

EHRENCLOU & GROVER

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

DUI LAW

There are many relevant statutes with respect to driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs charges. O.C.G.A. § 40-6-391 “Drivers with ability impaired by alcohol, drugs, or toxic vapor” is the main DUI statute, and is the statute that a person charged with driving under the influence of alcohol or driving under the influence of drugs will be accused of violating. Below is the statute as of May 2nd, 2012 [last amended in 2010 and effective as of July 1, 2010]:

- (a) A person shall not drive or be in actual physical control of any moving vehicle while:
- (1) Under the influence of alcohol to the extent that it is less safe for the person to drive;
 - (2) Under the influence of any drug to the extent that it is less safe for the person to drive;
 - (3) Under the intentional influence of any glue, aerosol, or other toxic vapor to the extent that it is less safe for the person to drive;
 - (4) Under the combined influence of any two or more of the substances specified in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this subsection to the extent that it is less safe for the person to drive;
 - (5) The person’s alcohol concentration is 0.08 grams or more at any time within three hours after such driving or being in actual physical control from alcohol consumed before such driving or being in actual physical control ended; or
 - (6) Subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this Code section, there is any amount of marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined in Code Section 16-13-21, present in the person’s blood or urine, or both, including the metabolites and derivatives of each or both without regard to whether or not any alcohol is present in the person’s breath or blood.
- (b) The fact that any person charged with violating this Code section is or has been legally entitled to use a drug shall not constitute a defense against any charge of violating this Code section; provided, however, that such person shall not be in violation of this Code section unless such person is rendered incapable of driving safely as a result of using a drug other than alcohol which such person is legally entitled to use.
- (c) Every person convicted of violating this Code section shall, upon a first or second conviction thereof, be guilty of a misdemeanor, upon a third conviction thereof, be guilty of a high and aggravated misdemeanor, and upon a fourth or subsequent conviction thereof, be guilty of a felony except as otherwise provided in paragraph (4) of this subsection and shall be punished as follows:

(1) First conviction with no conviction of and no plea of nolo contendere accepted to a charge of violating this Code section within the previous ten years, as measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted:

(A) A fine of not less than \$300.00 and not more than \$1,000.00, which fine shall not, except as provided in subsection (g) of this Code section, be subject to suspension, stay, or probation;

(B) A period of imprisonment of not fewer than ten days nor more than 12 months, which period of imprisonment may, at the sole discretion of the judge, be suspended, stayed, or probated, except that if the offender's alcohol concentration at the time of the offense was 0.08 grams or more, the judge may suspend, stay, or probate all but 24 hours of any term of imprisonment imposed under this subparagraph;

(C) Not fewer than 40 hours of community service, except that for a conviction for violation of subsection (k) of this Code section where the person's alcohol concentration at the time of the offense was less than 0.08 grams, the period of community service shall be not fewer than 20 hours;

(D) Completion of a DUI Alcohol or Drug Use Risk Reduction Program. The sponsor of any such program shall provide written notice of the department's approval of the program to the person upon enrollment in the program;

(E) A clinical evaluation as defined in Code Section 40-5-1 and, if recommended as a part of such evaluation, completion of a substance abuse treatment program as defined in Code Section 40-5-1; provided, however, that in the court's discretion such evaluation may be waived; and

(F) If the person is sentenced to a period of imprisonment for fewer than 12 months, a period of probation of 12 months less any days during which the person is actually incarcerated;

(2) For the second conviction within a ten-year period of time, as measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted:

(A) A fine of not less than \$600.00 and not more than \$1,000.00, which fine shall not, except as provided in subsection (g) of this Code section, be subject to suspension, stay, or probation;

(B) A period of imprisonment of not fewer than 90 days and not more than 12 months. The judge shall probate at least a portion of such term of imprisonment, in accordance with subparagraph (F) of this paragraph, thereby subjecting the offender to the provisions of Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 42 and to such other terms and conditions as the judge may impose; provided, however, that the offender shall be required to serve not fewer than 72 hours of actual incarceration;

(C) Not fewer than 30 days of community service;

(D) Completion of a DUI Alcohol or Drug Use Risk Reduction Program. The sponsor of any such program shall provide written notice of the department's approval of the program to the person upon enrollment in the program;

