

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · BUFFALO

How to Get a Driver's License in Buffalo: 2026 Guide (Erie County Auto Bureau)

For newcomers to Buffalo and Erie County, applicants of any immigration status, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: documents, tests, fees and offices.

SHORT ANSWER

In Buffalo, "DMV" services are run by the Erie County Auto Bureau, with offices in Buffalo, Tonawanda, Cheektowaga (Depew), West Seneca, Williamsville and Evans. New York's Green Light Law lets anyone age 16 or older apply for a standard license regardless of immigration status; if you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit. A first license needs documents, a knowledge test (offered in 20 languages, including Turkish), a 5-hour pre-licensing course and a road test. Erie County is outside the MCTD, so a first license costs \$64.25 to \$67.50.

Green Light Law: open to everyone in New York

- **Immigration status is not asked.** Since December 16, 2019, anyone 16 or older living in New York can apply for a standard license or learner permit. If you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit instead; the law does not affect voting eligibility and creates no path to citizenship.
- **The county's "have your Social Security card with you" line is generic text.** Erie County's web pages do not mention the Green Light Law, but the counter follows state DMV rules. If in doubt, call the appointment line before you go: (716) 858-8864.
- **There are three card types.** A Standard license is marked "NOT FOR FEDERAL PURPOSES" and cannot be used for domestic flights or entry to some federal buildings. A REAL ID costs the same as Standard and is required for domestic flights since May 7, 2025. An Enhanced license (EDL) costs \$30 more and is for U.S. citizens only; it is useful in Buffalo because it can replace a passport for land or sea re-entry from Canada.
- **Most foreign licenses, including Turkish ones, cannot simply be exchanged.** New York's only confirmed reciprocity is with Canadian provinces; no official DMV page lists Türkiye as reciprocal. Once you become a New York resident, a Turkish license must go through the full process (knowledge test, course, road test), and it is surrendered once you pass the road test.
- **No fixed day limit is printed for visitors.** DMV's own page says you can drive on a valid foreign license until you become a New York resident. Once you are a resident, you have 30 days to get a license; 90 days of residence is treated as presumptive evidence that you are a resident.
- **The knowledge test is offered in 20 languages, including Turkish.** That is a state feature. Erie County's interpreter-line list does not include Turkish; the free DMV language line is 1-518-486-9786.

Step by step

- 1 Gather documents proving your name, date of birth and New York residency (the 6-point document system, form ID-44). If your foreign license is not in English, bring an International Driving Permit or a certified translation for the road test.
- 2 Take the knowledge test: answer at least 14 of 20 questions correctly (70%), including at least 2 road-sign questions. Learner permit testing requires an appointment.
- 3 Complete the 5-hour pre-licensing course. Applicants 18 and older with a valid permit can take it online; cost runs roughly \$39 to \$80 depending on the provider.
- 4 Reserve a slot with the Erie County Auto Bureau (erie.gov/clerk/reservations). Appointments are encouraged, not required: customers with appointments get priority, and walk-ins are taken until 1 hour before closing. Each appointment covers up to 3 transactions.
- 5 Apply at the office with form MV-44, your documents and course certificate. Ask at the office or on dmv.ny.gov how to schedule your road test, and book it early.
- 6 Take the road test. Your fee covers two attempts; if both fail, \$10 covers two more.
- 7 Choose Standard, REAL ID or Enhanced and pay the fee; your foreign license is surrendered once you pass.

Erie County Auto Bureau offices

The Buffalo-area offices are Erie County Clerk agent offices, not New York DMV branches; rules and fees are the same as at the state DMV. Hours were last changed on August 26, 2026, so check again before you go.

OFFICE	ADDRESS	HOURS
Buffalo (downtown)	170 Pearl Street, Buffalo, NY 14202 (Rath Building)	Mon-Fri 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Tonawanda	2309 Eggert Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150 (Sheridan Plaza)	Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
West Seneca	1088-B Union Road, West Seneca, NY 14224 (Southgate Plaza)	Mon-Fri 7 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat 7 a.m.-12 p.m.
Cheektowaga (Depew)	2122 George Urban Blvd., Depew, NY 14043 (Urbandale Plaza)	Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Williamsville	4545 Transit Road, Williamsville, NY 14221 (Eastern Hills Mall)	Tue-Fri 10 a.m.-6 p.m., closed Sat
Evans	6853 Erie Road, Evans, NY 14047 (Highland Plaza)	Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

A limited-service Mobile DMV visits three places each week: Mondays at the Frank E. Merriweather Jr. Library in Buffalo (1324 Jefferson Ave), Wednesdays at Grand Island Town Hall, and Thursdays at the Concord Senior Center in Springville, all 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Appointment line: (716) 858-8864. Offices close on

November 3 (Election Day), November 11, November 26 and December 25-26; branches with Saturday hours also close on a Saturday before a Monday holiday. Learner permit testing requires an appointment, and each testing session ends 1 hour before the branch closes.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE
First Standard or REAL ID license (Erie County, no MCTD)	\$64.25-\$67.50
Enhanced license (EDL) add-on, U.S. citizens only	+\$30
5-hour pre-licensing course	about \$39-\$80
Two more road tests after failing two	\$10

The MCTD (Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District) surcharge applies only in New York City and in Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Rockland counties; it is not charged in Erie County. A license is valid for 8 years.

If you are not a U.S. citizen

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- The Green Light Law means your immigration status does not block a standard license application, but a standard license does not substitute for a REAL ID or Enhanced license for domestic flights or entry to some federal buildings.
- DMV's own page confirms reciprocity only with Canadian provinces; Türkiye is not on that list, so a Turkish license cannot be exchanged without testing.
- **If you are subject to the address-reporting requirement**, report your new address to USCIS within 10 days of moving (AR-11); A and G visa holders and Visa Waiver visitors are exempt.
- **If you are not a citizen, answer "no" to "Are you a U.S. citizen?" on the form.** USCIS treats a "yes" as a false claim of citizenship, with serious consequences.

Common mistakes

- Assuming a foreign license can be exchanged without testing; only Canadian provinces have that arrangement.
- Showing up for the road test without the 5-hour course certificate.
- Trying to fly domestically on a Standard license instead of a REAL ID, Enhanced license or passport.
- Not booking an appointment for learner permit testing.
- Assuming every office is open Saturday and driving to Williamsville; that office is closed Saturdays.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN BUFFALO

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in Buffalo and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

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