



Using Fingerprints to Identify Repeat Impaired Drivers

Responsibility.org Position:

Responsibility.org is dedicated to eliminating all forms of impaired driving. A critical part of this effort is ensuring that complete data on impaired driving cases is captured, reported, and shared within and between states. To help achieve this outcome, states should require fingerprinting for all impaired driving offenders at the time of arrest and equip law enforcement with stationary and mobile fingerprint scanners to quickly collect and report fingerprints to track and identify repeat offenders.

Responsibility.org is also interested in working with states and law enforcement agencies to advance efforts like securing funding to obtain mobile fingerprint scanners and strengthening impaired driving data.

This paper includes the most current and relevant data for this position as of Oct. 31, 2025.

Overview:

Identifying repeat impaired driving offenders is key to improving traffic safety. In 2023, alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes were six times more likely to have prior DWI convictions than drivers with no alcohol in their systems (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2025).

At least 19 states and Washington, D.C. (see reference section for full list) require fingerprinting of impaired driving offenders upon arrest or when taken into custody, though some states may not apply these laws in practice. Fingerprints are a key piece of information law enforcement collects on impaired drivers and submits to state and national crime information centers (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2023). This allows law enforcement and courts to identify repeat driving offenders within and across state lines.

However, some states report challenges in collecting and reporting complete impaired driving data. Standard arrest protocols may omit fingerprinting, and some agencies lack the staff, training, or equipment to capture fingerprints quickly (GAO, 2023). Without this data, repeat offenders may go undetected, which limits opportunities for appropriate sentencing, supervision, and treatment to prevent future offenses.

Solution:

Responsibility.org encourages agencies to obtain mobile and stationary fingerprint scanners to meet fingerprinting requirements. Mobile devices allow officers to quickly collect fingerprints in the field, while stationary readers at impaired driving processing sites ensure prints are captured at the time of arrest if not taken earlier. Expanding access to these tools can close gaps in impaired driving data, help identify repeat offenders, and enhance roadway safety.

References:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2025). *Alcohol-impaired driving: 2023 data* (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 713). U.S. Department of Transportation. <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813713>

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2023). Impaired driving: Information on data used to identify repeat offenders (GAO-23-105859). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105859.pdf>

State List Referenced in Text:

Responsibility.org's statutory research shows that at least 19 states, along with Washington, D.C., require fingerprinting of impaired driving offenders upon arrest or when taken into custody: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Utah.

For questions about this topic or updates to this list, please contact govrelations@responsibility.org.

Established in 1991 as a national not-for-profit organization, Responsibility.org leads the fight to eliminate drunk and impaired driving and underage drinking.