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Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program: In Brief

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SUMMARY

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Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program: In Brief

The Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) develops and issues standards for states' testing and licensing of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers. FMCSA has the authority to establish pilot programs to test changes to commercial driver licensing requirements. FMCSA established the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program (SDAP) on January 14, 2022, to meet requirements in Section 23022 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58). Section 23022 required the Secretary of Transportation to submit a report to Congress in March 2026 to provide a recommendation, based on data collected, on whether the level of safety achieved by the pilot program for CMV drivers under 21 years of age was similar to or greater than the level of safety for CMV drivers aged 21 years or older, as determined by FMCSA. SDAP was the second congressionally directed pilot program for truck drivers under 21 years of age. Since 2014, there has been federal support for programs to train under-21-year-old CMV drivers due to concerns of an aging CMV workforce and employee turnover. As of 2025, workers aged 55 years or older comprised 30% of the U.S. truck transportation workforce.

FMCSA began receiving applications for SDAP first from motor carriers in July 2022, then from apprentices and experienced drivers in November 2022, and concluded the program in November 2025. Although not statutorily required, FMCSA made quarterly program enrollment data publicly available beginning in April 2023. Between November 2022 and June 2025, the program received a total of 80 applications from apprentices who were commercial driver's license (CDL) holders between 18 and 20 years of age. FMCSA approved 95% of applicants to participate in the program. Of the applicants approved, 55% completed the two required probationary periods. The program had 76 apprentice participants making up 2.5% of the 3,000 total allowed apprentice participants per Section 23022 of the IIJA. The program enrolled 62 motor carriers (29% of 211 total applications received), making up 6.2% of the 1,000 total allowed motor carriers expected by DOT. Motor carriers not enrolled either did not meet DOT's qualifications (42% of total applicants) or voluntarily withdrew their application (26% of total applicants). In 2023, DOT required interested motor carriers to meet DOT's qualifications and register their apprenticeship program with the Department of Labor (DOL). In 2024, Congress modified SDAP through provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42). As a result of the changes, DOT could no longer require motor carriers to register their apprenticeship programs with DOL or require them to use inward- or rear-facing cameras to collect safety data.

Following SDAP's conclusion, Congress may consider various policy options regarding the program. Congress could establish a permanent apprenticeship program, initiate a new pilot program, or discontinue SDAP. If Congress is satisfied with the results of SDAP, Congress could establish a permanent apprenticeship program, taking into consideration alignment between DOT and DOL to improve the administrative efficiency of apprenticeships. Alternatively, Congress could direct DOT to initiate a new pilot program based on the findings from related studies and reports. If Congress decides not to authorize a new pilot program, under 21-aged CMV drivers would not be allowed to participate in interstate commerce pursuant to existing regulatory standards. Section 5401 of the Building Unrivaled Infrastructure and Long-term Development for America's 250th Act (Build America 250 Act; H.R. 8870), a surface transportation reauthorization bill introduced and ordered reported in the House of Representatives in May 2026, would extend the apprenticeship pilot program. Some of the issues identified in this report may be addressed in congressional debates concerning the Build America 250 Act (H.R. 8870), through other legislation, or as part of committee oversight.

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Introduction

Congress has long been concerned about the overall adequacy of the U.S. trucking workforce and the recruitment and retention of experienced drivers to maintain that workforce in the face of aging and employee turnover. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2025, workers aged 55 or older represented 30% of the U.S. truck transportation workforce.[1] To attract younger drivers to the trucking workforce, Section 23022 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58), enacted in 2021, required the Secretary of Transportation to establish a three-year apprenticeship pilot program for commercial drivers. The program was intended to allow apprentices—commercial driver's license (CDL) holders between 18 and 20 years of age—to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate commerce under the supervision of an experienced driver (see "Experienced Driver Applicants"). The Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) established the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program (SDAP) on January 14, 2022, to meet the requirements of the IIJA.[2] The program concluded on November 7, 2025.[3] SDAP was the second congressionally directed pilot program for truck drivers under the age of 21.[4]

This report provides a brief overview of SDAP. The report first explains FMCSA's regulatory and administrative role, then presents SDAP enrollment data reported in 2023, 2024, and 2025.[5] It also identifies policy options for congressional consideration. Congress might consider these or related issues during debates on surface transportation reauthorization, through other legislation, or as part of committee oversight. Congress included provisions to extend SDAP in the Build America 250 Act (H.R. 8870), a surface transportation reauthorization bill ordered reported in the House of Representatives in May 2026.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Authority

