

# Curbing Teen Driver Crashes

An In-Depth Look at State Initiatives

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## An In-Depth Look at State Initiatives

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## Introduction

**What to do about teens?** That's an issue every State Highway Safety Office (SHSO) must address in its quest to move toward zero fatalities. **Car crashes are the number one cause of injury and death for U.S. teens 15-20 years of age**, accounting for more than one in three fatalities in this age group (CDC , 2010). While crash rates are highest for 16-year-old drivers – the initial licensing (unsupervised driving) age in 34 states – drivers under the age of 20 have crash rates nearly four times higher than older drivers (Kweon and Kockelmann, as cited in Lerner et al., 2010). These statistics are particularly troubling since teens represent approximately 15% of the U.S. population, but as drivers in crashes they account for as much as 30% (approximately \$26 billion) of the total cost of motor vehicle injuries nationwide (Oleen & Teigen, 2011; CDC, 2010).

There is some good news – according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) fatalities involving teen drivers have declined over the past decade from 8,224 in 2000 to 5,021 in 2010 (the latest year for which data are available). (It should be noted, however, that preliminary state data for the first six months of 2011 show that teen driver fatalities are tracking slightly upward [GHSA, 2012].) Stronger licensing laws – in particular, graduated driver licensing (GDL) – coupled with education and enforcement initiatives focused on novice drivers are helping not only to raise awareness among key audiences (i.e., teens, parents, law enforcement officials, legislators), but reduce risk.







## Introduction

While states are working to enhance GDL laws, develop and implement peer and parental outreach programs, and leverage driver education and training, more work remains to be done to ensure that teens survive their most dangerous driving years. This report, a follow-up to the 2010 GHSA publication, *Protecting Teen Drivers: A Guidebook for State Highway Safety Offices*, takes a more in-depth look at what states are doing to address teen driver safety in six key areas:

- 1 Strengthening GDL laws to ensure states have essential elements that address crash risk and skill building**
- 2 Ensuring understanding and enforcement of GDL laws by law enforcement officials**
- 3 Engaging parents in understanding, supporting and enforcing GDL laws**
- 4 Strengthening driver education and training**
- 5 Engaging teens in understanding and addressing driving risks**
- 6 Garnering consistent media coverage of teen driving**

The programs and initiatives detailed in this publication were identified through a survey of State Highway Safety Offices (SHSO) conducted by GHSA in August 2011. Additionally, an expert panel was convened to share their insights regarding new, cutting edge and/or exemplary activities that are showing or expected to show through data analysis and/or peer reviewed research promising results. (Some of the activities were evaluated through an analysis of crash data, while others have or are being evaluated through the peer review process). Telephone interviews were also conducted with a number of federal and state highway safety and licensing officials, teen driver and traffic safety advocates, academicians, and media professionals to glean their insights on the issues addressed in this report.

This document is designed to help state highway safety officials, safety advocates and others working in the teen driving arena move the needle in the right direction by providing examples that are yielding promising results. However, not all of the programs, activities and/or initiatives discussed in the following pages will work for all states or organizations. Like a cookbook that contains many recipes, what's detailed in this publication may or may not appeal to the cook and/or his pallet. It's up to each state to determine what will work best based on its own unique *ingredients* and *flavors* or resources and capabilities. As an aid to states, key take-aways are also identified for each section and contact information is provided for the specific programs/initiatives.

# 1

## Strengthening GDL Laws

**Research clearly shows that Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) systems are associated with crash reductions ranging from 20 to 40%.**

### An Overview

Research clearly shows that Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) systems are associated with crash reductions ranging from 20 to 40% (Shope as cited in Williams, 2011). While some form of GDL is in place in all 50 states today, the U.S., unlike its European counterparts, wasn't quick to adopt the three-stage licensing system that includes a learner or supervised practice driving phase, an intermediate stage that allows for unsupervised driving but includes restrictions to address risk, and a full licensure stage where all provisions are lifted. It wasn't until the mid-1990s, when the fatal crash rates for 16 and 17-year-olds were 17 and 13 per 100 million miles, respectively (as compared to an overall rate of three in 100 million miles), that states began to adopt GDL in an attempt to lower the disparate fatal crash rate among teens (Williams, 2011).

Why does GDL work? Teens are over-represented in crashes because they lack both the judgment that comes with maturity and the skills that come with experience. GDL programs delay full licensure, while allowing new drivers to gradually gain experience over time in lower-risk situations (IIHS, 2010). A 2006 NHTSA-supported study conducted by Johns Hopkins University found that states with comprehensive GDL programs experienced a 20% drop in fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds (Compton & Ellison-Potter, 2008). NHTSA defines a comprehensive GDL program as one that includes at least five of the following components (Compton et al., 2008):

- Minimum age of 15 ½ for obtaining a learner's permit
- Minimum waiting period after obtaining a learner's permit of at least three months before applying for an intermediate license
- Minimum of 30 hours of supervised practice driving
- Minimum age of 16 ½ for obtaining an intermediate license
- Nighttime driving restriction during intermediate stage
- Passenger restriction during intermediate stage
- Minimum age of 17 for full licensure

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) have also defined optimal GDL systems. Both organizations call for the components outlined above, but IIHS and Advocates differ with NHTSA on the most appropriate age for full licensure (no earlier than 18). Advocates call for a longer permit holding period (minimum of 6 months), and both groups provide more guidance to states concerning nighttime driving (9 or 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.) and passenger restrictions (no more than one teen).

## Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success

- ✓ Establish a formal coalition or task force led by a dynamic **Champion** and a well-organized **Administrator** (they should not be the same person).
- ✓ Use state-specific crash data and real stories involving local teens, their passengers and others to make the issue real.
- ✓ Survey teens and parents to gauge their support for GDL and key provisions (i.e., passenger and nighttime driving restrictions, licensing age) and share this data with key stakeholders.
- ✓ Determine the safety **must haves** as well as what is most likely to garner legislative approval and how (i.e., one bill or a package).
- ✓ Keep the media informed and be proactive by regularly releasing updates and information.



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## Strengthening Graduated Driver License Laws

**Nationwide surveys of parents reveal strong support for raising licensing ages, with more than half indicating that the minimum licensing age should be 17 or older.**

While no state has an *optimal* GDL law as defined by these entities, gains have been made in addressing licensing age, permit and intermediate-stage holding periods, minimum practice driving hours, and passenger and nighttime driving restrictions, as well as the use of cell phones and other electronic devices. However, researchers suggest that states will reap the greatest gains by either raising the age at which teens may obtain a license or through GDL policy changes. When it comes to the latter, requiring novice drivers to hold their permit for a longer period of time (most states currently require a minimum holding period of at least six months) would provide additional opportunity for them to log more supervised miles and be exposed to more demanding driving situations, both critical for teens preparing to go it alone (Williams, 2011). This change not only provides opportunity for increased practice, but it also pushes full licensure back so that teens gain unrestricted privileges at a later age.

