

# GETTING BY IN THE U.S. AS AN IMMIGRANT:

## 3. CARS AND DRIVING IN THE U.S.

### DRIVER'S LICENSES

#### How Can I Get a Driver's License if I am an Undocumented Immigrant?

Each state has different requirements for getting a driver's license. Most states require a Social Security Number (SSN). Some states—Illinois, Kentucky, New Mexico, Utah, and West Virginia—accept an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) instead of an SSN. Other states—Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Washington—accept foreign ID cards in place of SSNs. Nevertheless, all but 4 states—Hawaii, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington—require proof that applicants are lawfully present in the U.S.

If you do not live in one of the states listed above, you probably cannot get a driver's license at this time if you are undocumented. Carpool if possible or take public transportation.

#### What is an ITIN and How Can I Get One?

An ITIN is a number provided by the Internal Revenue Service in order to assist people who do not have SSNs in filing their tax returns. ITINs should never be used for employment purposes.

You can apply for an ITIN by going to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or calling 1-800-829-3676. You can only apply when filing your tax returns.

### IF THE POLICE STOP YOU IN YOUR CAR

#### What Happens if the Police Pull Me Over In my Car?

The police will ask you for your driver's license, proof of car registration, and insurance. You must show these, and you may get a ticket if you do not have these. Whatever you do, do not show false documents and do not lie. It is a crime to give false identification to a police officer.

#### What Do I Do If the Police Ask for My Green Card?

If you have valid immigration status documents, show them to the police. If you do not, do not say anything about where you were born or how you entered the U.S. In some states, it is a minor crime

not to provide your name when the police ask you for it. Providing your name has risks and can be used to start deportation proceedings against you. If you decide to provide your name anyway, do not say anything else.

#### Do the Police Have the Right to Search My Car?

Not necessarily. In certain cases, the police may search your car without your consent. For example, the police may search your car if they have a valid search warrant, if the officer has good reason to believe that criminal activity is likely to take place, if you have been involved in a crime, or if you have evidence of a crime in your car. Make sure the officer understands that you do not consent to the search. The police should not arrest you because you refuse to consent to a search.

### DRIVING IN THE U.S.

#### How Can I Avoid Problems While Driving?

With state and local officials increasingly getting involved in immigration enforcement, it's more important than ever to avoid getting stopped in your car by the police. You can avoid problems by using common sense and complying with the law.

#### Do:

- Obey the speed limit
- Use your turn signals when making a turn
- Make sure children travel in car seats
- Register your car in the state where you live
- Carry car insurance
- Keep license plates and tags up to date

#### Do Not:

- Drive aggressively
- Drive with non-functioning turn signals or lights
- Drive with broken or cracked windows
- Drink alcohol and drive
- Carry open containers of alcohol in your car

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