FMCSA was established within DOT in 2000 pursuant to the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-159). FMCSA develops and issues standards—known as Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) found at Title 49, Parts 350-399, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*—for states' testing and licensing of CDL holders. Prior to FMCSA's establishment,

[1] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Aging of Workers in the Transportation and Warehousing Sector," accessed June 17, 2026, https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/caxh-t8jd. According to BLS, the truck transportation subsector includes occupations such as mechanic, freight mover, and truck driver. In 2025, truck drivers were 83% of the truck transportation subsector employment. For more information, see BLS, "Truck Transportation: NAICS 484," accessed August 7, 2026, https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag484.htm.

[2] U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program to Allow Persons Ages 18, 19, and 20 to Operate Commercial Motor Vehicles in Interstate Commerce," 87 *Federal Register* 2477, January 14, 2022.

[3] DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program (hereinafter FMCSA, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates"); and DOT, FMCSA, "Qualifications of Drivers: Minimum Age for Drivers; American Trucking Associations; Application for Exemption," 91 *Federal Register* 3771, January 28, 2026, p. 3771 (hereinafter FMCSA, "Exemption Continuation").

[4] DOT, *Military Under 21 Pilot Program*, https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/privacy/military-under-21-pilot-program.

[5] FMCSA began collecting data in 2022 and reported information beginning in 2023. FMCSA has not published reports for SDAP following June 2025.

the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) promulgated regulations for highway safety. In 1970, FHWA issued Title 49, Section 391.11(b)(1), of the *Code of Federal Regulations* requiring that CMV operators engaged in interstate commerce be at least 21 years of age, among other qualifications.

FHWA oversight of the CDL licensing process came later. In the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986 (Title XII of P.L. 99-570), Congress required DOT to issue regulations establishing minimum uniform standards for states' issuance of CDLs and commercial learner's permits (CLPs). States are not allowed to issue an unrestricted CDL to anyone who does not meet the driver qualifications stated in Title 49, Section 391.11, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Additionally, the act authorized the Secretary of Transportation to grant waivers and exemptions from the FMCSRs and to conduct pilot programs "to evaluate alternatives to regulations relating to, or innovative approaches to, motor carrier, commercial motor vehicle, and driver safety."[6]

The Under 21 Military CDL Pilot Program, the first congressionally directed pilot program for younger CMV drivers, was enacted in 2015 in Section 5404 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act; P.L. 114-94). The FAST Act directed DOT to develop a pilot program to allow a limited number of individuals between 18 and 20 years of age to operate CMVs in interstate commerce if they received heavy-vehicle driver training while serving in the military. From 2019 to 2022, FMCSA carried out this FAST Act pilot program, which also allowed individuals receiving military-based heavy vehicle driver training to be hired by a participating motor carrier for the pilot program.[7]

Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program

SDAP is the second congressionally directed pilot program for CMV drivers under the age of 21.[8] In contrast to the first pilot program, authorized by the FAST Act, drivers participating in SDAP must hold only an intrastate CDL to be eligible for the program. Normally, an individual between 18 and 20 years of age is issued a CDL with a "K" restriction for intrastate-only use in accordance with Title 49, Section 383.153(a)(10)(vii), of the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Drivers under 21 years of age cannot operate a CMV in interstate commerce without an exemption from the K license restriction. Under Section 23022 of the IIJA, Congress directs FMCSA to provide exemptions from the K license restriction through a formal pilot program process for apprentice participants aged 18-20 years. SDAP met this requirement.

Following the conclusion of SDAP on November 7, 2025, some interest groups have discussed the potential continuation of SDAP.[9] On November 14, 2026, the American Trucking Associations (ATA) submitted a petition to FMCSA to extend SDAP for five years for previous apprenticeship participants. FMCSA requested comments on ATA's petition between January 28, 2026, and February 27, 2026. Several organizations, including the Commercial Vehicle Training Association, the Truckload Carriers Association, and the Next Generation in Trucking Association, expressed support for the petition as a trucking workforce development measure.

[6] The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) are located at 49 C.F.R. §§350-399. Under 49 U.S.C. §31315 and §31136(e), the Secretary of Transportation is authorized to grant waivers and exemptions from the FMCSRs and to conduct pilot programs.