Research also shows that earlier nighttime driving (optimally starting at 9 p.m.) and more stringent passenger restrictions (no passengers for beginning solo drivers) are effective and should be adopted. Nationwide surveys of parents reveal strong support for raising licensing ages, with more than half indicating that the minimum licensing age should be 17 or older. Additionally, most parents think night driving restrictions should begin at 10 p.m. or earlier and most favor limiting teen passengers to one or none (IIHS, 2010). Despite these findings, state laws have been slow to change.

That's not to say that states aren't trying to improve their GDL laws. According to the 2011 GHSA survey of SHSOs, 61% of states indicated that efforts were underway to strengthen key components of their GDL laws. Attempts to pass legislation banning the use of cell phones and texting are high on the list, along with earlier nighttime driving and tighter passenger restrictions, mandatory seat belt use, and additional supervised practice driving hours during the permit phase. These findings are in sync with the National Conference of State Legislatures, which reported that as many as 40 states considered teen driving/GDL enhancement bills in 2011 (Oleen & Teigen, 2011).

Strengthening GDL laws is important for states seeking to make gains not only in teen driver safety, but also in overall highway safety. When teens crash they don't just injure or kill themselves and their peers, but they also impact other roadway users. As noted earlier, 5,021 people were killed in crashes involving young drivers (ages 15-20) in 2010 (NHTSA). A closer look reveals that of that number, 1,963 (or 39%) were the teen drivers, while the remaining 61% of the victims were either the teen drivers' passengers (1,326) or pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles (1,732) (NHTSA, 2012). According to a 2007 report published by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, states with the most restrictive GDL laws are seeing reductions of 38% and 40%, respectively, in fatal and injury crashes involving 16-year-old drivers (Baker, Chen & Li, 2007).

### Helping States Take a Strategic Approach

Researchers suggest that gains are indeed possible if states take a strategic approach to the problem. In an effort to help states reduce teen deaths and injuries, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is partnering with the Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) to assess the utility of the GDL Planning Guide. The Guide, developed by CDC and partners, is a tool to assist states in assessing their teen driver licensing systems and developing an action plan to improve teen driver safety based on evidenced-based strategies, such as Graduated Driver Licensing systems. As part of the pilot, states can request technical assistance and support as action plans are implemented. States are identifying opportunities where they can make gains in enhancing their GDL systems by working toward implementing *proven* policy provisions, such as limiting nighttime driving and the number of teen passengers. Work has been completed or is currently underway in Iowa, New Hampshire, Michigan, North Dakota and South Dakota.

HSRC initially assists states by hosting a workshop to engage stakeholders in not only gaining a better understanding of how and why GDL works, but also how they can leverage the expertise and resources in the room to address teen driver safety. Presentations cover national and state-specific data regarding injury burden and risk, and evidence-based teen driver licensing practices. Following a process outlined in the GDL Planning Guide (which is currently in draft form), state participants discuss strategies that are evidenced-based and feasible for their state and develop an action plan for enhancing their GDL system. States develop their plans and strategies, with HSRC providing technical assistance (i.e., state-specific data, media support) when requested by the state to help them move the needle in the right direction to reduce deaths and injuries among teen drivers.

The HSRC typically provides assistance in conducting a statewide survey of parents to gauge what they think about teen driving laws. Often the findings reveal misperceptions on the part of state partners (or stakeholders) about what parents want: they do look to the law for guidance, and by and large are very supportive of GDL restrictions. Surveys also show that rural parents are no different than urban parents when it comes supporting teen safe driving measures. State stakeholders then share this data with a variety of partners and the press to enhance understanding of parent perceptions regarding teen driving practices and their support of specific teen licensing provisions.

After observing and assisting several states as they carry out their action plans, CDC and HSRC officials leading the project point not only to the need for individual state data, but also to the importance of state leadership in addressing the problem. Leaders engaged in this issue have the passion and commitment to bring stakeholders together, and to turn the data into something tangible. (This individual is not likely to be the same person who provides administrative support to the state partners – an-

**Surveys show that rural parents are no different than urban parents when it comes supporting teen safe driving measures.**

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**Enlisting the help of local individuals who were personally impacted by a teen driving crash will make for a more compelling understanding of the issue.**

## Strengthening Graduated Driver License Laws

other critical and necessary function.) Additionally, enlisting the help of local individuals who were personally impacted by a teen driving crash (i.e., a parent who lost a teen, a teen who was permanently injured while driving or riding with a novice driver) will make for a more compelling understanding of the issue.

Determining “must haves” is also essential. For example, state partners may want an earlier night-time driving restriction, a one-passenger limit and an older permit age. They should decide what will initially make the *biggest* difference, particularly if one of these provisions is highly controversial.

HSRC and CDC are in the process of evaluating the utility of the GDL Planning Guide as well as implementation practices. These findings will be published following completion of the pilot project and will include lessons learned.

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### A Tougher GDL Law in the Heartland ▶

The CDC/HSRC project is modeled after work done in Kansas between 2007 and 2009. The highly rural state, which had one of the weakest GDL laws in the nation, now requires a 12-month permit holding period that includes logging practice driving hours, and restricts 16-year-old intermediate license holders from driving between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. (Fifteen-year-olds holding this license may only drive between home or school and to and from work with adult supervision and must log additional supervised practice driving hours, including 10 at night.) The law, which took effective on January 1, 2010, also prohibits intermediate license holders from transporting more than one non-family member under the age of 18, bans the use of all wireless communications devices, and restricts teens from advancing from one stage of the GDL to the next if they don't have a clean driving record for at least six months (first and second offenses carry a 30- and 90-day license suspension, respectively; a third offense carries a one-year license suspension).

Key to the success of the initiative was the formation of a strong coalition (Kansas Teenage Driver Safety Project), led by a highly effective coordinator skilled in dealing with the legislature and the press; parent and teen surveys to gauge awareness and acceptance of protective restrictions that are characteristic of GDL systems; and state-specific crash data. Additionally, while Kansas allows teens to obtain a farm and instruction permit at age 14, the Coalition recognized that taking on this issue could

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18/2008

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## Strengthening Graduated Driver License Laws

**An evaluation of 2010 and 2011 crash data show that teen involvement has fallen to 19.6% and 18.5%, respectively, statewide.**

put their entire GDL agenda in jeopardy and opted instead to take it off the table. Instead, they focused on the lack of seat belt use and the proliferation in the use of electronic wireless devices by teens to garner passage of the state's stronger GDL law.

