

Article 2B.

Special Identification Cards for Nonoperators.

§ 20-37.7. Special identification card.

(a) Eligibility. – A person who is a resident of this State is eligible for a special identification card.

(b) Application. – To obtain a special identification card from the Division, a person must complete the application form used to obtain a drivers license.

(b1) Search National Sex Offender Public Registry. – The Division shall not issue a special identification card to an applicant who has resided in this State for less than 12 months until the Division has searched the National Sex Offender Public Registry to determine if the person is currently registered as a sex offender in another state. The following applies in this subsection:

- (1) If the Division finds that the person is currently registered as a sex offender in another state, the Division shall not issue a special identification card to the person until the person submits proof of registration pursuant to Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes issued by the sheriff of the county where the person resides.
- (2) If the person does not appear on the National Sex Offender Public Registry, the Division shall issue a special identification card but shall require the person to sign an affidavit acknowledging that the person has been notified that if the person is a sex offender, then the person is required to register pursuant to Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
- (3) If the Division is unable to access all states' information contained in the National Sex Offender Public Registry, but the person is otherwise qualified to obtain a special identification card, then the Division shall issue the card but shall first require the person to sign an affidavit stating that: (i) the person does not appear on the National Sex Offender Public Registry and (ii) acknowledging that the person has been notified that if the person is a sex offender, then the person is required to register pursuant to Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes. The Division shall search the National Sex Offender Public Registry for the person within a reasonable time after access to the Registry is restored. If the person does appear in the National Sex Offender Public Registry, the person is in violation of G.S. 20-37.8, and the Division shall promptly notify the sheriff of the county where the person resides of the offense.
- (4) Any person denied a special identification card by the Division pursuant to this subsection has a right to file a petition within 30 days thereafter for a hearing in the matter in the superior court of the county where the person resides, or to petition the resident judge of the district or judge holding the court of that district, or special or emergency judge holding a court in the district, and the court or judge is hereby vested with jurisdiction. The court or judge shall set the matter for hearing upon 30 days' written notice to the Division. At the hearing, the court or judge shall take testimony and examine the facts of the case and shall determine whether the petitioner is entitled to a special identification card under this subsection and whether the petitioner is in violation of G.S. 20-37.8.

(c) Format. – A special identification card shall include a color photograph of the special identification card holder and shall be similar in size, shape, and design to a drivers license, but shall clearly state that it does not entitle the person to whom it is issued to operate a motor vehicle.

A special identification card issued to an applicant must have the same background color that a drivers license issued to the applicant would have.

(d) Expiration and Fee. – A special identification card issued to a person for the first time under this section expires when a drivers license issued on the same day to that person would expire. A special identification card renewed under this section expires when a drivers license renewed by the card holder on the same day would expire. The Division shall offer renewal of a special identification card in person and online on the Division's website.

The fee for a special identification card is the same as the fee set in G.S. 20-14 for a duplicate license. The fee does not apply to a special identification card issued to a resident of this State as follows:

- (1) The applicant is legally blind.
- (2) The applicant is at least 17 years old.
- (3) The applicant has been issued a drivers license but the drivers license is cancelled under G.S. 20-15, in accordance with G.S. 20-9(e) and (g), as a result of a physical or mental disability or disease.
- (4) The applicant is homeless. To obtain a special identification card without paying a fee, a homeless person must present a letter to the Division from the director of a facility that provides care or shelter to homeless persons verifying that the person is homeless.
- (5), (6) Repealed by Session Laws 2018-144, s. 1.3(a), effective December 19, 2018.
- (7) The applicant has a developmental disability. To obtain a special identification card without paying a fee pursuant to this subdivision, an applicant must present a letter from his or her primary care provider certifying that the applicant has a developmental disability. For purposes of this subdivision, the term "developmental disability" has the same meaning as in G.S. 122C-3.

(d1) For a person who has a physician's letter certifying that a severe disability causes the person to be homebound, the Division shall adopt rules allowing for application for or renewal of a special photo identification card under this section by means other than a personal appearance.

(d2) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, for a person whose valid drivers license, permit, or endorsement, is required to be seized or surrendered due to cancellation, disqualification, suspension, or revocation under applicable State law, the Division shall issue a special identification card to that person without application, if eligible to receive a special identification card, upon receipt by the Division of the seized or surrendered document. The Division shall issue and mail, via first-class mail to that person's address on file, a special identification card pursuant to this subsection at no charge.

(e) Offense. – Any fraud or misrepresentation in the application for or use of a special identification card issued under this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(f) Records. – The Division shall maintain a record of all recipients of a special identification card.

(g) No State Liability. – The fact of issuance of a special identification card pursuant to this section shall not place upon the State of North Carolina or any agency thereof any liability for the misuse thereof and the acceptance thereof as valid identification is a matter left entirely to the discretion of any person to whom such card is presented.

(h) Advertising. – The Division may utilize the various communications media throughout the State to inform North Carolina residents of the provisions of this section. (1973, c. 438, s. 1; 1975, c. 716, s. 5; 1979, c. 469, c. 667, s. 30; 1981, c. 673, ss. 1, 2; c. 690, s. 12; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1257, s. 3; 1983, c. 443, s. 2; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1062, s. 7; 1985, c. 141, s. 5; 1991, c. 689, s. 328; 1993, c. 368, s. 3; c. 490, ss. 1, 2; c. 539, s. 325; c. 553, s. 77; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 750, s. 2; 2006-247, s. 19(d); 2009-493, s. 3;

2013-233, ss. 1, 2; 2013-381, s. 3.1; 2016-80, s. 1; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-142, s. 3(b); 2018-144, s. 1.3(a); 2020-17, s. 9; 2025-25, s. 29(5).)