Online Provider Town Hall Meeting
June 18, 2020 10:30 AM

Organizer: Stacey Thompson, Program Administrator, Office of Driver Training

Attendees: Julia Tipple, Administrative Professional, Office of Driver Training

Valerie Wald, State Administrator of Driver Training

Lt. Herb Homan, Ohio Traffic Safety Office

Michael Belcoure, AAA-Allied Group, Inc.

Paul Zalatoris, Top Driver

Kristine Deveza, Aceable

Andrea Hekimian-Williams, 2Cool Traffic School

Shalana Shatterwhite, Public Safety Driving School

Justin Pruskowski, Drive Learning Technology dba igottadrive.com

Topic 1: Curriculum Content: Is it difficult during creation, do you have

Paul: I thought you guys provided a really easy guide to make sure that everything you required we taught could be checked off as we went along. As more changes have come out, I thought those changes were clearly articulated as well and we haven't had any problems getting them integrated.

Shalana: As far as the curriculum, I had some questions. We were approved not too long ago. When my IT team was putting things together they had a lot of problems. Is there a way for us to get an online curriculum that has already been approved that way we as a school don't have to go through and be accepted and denied?

Stacey: We do not have a mass state online program.

Mike: As an online provider here in Ohio, I also run and brick and mortar school, we use the AAA curriculum that has been approved from the state for other schools to even use to teach, and we had to go through the exact same process as anyone else even though we have an approved curriculum. I think the Ohio curriculum you sent out is very clear, it was very easy to just check the boxes. I have no problem with the curriculum or any changes that are sent out.

Stacey: Do you have any suggestions as to how to make the online curriculum any easier to create a program?

Shalana: It took us almost two years, to get approved and we kept getting stuff kicked back, like our videos, and that made it hard for us.

Stacey: If any ideas pop up to make it easier on the developers and technical people please shoot us an email so that we can make it clear and easier for people in the future.

Topic 2: Certificates: electronic transfer of certificates, what is it like having more than one certificate, is there a way for us to make this easier on you?

Shalana: The issue that our school is having currently is that we have to issue three certificates for each student since we are brick and mortar as well. Is there a way for us to send things straight to the BMV instead of having to print three certificates? We pay $4 every time for each certificate and this is getting expensive.

Mike: I concur with Shalana, we are also a brick and mortar school. I get the enrollment certificate in some way because a lot of brick and mortar schools are even requiring two hours of classroom before in cars. It would be nice if we could eliminate one of the certificates for those of us who also do brick and mortar.

Andrea: We don't have a problem really issuing certificates, but having it digital would be nice.

Kristine: In other states we just order one certificate and that has been nice. I would second that we would like to have digital certificates.

Shalana: In order to issue a final certificate we have to have both the enrollment and completion from the online. It would be nice for those of us who have brick and mortar if we could issue nothing but a completion if they are signed up with our online and brick and mortar.

Mike: I would say the majority of students we get from online providers who are not us, we don't see them until they are completely done. It would be nice if we could do digital enrollment and then a printed completion.

Paul: We always have some students either in a rush or who have made a mistake. We always have students who have incorrect information on their enrollment certificates, so with having to reissue it is very time consuming when we have to send a new one out again, and the parents are always in a hurry. I would really like to advocate for digital enrollment because it would save cost on those certificates as well as postage.

Andrea: We have students that misplace or never get their certificates, so if it was digital we could just resend it to the email and it would be so much easier.

Topic 3: Student Footprints: violations with shortage of time, breaks, and going over the 4 hour limits. Are you seeing a problem with the development from your original until now or security leaks?

Paul: The first program review, when we had originally developed we based it on the time for the content, but we had to change to log on time. The way our system was originally built was that we had a lot of people who would not log off and then it would go over 4 hours, but we have fixed the problem.

Stacey: How about when you were developing? Was it hard to add in the breaks and when to cut off? Do you guys find that hard to maintain?

Mike: I think when we were building the program it was hard to know the difference between curriculum timing and log on time. It's just knowing that the curriculum time needs to be built at 24 hours but the breaks you build in should be at 4 hours of log on time.

Kristine: We also had to figure out where we should put the break times. We were also concerned about students who would take longer with the curriculum. We were concerned with the user experience more than the content breaks. We were concerned with who would need breaks in different places. The break requirement makes it more difficult.

Shalana: What other states do, they go off of the word count. The lesson would have so many words and then the breaks would be based off of how many words and how long it should take. I would like it better if it wasn't a running clock but basing it on how many words and how long it should take.

Mike: If a parent calls in and talks about the time in the course, we really stress that the course is a minimum of 24 hours, because everyone takes a different amount of time. If we are open and understanding with the parents, it really helps them understand how it can be longer than that amount of time.