[7] DOT, FMCSA, "Commercial Driver's Licenses; Proposed Pilot Program to Allow Persons Between the Ages of 18 and 21 With Military Driving Experience to Operate Commercial Motor Vehicles in Interstate Commerce," 81 *Federal Register* 56745, August 22, 2016.

[8] CRS completed a search of the *Federal Register* for FMCSA-administered pilot programs for drivers under 21 years of age. CRS found two programs, the military pilot program for drivers under 21 and SDAP, in that search.

[9] FMCSA, "Exemption Continuation," p. 3771.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), the Truck Safety Coalition, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways, Parents Against Tired Truckers, and Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, among others, opposed the petition, suggesting that the young age and inexperience of drivers in the program pose a safety risk. In its comments, OOIDA asserted that the program did not address trucking workforce concerns of driver recruitment and retention.

Program Requirements for Motor Carriers

For motor carriers, SDAP required the completion of four tasks as part of the application process: (1) submit an application demonstrating achievement of eight safety qualifications; (2) commit to submitting monthly data on apprentices as required by Section 23022 of the IIJA; (3) register their apprenticeship program with the Department of Labor (DOL); and (4) provide their program's DOL-registered apprenticeship number to DOT.[10] (See "Motor Carrier Applicants.")

On March 14, 2024, Congress enacted provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42), changing the 2023 SDAP program requirements enforced by DOT. Section 422 of the act states that "none of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to require the use of inward facing cameras or require a motor carrier to register an apprenticeship program with the Department of Labor as a condition for participation in the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program." On May 14, 2024, FMCSA published a notice of revision to the pilot program in the *Federal Register* that revised motor carrier participation requirements to reflect these provisions.[11] Although motor carriers were no longer required to register their apprenticeship program with DOL, they were still required to submit an application addressing the safety qualification criteria and commit to monthly data reporting.[12]

Program Enrollment Reported in 2023-2025

FMCSA made quarterly reports on SDAP publicly available beginning in April 2023.[13] FMCSA began collecting motor carrier applications on July 26, 2022, and experienced driver and apprentice applications in November 2022. Applications collected by FMCSA in 2022 appear to have been reported in first quarter of 2023 data. FMCSA presented quarterly data in four categories: Motor Carriers, Experienced Drivers, Apprentice Drivers, and Apprentice Driver Progress.

The number of SDAP applications declined over the years. In 2023, the program received the most applications: 229 applications for the three roles (112 motor carriers, 81 experienced drivers, and 36 apprentice drivers). In 2024, 184 applications were received (87 motor carriers, 65 experienced drivers, and 32 apprentice drivers). FMCSA reported at the end of the second quarter of 2025 that 31 applications were received in 2025 (12 motor carriers, 7 experienced drivers, and 12 apprentice drivers). By the conclusion of the program, enrollment numbers totaled 2.5% (76 apprentices) of the maximum number of apprentice drivers allowed under the law (3,000) and

[10] FMCSA, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates." Information reported in Q1 of 2023 includes information collected between July 2022 and March 2023.

[11] DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program to Allow Persons Ages 18, 19, and 20 to Operate Commercial Motor Vehicles in Interstate Commerce; Revision to Program Requirements," 89 *Federal Register* 42054, May 14, 2024; and DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Overview," 2024, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sdap. In the 119th Congress, the DRIVE-SAFE Act (H.R. 5563) proposes the use of forward-facing cameras in commercial motor vehicles driven by under 21-year-old apprentice drivers.

[12] DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program to Allow Persons Ages 18, 19, and 20 To Operate Commercial Motor Vehicles in Interstate Commerce; Revision to Program Requirements," 89 *Federal Register* 42054.

[13] FMCSA, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates."

6.2% (62 motor carriers) of motor carriers allowed (1,000). Although there was a decline in the number of reported applications between 2023 and 2024, there was an increase in enrollment for the program from 2023 to 2024 (+60%). Overall reported program enrollment stayed the same between 2024 and 2025. More detailed annual data from these reports are presented in the following sections.