Is the law having an impact? According to SHSO officials, teens account for 8% of the licensed drivers in Kansas, but prior to enactment of the new and improved GDL were involved in 22.2% of crashes, 16.9% of which were fatal. An evaluation of 2010 and 2011 (data for 2011 is preliminary) crash data show that teen involvement has fallen to 19.6% and 18.5%, respectively, statewide. The percentage of fatal teen crashes fell as well to 14.7% (2010) and 11.9% (2011), which suggests that the numbers are moving in the right direction (Kansas Department of Transportation, 2012).

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### The Media Prompts Action in Illinois

Is Kansas' experience unique? No, other states have leveraged these and other tactics to bolster their GDL laws. In Illinois, for example, a high profile champion (the Secretary of State), spurred on by a year-long teen driving series in the *Chicago Tribune*, chaired a non-partisan task force that partnered with two highly respected, pro-traffic safety legislators to gain passage of a GDL bill that has helped cut the number of teens killed in motor vehicle crashes from a high of 174 in 2002 to 81 in 2011 (Crash Information Section, 2012). The Teen Driver Safety Task Force held three, highly publicized and well-covered hearings across the state to generate interest in teen driver safety. In January 2007, the Task Force issued a final report that included 10 recommendations that were incorporated into a comprehensive bill that was introduced, overwhelmingly passed (115-1) and signed into law in only eight months.

While not all of the Task Force's recommendations were enacted, Illinois' stronger GDL law, which took effect on January 1, 2008 (just 12 months after the group issued its report), now includes: a longer permit holding period (expanded from three to nine months); an earlier curfew for intermediate license holders (10 and 11 p.m., respectively, on weekdays and weekends rather than 11 p.m. and 12 a.m.); a longer restriction period (12 rather than six months) for transporting just one passenger under the age of 20 during the intermediate license phase; the ability to ticket passengers between 15 and 19 years of age for violating the passenger restriction (the offense carries a minimum fine of \$75); and the requirement that permit and intermediate license holders maintain a conviction-free driving record for at

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least nine and six months, respectively, before advancing to the next stage of licensure.

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### The Empire State Unites Under One Bill

In New York, troubling crash statistics involving young drivers caught the attention of a majority of policy makers. There were several bills in both the State Senate and Assembly that touched on possible changes to the GDL law. However, in mid-2009 a concerted effort was made on behalf of the Governor, legislative leaders and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to unify these efforts into one plan.

Using information and research provided by the DMV, a bill was drafted that followed the model GDL programs of IIHS, AAA and NHTSA. With limited amendments and concessions, the bill moved relatively quickly through both legislative bodies and was signed into law in August 2009. SHSO officials note, however, that the highest profile portion of the bill wasn't the stronger GDL provisions, but an amendment which created a secondary ban for all drivers on texting or using any portable electronic devices while driving. The latter took effect on November 1, 2009, while the GDL enhancements became effective on February 22, 2010.

**Between 2003 and 2010, New York State experienced a 49.3% reduction in personal injury and fatal crashes where a young driver (16-17 years of age) was involved.**

What changes to the state's GDL law were approved? A stronger passenger restriction (intermediate or *junior* license holders may transport only one rather than two non-family members under the age of 21 when not accompanied by a parent or guardian), elimination of the *limited use* junior license (which allowed teens on a permit to drive unsupervised to and from school and work), a longer minimum permit holding period (six rather than three months), and an increase in the number of supervised practice driving hours a permit holder must complete (changed from 20 to 50, with 15 after sunset) before scheduling a road test. Additionally, a provision was made to allow intermediate license holders who complete six hours of behind the wheel instruction to count those hours towards the supervised practice driving requirement, a concession that SHSO officials hope will prompt increased enrollment in driver education and training programs. While New York SHSO officials indicate that, due to a data lag they are not yet able to show the impact the latest GDL changes have had on teen-related crashes, they do know that between 2003 and 2010, the State experienced a 49.3% reduction in personal injury and fatal crashes where a young driver (16-17 years of age) was involved. The GDL program has

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also generated reductions of 33.3% and 22.6%, respectively, in crashes involving 18- and 19-year-olds.

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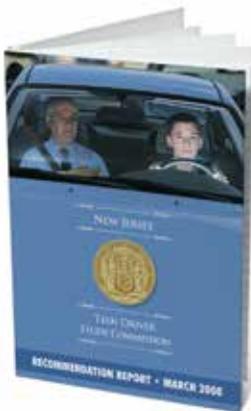
**The Commission's report, which has been lauded nationally as a blueprint for helping states address teen driver safety, segments the recommendations into seven key areas.**

### NJ Teen Driver Study Commission Gets Results

In New Jersey, the Governor's willingness to sign a bill calling for the establishment of a bi-partisan Teen Driver Study Commission prompted a flurry of activity, unprecedented media interest in teen driver safety (precipitated by the chief executive nearly dying in a car crash), and the eventual passage of two GDL enhancement bills, one of which was landmark legislation. The Commission, which was led by the Director of the SHSO, worked over the course of five months and 29 days to deliver (ahead of schedule) a comprehensive report that included 47 recommendations – 14 of which were deemed essential – for addressing teen driver safety in the State (NJ Teen Driver Study Commission, 2008). The Commission's report, which has been lauded nationally as a blueprint for helping States address teen driver safety, segments the recommendations into seven key areas. Additionally, each of the recommendations includes a champion— an individual or organization tasked with ensuring that the recommendation is implemented.

Throughout the Commission's tenure, the SHSO kept the media informed of the entity's work, advising them about key findings from meetings convened with expert panels. SHSO included a Commission section on its website, published a New Jersey-specific teen driving white paper, and extended personal invitations to key media outlets to cover three public hearings held in the Northern, Central and Southern regions of the state. This focus on courting the press resulted in the Commission's final report receiving favorable coverage in more than 90% of the print and broadcast media outlets serving the state (including Pennsylvania and New York press).

The media coverage created a public groundswell that prompted the Legislature, in partnership with the Governor's office, to introduce four bills, two of which were signed into law in April 2009 and took effect 13 months later. One of the bills, which changed the name of the intermediate license phase from *provisional* to *probationary*, expanded by one hour (11 p.m. rather than 12 a.m.) the curfew for intermediate license holders. Additionally, it allowed a teen under 21 holding an intermediate or probationary license to transport just one passenger (regardless of family affiliation) unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Under New Jersey's prior GDL passenger restriction, teens could transport only one non-family member and as many family members as there were seat belts in the vehicle (a law police found nearly impossible to enforce).



