

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · COLORADO

How to Get a Driver's License in Colorado: 2026 Guide

Status is not asked, but everyone on temporary status gets the banner-marked card too. The 30-day deadline, documents, a two-language test and the agency's own fraud warning.

SHORT ANSWER

The main fact in this guide has two sides, and the value is in the second one. Colorado **issues a driver license without regard to lawful status**: a resident who cannot prove status still gets a real license, with a black banner on the card and a list of what it cannot do (boarding a plane, entering a federal facility, voting, federal benefits). **But the same statute means everyone who is only temporarily lawfully present**, which includes H-1B, L-1, F-1, J-1, TPS and employment authorization holders, **gets the same banner-marked card as a person with no documents**, and a REAL ID brought in from another state is downgraded on transfer. The practical result: **the document you show at the airport is not your license but your Turkish passport**. The deadline is short too: **30 days**, and the clock starts the day you begin a job.

First, who gets which card

WHO YOU ARE	THE CARD YOU GET
U.S. citizen	REAL ID compliant license, star on the face
Green card holder (permanent lawful presence)	REAL ID compliant license
National of a Compact of Free Association country	REAL ID compliant license
Commercial license applicant	REAL ID compliant license
Temporary lawful status: H-1B, L-1, F-1, J-1, TPS, employment authorization, pending change of status	Banner-marked standard document , three years
Resident with no lawful status	Banner-marked standard document , three years

The text of the banner is printed on the agency's own page: **not valid for federal identification, voting or public benefit purposes**. The agency spells that out with its own list: **boarding a commercial aircraft, entering federal facilities, voting and receiving federal public benefits**. It is equally clear about what the card is: **the standard document is a valid Colorado identification**, and it is enough to drive anywhere in the state. The program is **CO-RCSA**, the bill number was **SB 251**, and it sits at 42-2-501 through 506. Two separate agency pages say the same thing: **Colorado issues REAL ID only to U.S. citizens and permanent**

residents, a person who brings a REAL ID from another state can transfer the driving privilege but the credential is **downgraded to the banner-marked standard license**, and these documents **cannot be upgraded to REAL ID compliant**. The only thing that changes the answer is your status becoming permanent.

THE DOCUMENT FOR THE AIRPORT IS THE TURKISH PASSPORT, NOT THE LICENSE

- **We print this in bold:** if you are on temporary lawful status your Colorado license will carry the banner, it will have no star, and no star will arrive while your status remains temporary. For domestic flights and for federal business that asks for identification, carry **your Turkish passport together with your visa or I-94 record**.
- Since **May 7, 2025** travelers 18 and over are asked at the checkpoint for a REAL ID compliant document or an accepted alternative. The agency writes on its own page that the **temporary paper document issued at the appointment cannot be used for air travel**.
- **On federal buildings the agency does not generalize:** it tells you to ask the agency that operates the building about its policy before you go. So this guide does not say that a banner-marked card will get you into a USCIS or immigration court building.
- The other side of the coin deserves to be said plainly too: **a person with no status at all gets the same card on broadly the same terms and can drive lawfully**.

The deadline is 30 days, and the trigger is the day you start work

- Colorado's residency definition has **three triggers**, and each one is sufficient on its own: owning or operating a business in the state, **working in Colorado**, or living in the state for **90 consecutive days**.
- **The trap sits exactly here:** because working alone is sufficient, 90 days is not a precondition but an alternative. An engineer who starts a job on Monday has 30 days from that day, not 90. This is the shortest license deadline in the states we have covered.
- **Vehicle registration is a separate clock and a longer one: 90 days.** Both clocks start the same day and run different lengths; the detail is in the car registration guide.
- There is a surprise at the counter: **your old license is punched and voided** (Colorado law 24-60-1106). If you will need the number, **photograph it before you hand it over**.
- **Türkiye is not on the reciprocity list.** The agency publishes the countries it grants a testing exemption to (Canada, France, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Japan); Türkiye is not named, so you take both tests. There is one convenience for adults: **there is no minimum time for holding the permit**, and an adult who gets a permit is eligible for the road test straight away.