Motor Carrier Applicants

Pursuant to Title 49, Section 13102, and Title 49, Section 31134, of the *U.S. Code*, a *motor carrier* is an employer or person registered with DOT that provides "motor vehicle transportation for compensation." FMCSA reported receipt of 211 total SDAP applications from motor carriers between 2022 and 2025. FMCSA reported 112 applications in 2023 (53% of the total), with 84 of these applications (40% of the total) received in the first quarter of 2023. Applications dropped to 87 in 2024 and to 12 in the first half of 2025. Of the 112 applications FMCSA reported receiving in 2023, it evaluated 108 and did not evaluate 4. **Table 1** provides data on motor carrier applications and application determinations reported by FMCSA from 2023 to 2025. FMCSA approved 62 (29%) of the total applications received. FMCSA did not approve of 88 (42%) motor carrier applicants because they did not meet FMCSA's safety qualification criteria. Of all motor carrier applicants, FMCSA reported that 55 (26%) voluntarily withdrew their applications by 2025.[14] The remaining 6 carriers (3%) were removed from the program because of defunct operating authority.

Table 1. SDAP Motor Carrier Status, 2023-2025

	Calendar Year(s)			
Application Determinations	**2023 (beginning in July 2022)[a]**	**2024 (full year)**	**2025 (through June)**	**2023-2025 Combined**
Approved	34	25	3	62
Not Approved	38	43	7	88
Voluntarily Withdrawn	40	13	2	55[b]
Prequalified[c]	*36*	*0*	*0*	*36*
Not Evaluated[d]	*4*	*0*	*0*	*4*
Removed from Program	0	6	0	6
Total Applications	**112**	**87**	**12**	**211**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes: FMCSA maintains a public list of approved motor carriers organized by state.[15]

[14] In 2025, FMCSA reported 55 applications as "voluntarily withdrawn," which included the 15 applications that were voluntarily withdrawn by 2025 and applications that were prequalified (36) and that were not evaluated (4) by FMCSA in 2023.

[15] DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) Program Job Opportunities," updated April 17, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program-job.

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for motor carriers in July 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023 applications.
b. In 2025, FMCSA reported 55 applications as "voluntarily withdrawn," which include the 15 applications that were voluntarily withdrawn in 2024 and 2025 and applications that were prequalified (36) and that were not evaluated (4) by FMCSA in 2023.
c. In 2023, prequalification status was issued to motor carriers that had met qualifications for program participation in their application but had not provided their Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship number to FMCSA for SDAP participation approval. A notice at 89 *Federal Register* 42054 removed this requirement for motor carrier applicants. In 2024 and 2025, FMCSA did not report prequalified applications.
d. In 2023, FMCSA reported receipt of 112 applications and evaluated 108 applications, leaving 4 applications not evaluated.

Of the 55 motor carriers that were reported to withdraw their application from the program, 96% withdrew their application by the end of 2024.[16] Until 2024, motor carriers were required to meet FMCSA's safety qualification criteria and register their apprenticeship under DOL.

Experienced Driver Applicants

SDAP defined an *experienced driver* as an individual older than 26 years of age with a minimum of five years of experience driving a CMV in interstate commerce.[17] Experienced drivers were required to apply through an approved motor carrier to participate.[18] An apprentice driver was required to be accompanied by an experienced driver sitting in the passenger seat of the CMV during the apprentice's probationary periods.[19] Experienced drivers were able to serve for a maximum of two years. Throughout the entirety of the service period, experienced drivers needed to hold a valid CDL, have no preventable accidents reported to DOT, and have no pointed moving violations.[20]

Table 2 provides data on experienced driver applications for SDAP. Of the 153 applications reported between 2023 and 2025, 141 were approved (92%) and one was disapproved (<1%). Eleven experienced drivers were disenrolled from the program before their service period ended: eight voluntarily withdrew (5%), two were removed from the carrier (>1%), and one was removed for safety reasons (<1%).[21]

[16] Beginning in 2024, FMCSA reported a "Voluntarily Withdrawn" category for motor carriers.

[17] P.L. 117-58, §23022(a)(5).

[18] DOT, FMCSA, "Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions," August 18, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-program-frequently.

[19] P.L. 117-58, §23022(b)(2)(C)(ii).

[20] Per 49 C.F.R. §385.3, a *preventable accident* is an accident involving a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) that could have been averted by the motor carrier or driver. *Pointed moving violations* are infractions including speeding, improper turns, and reckless driving that accrue penalty points to a driver's license. Per 49 C.F.R. §392.2, drivers must obey the rules of their jurisdiction.

[21] FMCSA labels these participants as "Other" in the quarterly reports.