NJ Teen Driver Study Commission, 2008

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**The second bill requires teens under 21 holding a permit or probationary license to display a decal on the front and rear license plate of a vehicle when they're behind the wheel.**

The second bill – dubbed Kyleigh's Law in honor of a 16-year-old high school honor student who died in a teen driving crash involving an intermediate license holder who was in violation of the GDL passenger restriction – requires teens under 21 holding a permit or probationary license to display a decal on the front and rear license plate of a vehicle when they're behind the wheel. The bill, which was championed by Kyleigh's mother and a core group of teens as well as the State Traffic Officers Association, unanimously passed both houses. New Jersey is the first state in the nation to pass an identifier law. While the requirement has not been without controversy, the law (discussed in greater detail in the law enforcement section of this report on page 22) remains in effect today.

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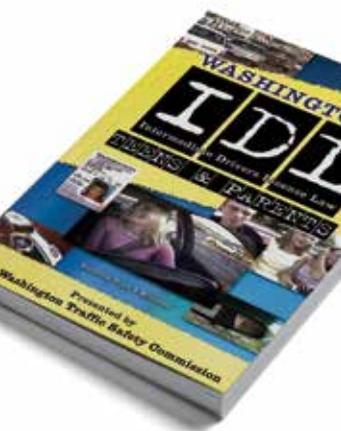
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### Seeking Reform Through One Bill or a Package

While the states described earlier opted to include all of their proposed GDL enhancements in one bill, New Jersey, unlike the states described previously, elected to go with a package of bills rather than just one. While two of the New Jersey bills managed to gain Legislative approval, one was held and the other failed to gain passage in the Senate. What's the best strategy? It's hard to say. But if a Coalition does its homework and gauges the Legislature's appetite, it may be able to determine what is most palatable – passing one large GDL enhancement bill, a package of bills, or perhaps a traffic safety bill, that like New York, *quietly* included GDL enhancements.

Had New Jersey tried to bundle the provisions outlined in the failed bill with the other requirements, the state might not have gotten any GDL enhancements at all. Safety advocates in Washington State took that approach when they tried to enhance their Intermediate Driver Licensing, or IDL (the State's GDL nomenclature) in 2006. While the state's original GDL law took effect in 2001 and was credited with helping to reduce collisions among 16- and 17-year-olds by 54% and 16.5%, respectively, advocates knew that enhancements to the law were still warranted since it didn't reflect the model law. From the minute the bill was passed and signed into law, said SHSO officials, there was a "push to go back and do more."

A bill that included 14 provisions was introduced, but it was complicated and included a large fiscal note that stymied support and action. Then, in the mid-2000s, an Intermediate Driver Licensing Advisory Group was formed. This time the advocates, under the direction of a seasoned legislative liaison, went on the road meeting with legislators who had previously sponsored bills or expressed an interest in teen driving. With their input, the Advisory Group decided to focus on what they could do to save lives



Washington State's  
Intermediate Driver License  
Law (IDL) Teens & Parents

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and settled on two GDL enhancements – a more stringent passenger restriction and an earlier curfew.

Despite narrowing their focus, the initiative failed to gain traction. What was missing? According to SHSO officials, compelling passenger data, which the state wasn't tracking, along with a failure to leverage national research data that clearly explained why passengers and late night driving were so risky for teens. The group eventually developed a simple, one-page document that addressed the risk nighttime driving and passengers pose for Washington teens as well as the positive impact strengthening the current GDL provisions could have on reducing this risk. However, advocates point to a lack of a champion who would carry the bill in the legislature as the most significant stumbling block.

It is important to note that a provision banning GDL holders from using hand-held or hands-free wireless devices was included in a comprehensive cell phone/texting law that took effective in Washington in June 2010. As of the publication of this report, however, no other GDL-related bills have been introduced or are on the horizon in the state. For now, safety officials are focusing on helping parents understand and better enforce the provisions of the current law, which includes a 1 to 5 a.m. curfew and a two-step restriction on passengers (for the first six months of intermediate licensure teens may not transport any passengers under 20 years of age with the exception of immediate family members; during the second six months, they may transport up to three passengers under 20 years of age with the same family exception).

Finally, many states, including Washington, are wrestling with whether it makes more sense to strengthen their existing GDL provisions which apply only to new drivers under 18 years of age or try to increase GDL requirements so that they include older teens. While provisions addressing drivers under 21 is the norm in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, only three states – New Jersey, Maryland and Maine – currently require novice drivers 18 and older to adhere to the same GDL requirements (or a modified version) as their younger counterparts. Some researchers and safety advocates argue that the GDL cut-off age encourages teens to wait until they turn 18 to secure a driver's license, thereby allowing them to opt out of a system that is proven to protect them. New national research suggests that a majority of parents of teen drivers do support longer permit holding periods as well as older permit and licensure ages (Williams, 2011). Whether this data prompts states to act remains to be seen.

**New national research suggests that a majority of parents of teen drivers do support longer permit holding periods as well as older permit and licensure ages.**

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Washington State's comprehensive cellphone/texting law includes a provision banning GDL holders from using hand-held or hands-free devices.

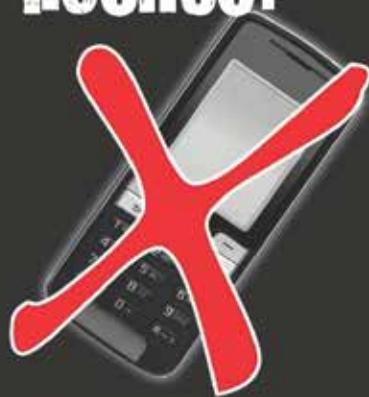


# Under 18?

**No phone while driving.  
You can lose your license.**

- No Hands Free
- No Texting
- No Joke

A driver isn't fully licensed until age 18. Under Washington law a person under 18 has an intermediate driver's license (IDL). With an IDL, cell phone use is prohibited. See RCW 46.20.075.



More info: Washington Traffic Safety Commission in Olympia at 360-753-6197 • [www.wtsc.wa.gov](http://www.wtsc.wa.gov)

# 2

## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

### An Overview

Graduated Driver Licensing is complicated. While teens typically know at what age they may enter a state's GDL system and move from one phase to the next, it's common for them to be misinformed about the restrictions and other provisions. If teens – the audience directly impacted by GDL – and often their parents as well (who offer a first line of enforcement/reinforcement within the home) don't fully understand the law, imagine the challenge for police officers.