Paul: The 24 hour lockout period, I think it would make more sense to make it a calendar day period. A lot of people are calling upset because they don't understand that they cannot log back on until the time they logged off the night before.

Justin: Even a 12 hour lockout period would make it easier for kids.

Kristine: I want to agree, my engineers said that a requirement to have it so that a student cannot complete the course in less than say 6 days would be easier than the 24 hour lockout requirement.

Paul: I don't agree, I think that kids would start cramming everything in two days. I think limiting it to 4 hours every calendar day would be better. Attention spans are really only good for about 4 hours.

Kristine: Let me correct myself, I think the four hour requirement would still need to stay in place.

Stacey: If we changed this rule, how would it affect your current program?

Paul: I think it would make it easier for the customer and dealing with the customer.

Shalana: For us it would not be anything major to change. It would be as easy as going into our settings and changing the requirement.

Andrea: We would have to reprogram some things, but I think that the students and the parents would like that rule better.

Stacey: Do you guys have any other issues you're seeing?

Shalana: If we were allowed to do that would it eliminate the running clock?

Paul: No it would still have a four hour limit in the day.

Shalana: Well our course is currently sectioned with clock timers on each page, but we don't have an overall running clock.

Paul: It would be four hours of running clock for the entire day. It is a cumulative running time for the entire day. If they log off and log back on they would have whatever time remaining. Say they do two hours, log off, and then log back on in the same day, they would still have two hours left. On the other side, this would mean if they stayed on the same page for a half hour, they would lose that half hour.

Justin: I would agree with the way Paul is doing it.

Justin: The parent authentication stuff, we have a lot of trouble with. We have parents who are not in the database we use, so they have to go get a notarized statement and it is a hassle. A lot of other states don't require this. We would like to look at eliminating this.

Shalana: I agree, I think a solution could potentially be the parent affidavit that the BMV uses to verify the parent hours.

Andrea: Would the BMV approve online notaries?

Shalana: This goes back to the certificate issue, it would make it easier if we only had the one certificate and then the parent affidavit.

Kristine: We are interested in removing the 3rd party verification process, and if we have to keep it we would like to see it made easier and more user friendly.

Justin: It would also be easier it we had one standard process for all the companies.

Stacey: What would the ideal standard process?

Justin: I would say none.

Shalana: It should just be a digital certificate that they provide to the brick and mortar school.

Stacey: How would that validate who the parent is before they go through the online school?

Shalana: There are easier ways to add in some additional information to the credit card process, like requiring a copy of the driver's license.

Mike: We have a contract being signed by our online students as well as the brick and mortar schools. The bigger risk is actually for brick and mortar schools who are having someone come in and sign a contract. It seems to be redundant for those students who are signing two contracts. It is just a lot of steps for someone to go through to do a 24 hour online course. I think a standard online form would be much easier.

Stacey: The parent validation is in place because we do get phone calls from parents who will say that their student signed up for driving online without their permission and used their credit card. At that point we have to put it back on the schools.

Shalana: In the same respect if a student goes online and uses their credit card for anything else it is illegal. I don't think that it should fall on us if a student does that when signing up for online education. The driver's education school should not be responsible. Also, to piggyback, it is a bit redundant to have to enter in the same information three times.

Mike: I think that you turning it back on us because we are the online providers is a good idea. I would do the same thing in my brick and mortar if someone used a fraudulent credit card or check, I would cancel the enrollment. I think the amount of people having the issue with their kid taking their credit card is far less than the amount of people who have third party database problems.

Stacey: If we do anything we might take this to a universal way to do parent validation, what would be the easiest way to do this?

Andrea: In other states we are asked to collect the driver's license numbers, and then we access the database to verify.

Stacey: So are you saying that other states allow you to use a state database to verify information you are given?

Andrea: No, I am saying this would be a good idea for Ohio to have.

Shalana: Just recently we had a student sign up for our online course, they are ready to go and sign up for in cars, but in their area they do not allow online students. Is there a way to force businesses to take these students?

Stacey: This is a private business matter and we cannot force businesses to do business.

Shalana: I think this might be a conversation we need to have at a later date. I don't think this is fair to online schools. It will detract from people wanting to open online schools if they are going to run into schools who won't take their students, especially schools who do nothing but online.

Mike: I have seen the opposite in my area, there are schools that will not do any classroom. They will only take online students. Especially with the current situation, schools don't want to hold classroom, but they will take in car students all day long.

Paul: The brick and mortar people are really lucky. With this whole situation Michigan, where I also do business, did not have the same luxuries as the schools here in Ohio.

Valerie: If it is any consolation, in 2012-2013 we only had about 7% of students doing online and that number has jumped to almost 30%. I would advise everyone to talk amongst themselves about any issues, comments, and concerns you have.