Table 2. SDAP Experienced Driver Application Determinations, 2023-2025

	Calendar Year(s)			
Application Determinations	**2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]**	**2024**	**2025 (through June)**	**2023-2025 Combined**
Approved	80	59	2	141
Not Approved	1	0	0	1
Voluntarily Withdrawn	0	4	4	8
Removed from Carrier	0	1	1	2
Removed from Program	0	1	0	1
Total Applications	**81**	**65**	**7**	**153**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes:

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for experienced drivers in July 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023, applications.

Apprentice Driver Applicants and Program Progress

Apprentice drivers under SDAP were individuals aged 18-20 years who held a CDL.[22] Apprentice drivers were required to complete two probationary periods: a 120-hour period, which included at least 80 hours of driving time, followed by a 280-hour period, which included at least 160 hours of driving time. Both probationary periods had performance benchmarks against which an apprentice's competency was measured.[23] Interested eligible drivers applied directly to an approved motor carrier for an SDAP apprenticeship position and awaited approval by FMCSA for acceptance to SDAP.[24]

FMCSA received a total of 80 apprentice driver applications from the end of 2022 through the middle of 2025. FMCSA approved 76 applications (or 95% of all applications received). **Table 3** provides data reported by FMCSA on apprentice driver applications and determinations.

[22] P.L. 117-58, §23022(a)(1).

[23] P.L. 117-58, §23022(b)(2); 29 C.F.R. §29.5(b)(2) describes training standards of a registered apprenticeship. A *registered apprenticeship* can be at least 2,000 hours of on-the-job training (time-based), the attainment of competency (competency-based), or a combination of time-based and competency-based approaches (hybrid). SDAP took a hybrid approach.

[24] FMCSA, *How to Apply to the FMCSA Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) Program*, FMCSA-SSL-24-001, April 2024, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/2024-05/FMCSA_SDAP%20How%20to%20Apply-508c.pdf.

Table 3. SDAP Apprentice Driver Application Determinations, 2023-2025

	Calendar Year(s)			
Application Determinations	**2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]**	**2024**	**2025 (through June)**	**2023-2025 Combined**
Approved	36[b]	30	10	76
Not Approved	0	2	2	4
Total Applications	**36**	**32**	**12**	**80**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes:

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for apprentice drivers in November 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023 applications.

b. One apprentice driver was removed from the program for safety reasons in Q4 CY2023.

Apprentice Driver Progress

Table 4 provides the reported progress through probation and completion for apprentice drivers in SDAP by the end of each year. As reported at the end of 2023, of the 36 approved applicants that year, 14 apprentices were in the process of completing both of their probationary periods (39%), 13 apprentices had completed both probationary periods (36%), and 9 apprentices did not complete both probationary periods (25%). As reported at the end of 2024, of the 66 total approved applicants, 36 apprentices had completed both probationary periods (55%), 20 did not complete both probationary periods (30%), and 10 were in the process of completing their probationary periods (15%). In 2024, the number of program participants who did not complete their probationary periods increased 120% compared with 2023. By the end of the second quarter of 2025, of the program total of 76 approved applicants, 42 apprentices had completed both probationary periods (55%), 30 had not completed both probationary periods (40%), and 4 were in the process of completing their probationary periods (5%).

Post-probationary participation status (**Table 5**) and the status of apprentices who did not complete both probationary periods (**Table 6**) are discussed below.[25]

[25] FMCSA does not present data for the number of apprentice drivers who completed the first probationary period and not the second probationary period.

Table 4. SDAP Apprentice Driver Progress by Year, 2023-2025

Status	Calendar Year: 2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]	2024	2025 (through June)
In Probation	14	10	4
Completed Probation	13	36	42[b]
Did Not Complete Probation	9	20	30[c]
Total	**36**	**66**	**76**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes:

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for apprentices in November 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023 applications.

b. See **Table 5** for more information on apprentice drivers who completed probation.

c. See **Table 6** for more information on apprentice drivers who did not complete probation because of aging out of the program, voluntarily withdrawing from the program, or being removed from their motor carrier.

Completion of Probationary Periods

In 2024, FMCSA began recording participants who aged out, voluntarily left the program, were removed from the carrier, or were removed from the program based on whether they completed both probationary periods (**Table 5** and **Table 6**). By 2025, a total of 42 apprentice drivers had completed both probationary periods. Within this group, many apprentice drivers either remained active in the program (45%) or aged out (33%).[26] In addition, 17% of apprentice drivers completed both probationary periods and voluntarily withdrew from the program.

