

# Driver Examination Stations

Update to 2021 Evaluation Report

January 2023

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## Problems Identified

- **Unclear Requirement for Exam Availability.** Statutes require that eligible customers be able to obtain a Class D road-test appointment within 14 days of request. The law does not make clear whether this could be an appointment anywhere in the state or whether the Department of Public Safety’s Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) must make appointments available closer to where the customer resides.
- **Too Many Exam Stations.** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DVS consolidated exam stations from 93 to 15. In 2021, the Legislature directed DVS to reopen all 93 exam stations. DVS has done so, but a 2021 Independent Expert Review commissioned by the Legislature agreed with OLA’s assessment that operating 93 exam stations was inefficient, and suggested that DVS operate between 40 and 50 exam stations.
- **Online Knowledge Testing Allowed at Home.** While statutes allowed DVS to authorize “entities” (such as driver education programs) to administer online Class D knowledge tests, DVS extended this authorization—without the explicit legal authority to do so—to relatives serving as proctors for people taking the test in their own homes.
- **Inability to Forecast Demand.** DVS lacked a systematic approach to forecasting demand for Class D road tests, an important factor in making decisions about how to staff exam stations. DVS had estimated demand only on an ad hoc basis, and without including all of the variables (such as retesting rates) important to determine road-test demand.

## Changes Implemented

- **Proctor Requirements Modified.** The 2021 Legislature enacted requirements that online knowledge tests be proctored by employees of specific entities (including driver education programs, schools, and state or local governments, among others). The legislation clarified that online knowledge tests may not be proctored by a relative of the test taker.
- **Forecasting System Implemented.** In 2022, DVS developed forecasting capability within its MNDRIVE system. The system allows DVS to analyze permit issuances, retesting rates, and population trends by county to forecast the demand for Class D road tests.

## Actions Needed

- **Clarify 14-Day Requirement.** The Legislature should clarify whether a Class D road-test appointment must be available within 14 days of request (1) anywhere in the state or (2) within some more narrowly defined geographic area.
- **Reconsider Number of Exam Stations.** The Legislature should reconsider its direction that DVS reopen all 93 exam stations, as a smaller number of exam stations would provide DVS more staffing efficiency while providing adequate coverage across the state.