Documents: there are two separate checklists

Applicant with no lawful status

- **Proof of identity and date of birth:** a passport, consular card or military identification from your own country. The document must be **unexpired or expired less than ten years**. The document a Turkish applicant almost certainly holds, an unexpired Turkish passport, sits at the top of the accepted list, and **Colorado will take a foreign passport expired by up to ten years as primary identity**, which no other state we have covered does.

- **A CO-RCSA affidavit** (see the contradiction below).
- **One current Colorado proof of address:** it must show your full name and a physical address (**a post office box is not accepted**), be **dated within the past year** and be **in English**. Accepted items include a bank statement, a pay stub, a utility bill, a lease, a vehicle registration and first-class mail from a government agency. Advertising and bulk mail, handwritten documents and envelopes with a label stuck over the address are refused. **Proof of address is required at every card issuance**, not only the first.
- **If a name change has to be documented**, again a current passport, consular card or military identification from your own country; **a marriage certificate and a court-ordered name change cannot be used on this route**.
- **If you are transferring from another U.S. state:** a valid license expired by less than a year, or a driving record from the prior state dated within the past 30 days. This does not replace the identity documents.

Applicant on temporary lawful status

- **Proof of identity and date of birth:** the full list of accepted documents is on the **DR 2300B** checklist. **We could not read that list**, so we do not itemize it here; download the form before your appointment.
- **Proof of lawful presence:** a valid **employment authorization document (EAD)**, a temporary residence stamp, or a **valid passport together with the I-94**.
- **One current Colorado proof of address:** the same list and the same rules.
- **There is a sequencing trap on name changes.** A name change has to be supported by **an updated USCIS document:** a passport with the I-94, an **I-766** employment authorization card, or a passport with an **I-797**. **A marriage certificate and a court order cannot be used to change a name on a temporary status record**, and the name on the card has to match current USCIS data. If you marry in Colorado and take a spouse's surname, the USCIS document has to be reissued in the new name first; get the order wrong and months are lost.
- **The translation rule is unique to this state.** Every non-English document needs a complete certified translation, the statement has to appear **on the page bearing the translation rather than on a separate page, and the translation must also carry the number of the translator's own unexpired U.S. driver license or identification card and the state that issued it**. Colorado publishes no list of approved translators, so the consequence is plain: **a translation prepared in Türkiye does not satisfy this rule**. The agency is also explicit that **a notary cannot certify a copy**.

A CONTRADICTION: THE STATUTE REMOVED THE AFFIDAVIT REQUIREMENT, THE AGENCY KEEPS PUBLISHING THE FORM

- **On one side, the statute.** SB25-276, signed on May 23, 2025, repeals the requirement that a person without lawful immigration status file an affidavit, according to the General Assembly's official as-enacted summary.
- **On the other side, the agency.** The Division of Motor Vehicles still publishes a CO-RCSA affidavit on its own SB 251 page, and under **two different numbers: DR 2212A** in the first-application section and **DR 2122A** in the renewal section. Both sit on the same page.
- **We do not settle this.** What was repealed may be only the lawful-presence declaration while a different affidavit survives, or the agency page may not have been updated. **The statutory text was not read**, only the legislature's official summary, and no statutory language is quoted in this guide.
- **What to do:** on the day of your appointment, fill in whichever form the agency's page lists and take it with you, and ask plainly at the counter. Do not trust guides that give one universal form number; the agency's own page gives two.

Appointment, tests and getting the card

- 1 **Pre-register online first.** The agency's sentence is that everyone applying for the first time must pre-register online.
- 2 **Then book.** Every application route at a state driver license office repeats that all applicants must have an appointment; **walk-in driver service is not the norm**. You can check in **no earlier than 15 minutes** before the appointment.
- 3 **At the appointment:** a basic **vision screening, fingerprints** (Colorado law 42-2-107 and 42-2-302) and a **new photograph**. Let us be plain about the fingerprints: a person applying on this route is fingerprinted by a state agency whether or not they hold status.
- 4 **Interpreters:** the agency writes that some offices have a translation device, or that an applicant may bring a friend or family member. The condition is that the interpreter shows an unexpired license or identification card, **and that the interpreter's name and document number are entered on the applicant's permanent motor vehicle record**.
- 5 **A temporary paper document is issued at the appointment** and is valid immediately; **the permanent card is centrally printed and mailed within 30 days**. You can check on it at **303-205-5600**.
- 6 **You will be offered voter registration at the driver license office. Decline it.** Every Colorado driver license office provides that service; voting in Colorado requires U.S. citizenship, and the banner-marked card says on its face that it is not valid for voting. The agency's page does not warn non-citizens about this, so we do: tell the clerk you are not a citizen, and if a registration is created by mistake do not throw away the notice that arrives.