**Police officials must be fully aware of the risks for teens and how graduated driver licensing works to address that risk.**

Ensuring that law enforcement officials understand how and why GDL works is essential. But simply providing training that addresses the nuts and bolts of the law isn't enough. Police officials must be fully aware of the risks for teens and how graduated driver licensing works to address that risk. This training must be directed not only at patrol officers, but a police agency's leadership as well. Ensuring that the top police official recognizes the impact a strong and well-enforced GDL law can have on reducing teen crash risk in the community is essential. Since *traffic enforcement* is after all *law enforcement*, the chief must endorse and demand consistent GDL enforcement.

Stopping and citing a teen for a GDL violation sends a strong message to a novice driver, his parents and others in the community that police take the law seriously. That stop also gives the officer the opportunity to reinforce the provision the GDL holder is being cited for (i.e., nighttime driving or passenger violation, riding unrestrained, texting) and why the teen is not only putting him or herself at risk, but others who may be in his or her car and on the road. And while teens, as well as parents, may view strong GDL enforcement as excessive, police officials should regularly monitor and report through local media and municipal channels why teens are being stopped and the impact these violations are having not only on their safety (i.e., fewer crashes, reductions in speeding, etc.), but also on the safety of all roadway users.

In the event an officer does stop a teen for a passenger or curfew violation, a department must have a standard operating procedure in place addressing this situation. Since driving late at night and/or with multiple passengers in the car is extremely risky for a novice driver, a police officer shouldn't allow the licensee (or his or her passengers), once ticketed, to get back on the road. If a department, however, hasn't established clear protocols for dealing with this situation, a police officer may elect not to make a GDL stop. For that reason, knowing what to do with the teen driver, along with the teen's passengers and vehicle, is essential.

## Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success

- ✓ Use peer-to-peer training initiatives to educate police officials (including the top brass) about the risks for teens and how GDL works to address those risks.
- ✓ Establish formal SOPs for handling teens cited for passenger and nighttime driving violations.
- ✓ Recognize that identifying GDL holders presents a significant challenge for law enforcement and consider piloting a *voluntary* decal program to build awareness and garner parental/public support for a statewide mandate.

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## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

**While the GDL law is complex, police are also faced with the challenge of trying to identify who is in fact driving with a permit or intermediate license.**

While the GDL law is complex, police are also faced with the challenge of trying to identify who is in fact driving with a permit or intermediate license. Police officials in the U.S. cite being able to identify GDL holders as one of the most vexing problems associated with the law. While a driver may look young, operate a vehicle favored by teens or be leaving an area (i.e., high school parking lot, mall, movie theater, etc.) frequented by young people, this doesn't guarantee that the driver is a GDL holder. In some states, such as Nevada, this inability to determine a driver's age and licensing status impacts whether a GDL violation is treated as a primary or secondary offense. And as research clearly shows, compliance rates associated with *secondary* enforcement of a motor vehicle law are considerably lower.

While other countries, including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and several Canadian provinces have required GDL holders to identify their licensing status through the use of placards or decals for a number of years, the requirement is mandated in just one state in the U.S. (detailed below). Giving police the tools – in this case, a means to identify GDL license holders – will also aid in enforcing the proven principles of the GDL law. And when the provisions of the law are enforced, teens – particularly those who are stopped and ticketed – tell other teens.

So what are states doing to help police understand and enforce their respective GDL laws? According to SHSOs surveyed by GHSA, most have developed GDL educational materials (65.8%) such as roll call videos and police-specific handouts or brochures. Fifty-six percent are addressing law enforcement organizations, while one-third of the states have developed training programs that are presented by SHSO officials, law enforcement liaisons and/or traffic safety resource prosecutors.



### Leveraging High and Low-Tech Tools

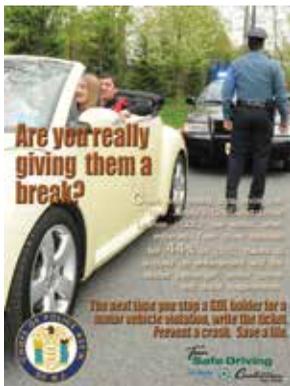
The New York State Chiefs of Police Association worked with the SHSO to develop a GDL *All Points Bulletin* (or APB) podcast to help police officers understand the law. Produced and recorded at minimal cost by a member of the Association, the GDL podcast (and a number of others addressing a variety of enforcement-related topics) can be accessed via a computer with a few simple mouse clicks. Officers can either click on a specific APB title and listen to the podcast via their computer's audio player or right click on the title and save it to their computer as a file for future listening. Some officers import or drag the file to their mp3 players and listen to podcasts while working, exercising or completing other tasks. They can also be burned to a CD to create a podcast training library, a valuable tool to police agencies that may be forced to cut their training expenditures due to budget issues.

Podcasts are a cost-effective way to introduce new and/or amended laws or procedures and to address common scenarios that officers may



## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

encounter in the field. Chiefs of Police Association officials have found that the ABP podcast page on the organization's website is the most visited section. While it's difficult to track podcast downloads due to their portability (a police department, for example, may download a podcast onto a CD-ROM that is subsequently used by several dozen officers), the GDL podcast has been accessed over 100 times since it was uploaded onto the Association's website in June 2011. The GDL podcast was also one of the site's top ten most clicked links in July, August and September 2011. Perhaps one chief of police put the value of the podcast best when he quipped to APB's producer, "it took away the mystery of the GDL law."



The New Jersey Chiefs of Police Association, meanwhile, has taken a *low-tech* approach to educating its members and their staff about GDL. Partnering with the New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition, the Association printed (copywriting, photography and design were donated) and distributed a poster and flyer that asks police officers, *Are you really giving them a break?* by not enforcing the state's GDL law. Using hard-hitting teen crash and GDL violation statistics and a photograph of a real police officer walking away from a vehicle carrying four teens (a violation under New Jersey's GDL law), the material explains how strict enforcement of the more stringent GDL that took effect in May 2010 resulted in a 40% drop in teen fatalities over a nine month period (May-December 2010). Additionally, the materials point out the impact the GDL decal requirement (detailed below) is having on statewide enforcement of the novice driver law (citations rose 50% over a nine month period from an average of 862 a month pre-decal to 1,275 post-decal) (NJ Teen Safe Driving Coalition, 2011).