Table 5. SDAP Apprentice Drivers' Post-Probationary Program Status, 2023-2025

Status	Calendar Year(s): 2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]	2024	2025 (through June)	2023-2025 Combined
Completed Probation and Active	13	5	1	19
Aged Out[b]	0	13	1	14
Voluntarily Withdrawn	0	3	4	7
Removed from Carrier	0	1	0	1
Removed from Program	0	1	0	1

[26] Note that the final two quarters of the program have not been published by FMCSA. The number of apprentice drivers who completed both probationary periods may have changed because four apprentice drivers were in probationary status by the second quarter of 2025.

Status	Calendar Year(s) 2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]	2024	2025 (through June)	2023-2025 Combined
Total Applications	**13**	**23**	**6**	**42**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes:

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for apprentices in November 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023 applications.

b. Apprentices who became 21 years old while participating in the program aged out of the program.

At the end of 2023, of the 13 apprentice drivers who completed both probationary periods, 100% remained active in the program following the completion of both probationary periods. Of all years, FMCSA reported that 2024 had the most apprentice drivers who completed both probationary periods (23) and the most apprentice drivers who aged out of the program (13). In the first half of 2025, 4 of 6 apprentices who completed both probationary periods voluntarily withdrew from the program.

For each year of the program as reported by FMCSA, nearly the same number of apprentices did not complete both probationary periods (see **Table 6**). In 2023 and 2024, more than half of the apprentices who did not complete both probationary periods voluntarily withdrew from the program. In 2024, the largest share of apprentices who did not complete both probationary periods were removed from their carrier (45%). By 2025, there were 30 total apprentice drivers who did not complete both probationary periods. The largest share voluntarily withdrew from the program before they could complete both probationary periods (53%).

Table 6. SDAP Apprentice Drivers Who Did Not Complete Both Probationary Periods, 2023-2025

Status	Calendar Year(s) 2023 (beginning in Nov. 2022)[a]	2024	2025 (through June)	2023-2025 Combined
Aged Out[b]	3	0	3	6
Voluntarily Withdrawn	5	6	5	16
Removed from Carrier	1	5	2	8
Total Applications	**9**	**11**	**10**	**30**

Source: CRS based on Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "SDAP Program Quarterly Updates," updated August 27, 2025, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/sdap/safe-driver-apprenticeship-pilot-sdap-program.

Notes:

a. FMCSA began collecting applications for apprentices in November 2022. In April 2023, FMCSA reported applications collected in 2022 with Q1 CY2023 applications.

b. Apprentices who became 21 years old while participating in the program aged out of the program.

Report to Congress

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the Secretary of Transportation is statutorily required in Section 23022(g) of the IIJA to submit a report within 120 days, addressing six items:

1. the findings and conclusions of the pilot program;
2. an analysis of the safety record of apprentice drivers who participated in the program;
3. the number of drivers who discontinued participation in the apprenticeship program before completion;
4. a comparison of the safety records of participating drivers before, during, and after the probationary periods;
5. a comparison, for each participating driver, of average on-duty time, driving time, and time spent away from their home terminal before, during, and after the probationary periods; and
6. a recommendation, based on the data collected, on whether the level of safety achieved by the pilot program was equivalent to or greater than the level of safety for equivalent CMV drivers aged 21 years or older, as determined by the agency.[27]

The program concluded on November 7, 2025. Therefore, under the provisions of the IIJA, the report was due to Congress on March 7, 2026. As of September 2026, FMCSA had not published this report. The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and OOIDA expressed that their organizations' support of the ATA's November 2025 petition to extend SDAP for five years for previous apprenticeship participants was contingent on FMCSA's submission of a report to Congress required by Section 23022 of the IIJA that would address safety implications of the program.

DOT is to use the program participant data to make recommendations about the level of safety achieved by the pilot program compared with normal licensing conditions. In 2024, FMCSA expected to collect enough information to assess whether the conditions of SDAP promoted safe driving practices.[28] DOT's assessment of safety based on SDAP participation data might not be generalizable due to the relatively small number of apprentice participants.[29]

Policy Options for Congress

This report discusses three possible policy options if Congress were to consider the status of SDAP; additional options may exist. Congress could establish a permanent apprenticeship program by statute, initiate a new pilot program, or maintain the status quo with SDAP discontinued.

