

“Failure to Pay Forfeiture” Suspensions

Unpaid traffic tickets that suspend your driver’s license

Around 50% of all driver’s license suspensions in Wisconsin are for failure to pay a traffic forfeiture. If you find yourself in this situation, **you have options**, even if you cannot afford to pay the past-due ticket in full.

Address Your Ticket to Resolve Your Suspension

Pay the ticket

The quickest way to take care of a fine is to pay immediately. You can pay the court directly in person or on their website.

Wait out the suspension

Check the time period of your suspension. A court can suspend your driver’s license for a year. If it expires in just a few months, you may want to wait until the suspension period is over. After the suspension is over, you will still owe the fine, but you can get your license back.

Request a payment plan

If you can’t pay your fines all at once, you can ask a judge to reduce the fine or ask the judge to order an alternative payment plan. This means that you pay a portion of your fine each month. You can only ask for one payment plan for each fine. If you receive a payment plan from the court and do not keep up on payments, the court can suspend your license again.

Request community service

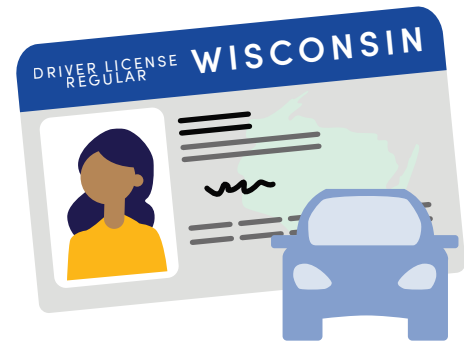
If you cannot pay the fine, you can ask to do community service instead of paying. The judge must approve your community service request. Once your request is approved, your suspension for failure to pay fines ends and you are eligible to get your license back.

Reopen the case

You ask the judge to reopen a case if you are trying to get the citation amount lowered or thrown out (dismissed). You have to file a motion in court to get your case reopened. You should get legal advice before filing a motion.

Still have questions?

You may benefit from talking to an attorney. We host monthly clinics in Jefferson and Racine County, but no matter which county you live in, we can help connect you to the resources you need.



Which Option is Right for Me?

No one knows your financial situation better than you. As you’re considering your options, keep the following in mind:

- Even if you wait out the full year-long license suspension, that does not eliminate your obligation to pay. The court may refer that debt to the State Debt Collection Agency (SDC). In an attempt to collect the debt, SDC may garnish your wages, intercept your state taxes, or even levy your bank account.
- If you are experiencing poverty, the court is required to grant certain protections. If you cannot afford to pay your ticket in full because of poverty, the court is required to give you a chance to pay in “affordable” installments (as low as \$20–\$25 a month). The court may ask you a series of questions to determine your eligibility and the appropriate monthly payments.
- After you’re approved for a payment plan, the court should lift your suspension right away. If you miss your monthly payments, the court can suspend your license again and cancel your payment arrangements. The court may not be willing to give you a second chance at a payment plan.
- If you are interested in community service, be aware that the court may not lift your suspension until after all of your assigned hours are completed. Keep that in mind as your picking your community service site!