(E) A clinical evaluation as defined in Code Section 40-5-1 and, if recommended as a part of such evaluation, completion of a substance abuse treatment program as defined in Code Section 40-5-1; and

(F) A period of probation of 12 months less any days during which the person is actually incarcerated;

(3) For the third conviction within a ten-year period of time, as measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted:

(A) A fine of not less than \$1,000.00 and not more than \$5,000.00, which fine shall not, except as provided in subsection (g) of this Code section, be subject to suspension, stay, or probation;

(B) A mandatory period of imprisonment of not fewer than 120 days and not more than 12 months. The judge shall probate at least a portion of such term of imprisonment, in accordance with subparagraph (F) of this paragraph, thereby subjecting the offender to the provisions of Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 42 and to such other terms and conditions as the judge may impose; provided, however, that the offender shall be required to serve not fewer than 15 days of actual incarceration;

(C) Not fewer than 30 days of community service;

(D) Completion of a DUI Alcohol or Drug Use Risk Reduction Program. The sponsor of any such program shall provide written notice of the department's approval of the program to the person upon enrollment in the program;

(E) A clinical evaluation as defined in Code Section 40-5-1 and, if recommended as a part of such evaluation, completion of a substance abuse treatment program as defined in Code Section 40-5-1; and

(F) A period of probation of 12 months less any days during which the person is actually incarcerated;

(4) For the fourth or subsequent conviction within a ten-year period of time, as measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted:

(A) A fine of not less than \$1,000.00 and not more than \$5,000.00, which fine shall not, except as provided in subsection (g) of this Code section, be subject to suspension, stay, or probation;

(B) A period of imprisonment of not less than one year and not more than five years; provided, however, that the judge may suspend, stay, or probate all but 90 days of any term of imprisonment imposed under this paragraph. The judge shall probate at least a portion of such term of imprisonment, in accordance with subparagraph (F) of this paragraph, thereby subjecting the offender to the provisions of Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 42 and to such other terms and conditions as the judge may impose;

(C) Not fewer than 60 days of community service; provided, however, that if a defendant is sentenced to serve three years of actual imprisonment, the judge may suspend the community service;

(D) Completion of a DUI Alcohol or Drug Use Risk Reduction Program. The sponsor of any such program shall provide written notice of the department's approval of the program to the person upon enrollment in the program;

(E) A clinical evaluation as defined in Code Section 40-5-1 and, if recommended as a part of such evaluation, completion of a substance abuse treatment program as defined in Code Section 40-5-1; and

(F) A period of probation of five years less any days during which the person is actually imprisoned; provided, however, that if the ten-year period of time as measured in this paragraph commenced prior to July 1, 2008, then such fourth or subsequent conviction shall be a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature and punished as provided in paragraph (3) of this subsection;

(5) If a person has been convicted of violating subsection (k) of this Code section premised on a refusal to submit to required testing or where such person's alcohol concentration at the time of the offense was 0.08 grams or more, and such person is subsequently convicted of violating subsection (a) of this Code section, such person shall be punished by applying the applicable level or grade of conviction specified in this subsection such that the previous conviction of violating subsection (k) of this Code section shall be considered a previous conviction of violating subsection (a) of this Code section;

(6) For the purpose of imposing a sentence under this subsection, a plea of nolo contendere based on a violation of this Code section shall constitute a conviction; and

(7) For purposes of determining the number of prior convictions or pleas of nolo contendere pursuant to the felony provisions of paragraph (4) of this subsection, only those offenses for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted on or after July 1, 2008, shall be considered; provided, however, that nothing in this subsection shall be construed as limiting or modifying in any way administrative proceedings or sentence enhancement provisions under Georgia law, including, but not limited to, provisions relating to punishment of recidivist offenders pursuant to Title 17.

(d)(1) Notwithstanding the limits set forth in any municipal charter, any municipal court of any municipality shall be authorized to impose the misdemeanor or high and aggravated misdemeanor punishments provided for in this Code section upon a conviction of violating this Code section or upon a conviction of violating any ordinance adopting the provisions of this Code section.

(2) Notwithstanding any provision of this Code section to the contrary, any court authorized to hear misdemeanor or high and aggravated misdemeanor cases involving violations of this Code section shall be authorized to exercise the power to probate, suspend, or stay any sentence imposed. Such power shall, however, be limited to the conditions and limitations imposed by subsection (c) of this Code section.

