a 15% reduction in the rate of alcohol-involved crash deaths; this translates into an estimated 915 lives saved.
- A recent examination of the effects of state interlock laws on alcohol-involved fatal crashes in the U.S. found that interlocks may reduce the occurrence of these crashes (McGinty et al., 2017). State laws that require interlocks for all DUI offenders were associated with a 7% decrease in the rate of fatal crashes involving a driver above the legal limit (.08) and an 8% decrease in the rate of fatal crashes involving a high-BAC (.15>) driver. This translates into an estimated 1,250 prevented fatal crashes involving a drunk driver. The study also found that laws requiring interlocks for high-risk offenders (such as repeat drunk drivers), may reduce alcohol-involved fatal crashes two years post-implementation.
- Results from a survey of DUI offenders required to install an interlock in Santa Fe, New Mexico reveal 87% felt that interlocks reduced driving after drinking. Furthermore, 85% of the offenders thought that interlocks were fair to DUI offenders and 67% believed that all convicted DUI offenders should be required to install the device (Robertson et al., 2006).
- Long-term alcohol recovery efforts can be supported by integrating interlocks into treatment programs (Beirness, 2001).

Prevalence:

Currently, all 50 states have passed some form of interlock legislation and achieved different degrees of program implementation. As of the fall of 2019, a total of 34 states have passed laws with all offender provisions, the majority of which require mandatory installation of ignition interlocks for all DUI offenses, including first offenses. While this is significant progress, more work is needed to strengthen existing practices and increase program participation rates. While all states have an interlock program, most have participation rates below 30%. This means that the majority of eligible offenders fail to install the device as required.



STATE LAW: IGNITION INTERLOCKS



Access Responsibility.org's interactive [State Laws Map](#) to stay current with changes in state interlock laws.

Policies to strengthen interlock programs

A majority of states have passed strong all offender or, at a minimum, required high-BAC and repeat offenders to install ignition interlocks. As a result, in recent years the focus has shifted to improving the implementation of programs and strengthening program infrastructure. Common interlock program improvements include:

- Removal of opt or wait out provisions that allow offenders to wait out the interlock installation period by agreeing not to drive during that timeframe.
- Creation of hybrid interlock programs that leverage the strengths of both administrative and judicial models which limits the likelihood that an offender can avoid the interlock sanction.
- Allowing offenders to install the interlock post-arrest and pre-conviction and permit that each day the device is installed is credited against their post-conviction interlock term.
- Reduction of the hard suspension period for those offenders who install the interlock.
- Improve the monitoring of offenders by designating a single agency with the authority to supervise offenders and act when there is non-compliance.
- Define program violations and create offenses for tampering and device circumvention.

- Establish compliance-based exit criteria (currently 20 states have these criteria which ensures that non-compliant offenders have their interlock installation period extended).
- Application of graduated sanctions for non-compliance.
- Tie assessment and treatment to the interlock program so that an offender who requires treatment goes through the program while the interlock is installed. The interlock will act as a safety net if there is a relapse.

Responsibility.org Position:

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility supports mandatory and effective use of ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders. Effective use of interlocks requires proper assessment and treatment, supervision, and verification of installation for all offenders ordered to install a device.

References:

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