Tests: two languages, a test from home, and a road test the agency does not give

ITEM	RULE OR AMOUNT
Languages of the knowledge test	English and Spanish only , both in the office and from home. Turkish is not offered . The application can read the test aloud, but still only in those two languages
Test from home	From any computer with a front-facing camera, 60 minutes . \$5 test fee plus a \$1.50 card fee, \$6.50 in total . The agency opens this to any resident who needs to take the knowledge test and attaches no status condition
State knowledge test fee	\$11.50 , in an office or, from April 1, 2026 , online. Retakes as often as needed, but no more than twice a day
Cheating controls	The application takes a photograph before the test starts and random photographs during it; staff compare those images against the person who arrives for the appointment
Road test	The agency does not give it . The appointment is booked with an approved third-party testing school , and the agency does not make those bookings. The only fee the state charges is the retest fee: \$15.40
What the school charges	The agency does not publish those prices and neither do we . Before booking, ask about the first test, the retest, the refund policy, and the charges for missing documents or not showing up
License and permit fees	A standard (CO-RCSA) license is \$36.00 against \$34.00 on the REAL ID route; a standard instruction permit is \$23.00 against \$20.00. So a person without permanent status pays slightly more, and every three years , for a card that does less

And there is a gap we have to be honest about. Some states provide a verbal test for an applicant who reads a language the written test does not cover. **No Colorado equivalent was found in the research**. The agency's interpreter rule is also written for the **appointment** rather than for the knowledge test itself; nothing was found that says whether an interpreter may be used during the test. So this guide **makes no promise about an interpreter**: ask plainly at the appointment and ask for the answer in writing. **Whether the handbook exists in Turkish could not be established either**, so we do not promise a Turkish handbook. For study, the agency publishes its own driver handbook and a practice test: dmv.colorado.gov/drivereducation.

WE CARRY THE AGENCY'S OWN FRAUD WARNING INTO THIS GUIDE

- On **August 10, 2026** the agency's motor vehicle investigations unit published a warning listing scams aimed at exactly the people reading this: **unauthorized brokers booking and reselling driver license appointments for profit**, people charging a fee to register a vehicle in someone else's name, applicants paying third parties to complete the written knowledge test fraudulently, and **driving schools promising a passing score**.
- The agency's own sentence is that **legitimate driving schools cannot guarantee a passing score**. A person who does not speak English and cannot find an appointment is the primary target, and because private schools give the road test the door opens exactly there.
- The agency's instruction is clear too: start every transaction at mydmv.colorado.gov, book only through the agency's own appointment page or through the approved school itself, register the vehicle at a **county motor vehicle office**, and take the knowledge test only through the official from-home service.
- The agency also publishes a list of **nonprofit partner organizations** that help with standard-document appointments. **We could not read the names on that list**, so no organization is named here; look the list up on the agency's page.

Renewal: the opposite of what you would expect

A cardholder with no lawful status can renew online: the last proof document submitted plus a newly completed affidavit (the number given in the renewal section is DR 2122A). **A cardholder on temporary lawful status can only renew in an office.** The agency's sentence is that customers on temporary lawful status are not eligible for online renewal, and each time they have to bring the last Colorado document issued, **unexpired** proof of lawful presence, and a proof of address dated within the past year. **So an H-1B holder with a job and a visa takes time off and goes to an office at every renewal, while a person without status can renew online.** There is a convenience that applies to everyone but does not close that gap: as announced on **September 16, 2026**, the online renewal window was extended to **11 years** from the last in-office photograph, which allows two consecutive online renewals without a new photograph; **that convenience does not reach people on temporary status**, because they cannot renew online at all. Two dated restrictions belong here as well: from **September 29, 2025** the agency suspended issuing and renewing limited-term commercial licenses for residents on temporary lawful status until further notice, and **no restart date has been published**; and exception processing is currently closed to applicants without documents, with the agency saying to **check again on January 1, 2027**.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN COLORADO

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