Since the fall of 2011, the Association's Traffic Safety Committee Chair, a municipal police chief and the father of teenage girls, has been traveling the state attending monthly County Chiefs and Traffic Officer Association membership meetings to distribute the material and address the impact of GDL enforcement. The Chief admits to his peers that he didn't know anything about the GDL law until his oldest daughter took driver education in high school in 2006. Since then, he has made it a priority to be informed about teen driving and share his knowledge about the risk for teens and the GDL law with fellow police officers and the community. Additionally, the Chief has developed and trained all of his officers in standard operating procedures for handling GDL stops involving teens who violate the nighttime driving and passenger restrictions. (The teen driver is ticketed and all teens are transported to the police station, where they are instructed to call their parents.)

In addition to the poster and flyer, the Chief also distributes to his colleagues a GDL violation card developed by the SHSO. The pocket-size, laminated card is clearly and succinctly written allowing patrol officers to quickly cite the appropriate section under the law when making a stop involving a GDL holder. The police officers in attendance at these

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## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

**In Connecticut, police may initiate an “on the spot” suspension of a teen’s driver’s license for violating the passenger and/or nighttime driving restrictions of the GDL as well as for speeding, reckless driving and driving under the influence.**

meetings are also encouraged to participate in the SHSO's free parent/teen orientation program instructor training. The Chief points out that sending an officer will ensure that the Department has someone on staff who is well-versed in the GDL program and can share that knowledge with fellow officers.

Clearly both of these educational initiatives can help to address any objections law enforcement officials may have about a states' GDL law. But as noted earlier in this section, if the top cop isn't on board, it's unlikely the rank and file will be either. In Connecticut, police may initiate an “on the spot” suspension of a teen's driver's license for violating the passenger and/or nighttime driving restrictions of the GDL as well as for speeding, reckless driving and driving under the influence. Since the first-in-the-nation 48-hour law was enacted in 2008, police have suspended nearly 1,500 licenses belonging to 16 and 17-year-olds. Once the license is seized, police file a report with DMV. To get the license back, the teen must appear at the police station with a parent who signs for the document's return (The DMV Center for Teen Driving, 2011).

While state officials view the measure as a means to show “that it has the will and determination to make driving safer” for teens, not all police departments are embracing it. During the first two years of enactment, only about 60 of the State's 104 police departments used the seizure law (The DMV Center for Teen Safe Driving, 2010). The DMV Center for Teen Safe Driving has been working with the Connecticut Chiefs of Police Association to increase awareness and support of the law so that it's “fairly” and “evenly” enforced by all police agencies across the State.

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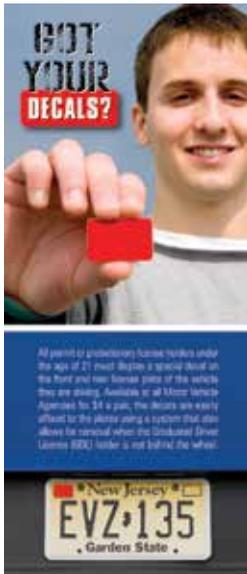
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### Identifying GDL Holders

When it comes to identifying GDL holders, as described earlier, police are clearly challenged. Currently, only New Jersey requires teens under 21 years of age holding either a permit or intermediate (probationary) license to display a decal when operating a motor vehicle. The small red, reflective decals must be affixed to the top left corner of the vehicle's front and rear license plates, and may be removed (they adhere to the plates

## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

with a Velcro backing) when the GDL holder isn't behind the wheel. The decals are sold at State Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) agencies for \$4 a pair (MVC's cost to produce and distribute the decals). However, many driving school instructors either sell or provide them free-of-charge to their students. There is a \$100 fine for failure to display the decal.



The mandate, which took effect on May 1, 2010 and is dubbed Kyleigh's Law, has not been without controversy. While many teens view the decal as a *Scarlet Letter*, parents have expressed concerns that it will attract sexual predators as well as give police license to profile or target teens (McCartt, Oesch, Williams, & Casanova, 2011). The State Attorney General's Office surveyed all police agencies to determine if there had been any incidences of predatory attacks on teen drivers displaying the decal. The report issued in April 2011, references one incident involving a female teen driver who was pulled over and asked for her phone number by a man posing as a police officer. When the teen refused, the man admitted that he wasn't a police officer and had stopped her because of the decal. He then drove away. No other cases have been reported (NJ Division of Criminal Justice, 2011).

In Australia, where novice drivers have been required to display L (learners permit) and P (provisional or intermediate license holders) placards for nearly four decades there have been no reported incidents of the placards resulting in predatory attacks on teens. Australia's response to the uproar in New Jersey has prompted surprise among teens and parents who, note that "the plates are meant to be visible to other drivers to show that we may be more likely to hesitate or make a mistake driving" (Faulks, 2010). Meanwhile, Australian teens, unlike their New Jersey counterparts, also asked, "how else will police know that we have license restrictions if we don't have red P-plates?" (Faulks, 2010).

And therein lays the primary purpose for the decal – to aid with enforcement. In its 2008 report, the New Jersey Teen Driver Study Commission, on the recommendation of law enforcement officials, called for a GDL identifier, suggesting that it would not only help police enforce the provisions of the law, but remove any concerns about police "profiling." The Commission also noted that the identifier could have the same impact as a "neighborhood watch" program and prompt community members to report unsafe teen driving (NJ Teen Driver Study Commission, 2008).

The jury is still out on whether the decal is having the intended effect. According to research conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety prior to and after the decal requirement was enacted, "the number of citations issued for violations of the graduated driver license law suggests that the decal requirement is facilitating police enforcement" (McCart, et al., 2011). However, the researchers go on to explain that "based on teenage drivers' self-reported violations of the law, the requirement does not appear to have achieved the ultimate goal of

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## Ensuring Understanding and Enforcement of GDL Laws

increased compliance [including compliance with the decal provision]" (McCartt et al, 2011). It's interesting to note, however, that the teens in the IIHS research project who indicated that they support the decal requirement explained that it would improve teen driver safety and help police enforce the GDL law. Supportive parents, meanwhile, also cited these reasons as well as the decals' ability to "inform other drivers that a teenage driver is on the road" (McCartt et al., 2011).

A second study addressing both the decal's effect on enforcement and GDL holder crash rates is currently underway by the Center for Research and Injury Prevention at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Researchers are analyzing crash and citation data as well as driver abstracts for a 1 to 1½ year period before and after the decal law took effect. The report findings are expected to be published in the Summer of 2012.