(e) The foregoing limitations on punishment also shall apply when a defendant has been convicted of violating, by a single transaction, more than one of the four provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section.

(f) The provisions of Code Section 17-10-3, relating to general punishment for misdemeanors including traffic offenses, and the provisions of Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 42, relating to probation of first offenders, shall not apply to any person convicted of violating any provision of this Code section.

(g)(1) If the payment of the fine required under subsection (c) of this Code section will impose an economic hardship on the defendant, the judge, at his or her sole discretion, may order the defendant to pay such fine in installments and such order may be enforced through a contempt proceeding or a revocation of any probation otherwise authorized by this Code section.

(2) In the sole discretion of the judge, he or she may suspend up to one-half of the fine imposed under subsection (c) of this Code section conditioned upon the defendant's undergoing treatment in a substance abuse treatment program as defined in Code Section 40-5-1.

(h) For purposes of determining under this chapter prior convictions of or pleas of nolo contendere to violating this Code section, in addition to the offense prohibited by this Code section, a conviction of or plea of nolo contendere to any of the following offenses shall be deemed to be a violation of this Code section:

(1) Any federal law substantially conforming to or parallel with the offense covered under this Code section;

(2) Any local ordinance adopted pursuant to Article 14 of this chapter, which ordinance adopts the provisions of this Code section; or

(3) Any previously or currently existing law of this or any other state, which law was or is substantially conforming to or parallel with this Code section.

(i) A person shall not drive or be in actual physical control of any moving commercial motor vehicle while there is 0.04 percent or more by weight of alcohol in such person's blood, breath, or urine. Every person convicted of violating this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, in addition to any disqualification resulting under Article 7 of Chapter 5 of this title, the "Uniform Commercial Driver's

License Act,” shall be fined as provided in subsection (c) of this Code section.

(j)(1) The clerk of the court in which a person is convicted a second or subsequent time under subsection (c) of this Code section within five years, as measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted, shall cause to be published a notice of conviction for each such person convicted. Such notices of conviction shall be published in the manner of legal notices in the legal organ of the county in which such person resides or, in the case of nonresidents, in the legal organ of the county in which the person was convicted. Such notice of conviction shall be one column wide by two inches long and shall contain the photograph taken by the arresting law enforcement agency at the time of arrest, the name of the convicted person, the city, county, and zip code of the convicted person’s residential address, and the date, time, place of arrest, and disposition of the case and shall be published once in the legal organ of the appropriate county in the second week following such conviction or as soon thereafter as publication may be made.

(2) The convicted person for which a notice of conviction is published pursuant to this subsection shall be assessed \$25.00 for the cost of publication of such notice and such assessment shall be imposed at the time of conviction in addition to any other fine imposed pursuant to this Code section.

(3) The clerk of the court, the publisher of any legal organ which publishes a notice of conviction, and any other person involved in the publication of an erroneous notice of conviction shall be immune from civil or criminal liability for such erroneous publication, provided such publication was made in good faith.

(k)(1) A person under the age of 21 shall not drive or be in actual physical control of any moving vehicle while the person’s alcohol concentration is 0.02 grams or more at any time within three hours after such driving or being in physical control from alcohol consumed before such driving or being in actual physical control ended.

(2) Every person convicted of violating this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor for the first and second convictions and upon a third or subsequent conviction thereof be guilty of a high and aggravated misdemeanor and shall be punished and fined as provided in subsection (c) of this Code section, provided that any term of imprisonment served shall be subject to the provisions of Code Section 17-10-3.1, and any period of community service imposed on such person shall be required to be completed within 60 days of the date of sentencing.

(3) No plea of nolo contendere shall be accepted for any person under the age of 21 charged with a violation of this Code section.

(l) A person who violates this Code section while transporting in a motor vehicle a child under the age of 14 years is guilty of the separate offense of endangering a child by driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The offense of endangering a child by driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs shall not be merged with the offense of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs for the purposes of prosecution and sentencing. An offender who is convicted of a violation of this subsection shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of subsection (d) of Code Section 16-12-1, relating to the offense of contributing to the delinquency, unruliness, or deprivation of a child.