



U.S. Department  
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# TRAFFIC TECH

## Technology Transfer Series



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# State of the Practice of Alcohol Ignition Interlock Programs

A breath alcohol ignition interlock device (BAIID) is a test device mounted near the dashboard that prevents the vehicle from being driven unless the driver provides a breath sample indicating a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) lower than a pre-set level, usually .02 g/dL. BAIIDs are an important type of sanction for driving while impaired (DWI) offenses. Initially used primarily for repeat DWI offenders, BAIIDs are now sanctions used for many types of DWI offenses, including first-time offenses. An offender assigned an interlock must first enroll in the State BAIID program, which incurs enrollment fees and other requirements.

## Proven Countermeasure

While installed, interlocks are effective at lowering recidivism rates. A review of 15 studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found among offenders using BAIIDs, the re-arrest rate decreased 67 percent compared to groups that did not have the BAIIDs installed (Elder et al., 2011). As evidence of effectiveness in reducing recidivism accumulated, State legislators expanded the use of BAIIDs and allowed their use in addition to or in place of license suspension.

State BAIID programs have important roles in the prevention of alcohol-impaired driving and the enforcement of DWI laws and are frequently used in combination with other sanctions and treatment programs. Although every State uses BAIIDs, BAIID programs across the Nation vary in key areas of program delivery, such as the sources of program funding, the agency assigned as being responsible for driver monitoring, and vendor oversight.

## Project Background

In the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act, Congress directed NHTSA to establish a cooperative program—the National Cooperative Research and Evaluation Program—to conduct research and evaluations of eight State highway safety countermeasures. Through the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) the States identify highway safety research or evaluation topics they believe are important for informing State policy, planning, and programmatic activities. GHSA identified a need for up-to-date information on the practice of interlock programs in the United States.

## Project Objective

This project documented the state of the practice of interlock programs across the country by surveying BAIID programs and populating an online inventory on key areas, including legislation, program funding, data management, vendor oversight, interlock technology, and monitoring of driver compliance.

## Methodology

The project included a review of literature, examination of laws, an online survey,<sup>1</sup> and group phone discussions with representatives from State interlock programs. Each State and the District of Columbia was invited to provide information on the inventory. Each program is defined by its law at that State level; thus, there is one program per State and the District of Columbia.

## Results

Thirty-eight States provided data for the online inventory. The inventory also includes data from publicly available sources. Information on States' interlock programs can be found at: <https://aic.tirf.ca/alcohol-interlock-program-inventory/>.

## Legislation

Thirty-six programs reported their States have all-offender legislation, resulting in every DWI offender being required to enroll in the program and use a vehicle with an installed interlock. Nine States require repeat and high-BAC drivers to use interlocks, and 3 States only sanction repeat alcohol-impaired drivers to use interlocks.

## Program Funding

Funding is available through several sources. Some States collect fees from interlock program participants and/or interlock vendors, and others use Federal Government grants through NHTSA or grants through State highway safety offices. Six States charge driver application or license fees ranging from \$10 to \$100. Two States charge vendors application and renewal fees. Indigent funding is available in 36 States. States set the eligibility criteria for offenders to apply for indigent funding, requiring participants to show proof of enrollment

<sup>1</sup>OMB Control Number 2127-0738

in public assistance programs, proof of income, expenses, total assets, and other factors such as the number of persons in their household.

### **Data Management**

Sixteen States noted the need for improvements in the processes and systems for data collection and data management, and identified budget constraints, inadequate staffing, and lack of modern data collection tools as barriers to better systems. Five States reported data was collected and owned by vendors within the States, making the data unusable or inaccessible to interlock program staff. Three States reported they are implementing new data collection and management systems.

The findings suggest that the most common types of data collected were the numbers of interlock installations and removals; interlock violations, circumventions, and tampering; interlock court orders and the noncompliance with these orders; medical and employer exemptions; and criminal offense data.

### **Agency Responsible for Vendor Oversight**

Vendor oversight helps ensure the use of high-quality devices that will accurately measure driver BAC and reliably prevent the vehicle from being operated when the driver BAC is above the program limit, typically .02 g/dL. Vendor oversight consists of approving vendors for the program, conducting service center inspections, and managing client complaints regarding vendors. The agencies that provide vendor oversight vary by State. In 6 States, the Departments of Public Safety are responsible for vendor oversight. In 9 States, the Departments of Motor Vehicles are responsible for vendor oversight. In 4 States, State Patrols are responsible for vendor oversight.

The number of vendors in the States varies, with more populous States having up to 11 vendors and less populous States having only 1 vendor. Nineteen States reported they require potential vendors to apply for permission; criteria for inclusion can be that vendors provide service center locations within specified area. For example, 2 States require vendors to include service centers in each judicial district and 2 States require vendors to include service centers in each county.

### **Interlock Technology Features**

The use of cameras, GPS, and real-time reporting improve driver monitoring and program compliance. Thirty-four States reported they require monitoring technologies (e.g., cameras) to be installed alongside the interlocks. For example, 33 States require cameras; 7 require GPS reporting devices; 9 require

real-time reporting of driver compliance; and 4 require all three features (camera, GPS, and real-time reporting).

### **Driver Compliance**

The capability of monitoring offenders for violations and imposing sanctions for violations quickly can increase the likelihood of offender compliance with program rules and improve program outcomes. Sanctions typically involve extending time in the program from 30 days to 12 months, depending on State requirements. Not all programs monitor drivers. Twelve States reported sanctions are often imposed for noncompliance but 5 States reported sanctions are rarely imposed. Four reported sanctions are occasionally imposed and 3 indicated sanctions are never imposed.

Thirty States each reported having a designated agency responsible for compliance monitoring. Nine States reported they will not extend the program length for noncompliance, and 1 State reported that extending the program length for noncompliance was at the discretion of the courts. Five States will reduce the time required for the offender to be enrolled in the interlock program period as reward for compliance. Thirty-one States require offenders comply with program rules before they can exit the programs.

### **Summary**

The state of the practice of interlock programs has evolved with changes in impaired-driving law and advances in technology. First-time offenders are required to use interlocks in an increasing number of States, and interlocks are used frequently in lieu of license suspension. Technologies such as mobile cameras and GPS enable monitoring in real-time and in finer detail. As these changes continue, it is important to document the changes to identify areas in program delivery that have improved and that require improvement. This project produced an online inventory as a resource for stakeholders to explore strategies to solve problems.

### **Reference for the Full Report:**

Barrett, H., Robertson, R. D., & Vanlaar, W. G. M. (in press). *State of the practice of state alcohol ignition interlock programs* (Report No. DOT HS 813 394). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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