There is no doubt that New Jersey is the nation's GDL decal test-kitchen. While other states, including Kentucky, Michigan, Alaska, Iowa, Minnesota, and North Carolina, have introduced legislation requiring GDL permit and/or intermediate license holders to display an identifier on their vehicles, no bills have gained approval. Connecticut's Teenage Driver Safety Study Commission, which was convened prior to New Jersey's, included a recommendation for a GDL identifier in its report to the Governor, but the idea was not pursued.

Delaware, unlike New Jersey, has gone the voluntary route when it comes to identifying novice drivers. Eleven months before New Jersey, the First State began providing free, reflective *Novice Driver* magnets and stickers to teens to display on their vehicles. The state, which licenses approximately 10,000 new teen drivers annually, pays \$3.25 for the 16 x 4 inch, bright yellow magnets. The magnets and stickers are available at all DMV facilities and marketed to teens and their parents/sponsors as an additional safety tool that can help alert motorists when a novice is behind the wheel.

DMV officials report that "parents love them and teens hate them," while one SHSO official indicated that her "17-year-old stepdaughter, who is on the second six months of her permit, was excited" to get one since "she noticed that other drivers are more careful around her." Whatever side of the issue parents and teens come down on, the GDL magnets, according to a DMV official, are "flying out the door" and "all over the road." Has the magnet helped with GDL enforcement or compliance? Delaware SHSO officials are unable to say, since no formal research has been conducted to assess the initiative's impact. However, they point to the overall impact the states' GDL law is having on reducing crashes. Since its enactment in 1999, crashes involving 16-year-olds have decreased by 30.8%, crash rates involving personal injury decreased by 30.1% and crash rates during the curfew period (10 p.m. – 6 a.m.) declined by 59.1%.

**Since the state's GDL enactment in 1999, crashes involving 16-year-olds have decreased by 30.8%, crash rates involving personal injury decreased by 30.1%**

**Delaware GDL holders who are required by their parents to display the novice driver magnet on their vehicles will only have to do so for 12 months, while New Jersey GDL holders are flagged for 18 to 24 months.**



Additionally, no 16-year-old driver died on the state's roadways in 2009 (the year the magnets were rolled out) or 2010 (Ratledge, 2010).

It's interesting to note that teens in Delaware may obtain a *Level 1* permit at the age of 16 after completing driver education and successfully passing a written and road test and practice driving with supervision for the first six months. During the second six months of the permit phase (which mimics the intermediate stage in other states), teens may drive without supervision, but must adhere to the nighttime driving restriction (noted above) and only carry one passenger unless accompanied by a supervising driver. Following completion of the second six months, the GDL permit is converted to an *unrestricted Class D* license, provided a teen's license hasn't been suspended or revoked. This means that Delaware GDL holders who are required by their parents to display the novice driver magnet on their vehicles will only have to do so for 12 months, while New Jersey GDL holders are flagged for 18 to 24 months.

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# 3

## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

### An Overview

Young driver behavior experts agree that parents play a key role in Graduated Driver Licensing. Parents who are knowledgeable about a state's GDL program and understand how and why it works to address their teens' crash risk can be effective GDL champions and enforcers. In fact, the earlier parents are involved in the licensing system – helping to coach their teen in the permit phase and subsequently setting and monitoring limits that address risky behaviors in the intermediate phase – the better the outcome (Zakrajsek, Shope, Ouimet, Wang, & Simons-Morton, 2009).

But there are obstacles to garnering parental awareness and support. Today's parents not only didn't grow up with GDL laws, but likely obtained their license after just a few months or weeks of practice driving. Add to that busy lifestyles, distinct parenting styles, a strong reliance on cars, and a generation of highly mobile teens, and the challenges for getting parents on board can be daunting.

**Helping parents understand how and why GDL systems work and the key role they play in partnering with their teens to leverage that system can set them on the path to becoming authoritative parents.**

States willing to push for parental engagement, say researchers at The Center for Injury Research and Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), are doing the right thing. In a multi-year study of teen driving, CHOP identified four distinct parenting styles – the permissive parent, the uninvolved parent, the authoritative parent and the authoritarian parent. While the permissive (“I’ll trust you to do the right thing”), uninvolved (“Kids will be kids – you’ll learn from your mistake”) and authoritarian (“You’ll do as I say”) parents either exert too little or too much control over their teens, authoritative parents (“I care and I’ll give you the freedoms you earn, but for safety-related issues, you’ll do as I say”) are both highly supportive and actively involved in setting and closely monitoring rules (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Center, 2009). Helping parents understand how and why GDL systems work and the key role they play in partnering with their teens to leverage that system can set them on the path to becoming authoritative parents.

Regardless of what style today's parents grew up with (CHOP researchers suggest that it was probably the “do as I say” model) and have adopted, the authoritative style has proven to be the most effective for supporting good driving behaviors in teens. While authoritative parents maintain some control, they also give their teens enough structured support to allow them to make good choices. Teens who report having authoritative parents who set rules and monitor their activities in a helpful, supportive way are half

## Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success

- ✓ Parents are the chief GDL enforcer but are often unfamiliar with their state's GDL program.
- ✓ Parenting style impacts GDL acceptance and enforcement. Promoting the adoption of an *authoritative* parenting style is best for reducing teen crash risk and risky behavior.
- ✓ The most effective GDL parent education programs include facilitated (active) guidance coupled with written materials that can be used to continue the discussion at home.
- ✓ Ensuring parent participation in a program may be difficult without an incentive or mandate.
- ✓ Giving parents online access to their teens' driving record promotes monitoring of novice driver behavior.



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## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

as likely to crash, 71% less likely to drive intoxicated, and 30% less likely to use a cell phone when driving. And recognizing how effective seat belts are in reducing serious injury and death in the event of a crash, these same teens are 50% more likely to buckle up and recognize why doing so is important (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Center, 2009).

What are SHSO offices doing to help parents assume a more authoritative role with their teen drivers? The GHSA survey found that just three states – Massachusetts, Connecticut and Virginia – require parents to participate in GDL or teen driving education programs, while approximately 20 states (40%) offer voluntary training opportunities. The remaining states have no requirements for parental involvement, either voluntary or involuntary. More than half of states have dedicated teen driving websites that are targeted either specifically at parents or contain information for this audience. The most common parent outreach tool is a brochure – 39 states (78%) report having one.

**GDL is a powerful parent tool – it provides rules they can use to protect their new driver.**

What's the best way to educate parents? Experts agree that while instructional and advisory materials (i.e., websites, brochures, flyers, etc.) can be helpful, there's no guarantee that parents will make the effort to obtain and/or use them, if they know they exist at all. What's needed is actual *face time* with parents, so that they not only receive critical information, but also understand how to use it. In other words, providing parents a *written* overview of their state's GDL law so that they're aware of the steps their teens must follow to gain full licensure is helpful, but GDL is much more than that. GDL is a powerful parent tool – it provides rules they can use to protect their new driver. Ensuring that they understand and buy into these rules is critical.