[27] P.L. 117-58, §23022(g).

[28] DOT, FMCSA, "Agency Information Collection Activities; Renewal of an Approved Information Collection Request: Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program," 89 *Federal Register* 50403, June 13, 2024.

[29] The agency reported to Congress in May 2026 that there had not been any observed "adverse impacts" on safety through SDAP in FY2023 and FY2024. For more information, see DOT, FMCSA, *Waivers, Exemptions, and Pilot Programs Report to Congress - Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024*, May 21, 2026, pp. 9, 14, https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/mission/waivers-exemptions-and-pilot-programs-report-congress-fiscal-year-2023-and-fiscal-year-2024.

Establish a Permanent Safe Driver Apprenticeship Program

If Congress is satisfied with the results of SDAP, it could create a similar permanent apprenticeship program. This could involve legislation directing DOT to promulgate regulations to provide exemptions from K license restrictions to 18-20-year-old CDL holders who participate and complete an approved apprenticeship program. Program requirements could be based on those in Section 23022 of the IIJA and the SDAP program requirements. In considering such a program, Congress might be interested in the federal administration required to carry it out. Were such a permanent program established, Congress could direct DOT to solely regulate the apprenticeship program approval process. However, because DOL regulates registered apprenticeship programs through Title 29, Section 29, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, there might be potential for duplication of federal efforts between DOT and DOL. Alternatively, Congress could choose to require that motor carriers receive joint approval from DOT and DOL to carry out a registered apprenticeship program. In the 119th Congress, the DRIVE-SAFE Act (H.R. 5563) proposes to establish an apprenticeship program that would retain provisions from Section 23022 of the IIJA.

Initiate a New Pilot Program

Congress could pursue a new or separate apprenticeship pilot program for CLP holders between the ages of 18 and 20. Organizations have expressed interest in offering apprenticeship opportunities for pursuers of CDLs in addition to early career CDL holders. On February 23, 2023, FMCSA announced that Pitt Ohio Express, LLC, filed an application for an exemption from the CDL requirements for SDAP participants under 21 years of age stating that the exemption would increase SDAP apprentice driver participation.[30] On May 9, 2024, FMCSA announced its denial of the exemption application from Pitt Ohio Express, LLC, due to insufficient information available to determine potential safety implications.[31]

To provide earlier training opportunities to pursuers of a career in truck operation, Congress could direct DOT to initiate a pilot program, for example, that would offer exemptions from the entry-level driver training requirements (49 C.F.R. Part 380 Subpart F) for CLP holders under 21 years of age who complete the apprenticeship pilot program. Congress also could, for example, initiate a new pilot program that would replicate SDAP and would similarly serve as a pilot program for drivers under 21 years of age to participate in interstate commerce. In the 119th Congress, Section 5401 of the Build America 250 Act (H.R. 8870), a surface transportation reauthorization bill introduced and ordered reported in May 2026 in the House of Representatives, would extend SDAP for former apprentice participants of SDAP.

Discontinue the Pilot Program

Congress could choose not to authorize a new apprenticeship program under DOT following SDAP's conclusion. If Congress chooses not to authorize a new apprenticeship program, the statutes and regulations that predate SDAP would remain, and states could continue issuing CDLs with K restrictions to individuals who are under 21 years of age. CDL holders with a K restriction

[30] DOT, FMCSA, "Commercial Driver's License: Pitt Ohio Express, LLC; Application for Exemption," 88 *Federal Register* 11503, February 23, 2023.

[31] DOT, FMCSA, "Commercial Driver's License Standards: Application for Exemption; Pitt Ohio Express, LLC," 89 *Federal Register* 39680, May 9, 2024.

because of age would follow their state's process to remove the restriction upon reaching 21 years of age if the driver pursues interstate commerce.

If Congress wishes to maintain the status quo, registered apprenticeship programs may exist as a legacy of SDAP. In 2023, at least 34 motor carriers had registered programs with DOL in accordance with Title 29, Section 29, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.[32] Congress may wish to ensure that any registered apprenticeship programs established as part of SDAP also are deactivated by directing DOL to terminate those programs. As an alternative to terminating the registered apprenticeship programs, Congress may direct DOL, in consultation with DOT, to verify that such programs can operate in compliance with federal CDL laws after SDAP's termination.

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[32] FMCSA, *SDAP Program Quarterly Program Update – End of Fourth Quarter 2023*.