### **A Facilitated Checkpoints Program ►**

In Michigan, researchers at the University of Michigan's Transportation Research Institute have been working with health educators and driver education instructors to determine whether facilitated parent/teen sessions prompt better utilization of the Checkpoints Program. Developed by the National Institutes of Health, the Checkpoints Program uses video and print materials to teach parents to limit, for the first 12 months after licensure, their teens' exposure to certain high-risk driving conditions and gradually increase driving privileges as their teens gain experience and demonstrate safe driving behavior.

The centerpiece of the program is a parent/teen agreement or contract that helps families set driving rules and restrictions for their teens as well as consequences for violating them. The agreement highlights four conditions (driving at night, with passengers, in inclement weather and on high speed roads) known to increase teen crash risk and prompts parents and teens to establish and periodically review four, time-based checkpoints. For example, during the first one to three months of driving,

***“The most important thing parents can do to reduce teen crash risk is to limit initial driving under high risk conditions.”***

**Dr. Bruce Simons-Morton, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development**



## **Michigan Checkpoints Parent-Teen Driving Agreement**

✓ CHECK THE POINTS! ✓

- ✓ **C**omplete it so parents and teens are clear about where and when teens can drive
- ✓ **H**ave parent and teen sign it to show they understand and agree to what is expected
- ✓ **E**xperience will be gained by following it before more complex driving
- ✓ **C**heck progress regularly on it so teens develop safe, responsible driving
- ✓ **K**eep updating it, recording changes as teens earn privileges

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## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

the parent and teen agree that the latter will be off the road by 8 p.m., not transport any passengers and only drive on local roads in dry conditions. At the end of the first three months, they review the teen's progress made to date and determine whether he or she is ready to gain additional privileges and move to the next checkpoint. If not, they establish a new date to review how the teen is doing.

In addition to the agreement, the original Checkpoints participants also received by mail a video, a series of eight newsletters during the permit phase and 10 newsletters during the first six months of intermediate licensure. For the Michigan research project, the information previously provided to families in the mailed material was included in the facilitated program. During the 30-minute session, the participants reviewed and discussed the nine-minute video that covered teen crash risk, setting expectations about restricting initial driving privileges, and completion and adherence to a parent/teen agreement. The facilitator then introduced the Checkpoints agreement and invited the participants, following a discussion about teen driving risks specific to the first few months of licensure, to work in their parent/teen pairs on the first checkpoint. The session ended with parents sharing their intended driving restrictions for their teens (Zakrajsek et al., 2009).

It's important to note that the project also included a comparison group – parents who were given a copy of the National Safety Council's booklet, *Teen Driver: A Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety*. This comprehensive publication includes information on teen driving risks, tips for parents to use in both the permit and intermediate license phase, along with a section on parent/teen agreements and the Checkpoints Program. However, this group was not engaged in any discussion about the agreement and excused after the booklet was distributed (Zakrajsek et al., 2009)

**Researchers found that the parents and teens who participated in the facilitated program were more aware of teen driving risk and more likely not only to use a parent/teen agreement, but also to impose several restrictions.**

Researchers found that the parents and teens who participated in the facilitated program were more aware of teen driving risk and more likely not only to use a parent/teen agreement, but also to impose several restrictions. Additionally, both parents and teens gave the Checkpoints material high marks and would recommend them to others. As for the value of participating in a facilitated program, the parents and teens appeared to enjoy it and worked well together, prompting the researchers to conclude that “active” versus “passive” learning contributed to the positive outcomes noted above (Zakrajsek et al., 2009).

Interestingly, the project researchers also weighed in on voluntary versus mandatory participation, citing difficulty in getting participants, despite extensive recruitment efforts, to attend both the facilitated and non-facilitated sessions. They noted that parent attendance proved to be a challenge since participation in the sessions wasn't mandatory (Zakrajsek, 2009).

That raises the question, should states mandate participation in teen driving programs to ensure that all parents, not just those who are

interested (and likely to participate on their own accord), have to attend? A 2007 Motor Vehicle Occupant Survey found a “general willingness” on the part of the public “to support parental participation, but noted that turning that willingness into action will require not just motivating parents to become actively involved, but also determining what assistance they may need to overcome deterrents” (Block & Walker, 2008).

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**Connecticut First to Mandate Parent/Teen Education**

Safety advocates and elected officials in Connecticut used a statutory mandate to induce parental involvement, becoming the first state to require parents to attend a facilitated program with their teens. Prompted by a series of high-profile crashes in 2007, the Governor established a Teen Driver Safety Task Force that reviewed Connecticut’s teen licensing requirements. The Task Force recommended and the Governor signed into law tougher restrictions on 16- and 17-year-olds that included additional training, tougher penalties for violating the GDL law (including license suspension, referenced in the previous section of this report), and a mandatory two-hour parent training course that also includes teen attendance.

The parent training requirement took effect on August 1, 2008 and is bundled with the eight-hour safe driving course that all teen drivers in Connecticut are required to complete for licensure. The Department of Motor Vehicles developed curriculum standards for the course, which is taught by licensed driving school instructors. The program addresses: the state’s GDL program (with a strong emphasis on the restrictions); driving risk for teens and how brain development factors into that risk; parents’ roles and responsibilities as well as liabilities associated with teen licensure; and tips and techniques for instructing and driving with their teens (including the importance of being a good role model).

How have parents responded to the training mandate? According to an independent survey of parents who participated in the two-hour orientation, there’s strong support for the requirement. Additionally, parents would recommend the training to other parents and thought it would help them in their role as the parent of a teen driver. But perhaps most importantly, nearly half of the respondents “said that because of the training, they were doing things with their teens they would not have done otherwise, and many said they were more likely to enforce GDL rules as a result of the instruction” (Chaudhary & Williams, 2010).

**Parents would recommend the training to other parents and thought it would help them in their role as the parent of a teen driver.**

# 3

## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

**In 2008 and 2009, teen driving-related fatalities and injuries dropped 20 and 21%.**

The parent training requirement, along with the other teen driving measures described above, are credited with sparking a 16.6% reduction in at-fault crashes involving 16-and 17-year-olds in the year they were adopted (2008) compared to the previous year. Additionally, in 2008 and 2009 teen driving-related fatalities and injuries dropped 20 and 21%, respectively (The DMV Center for Teen Safe Driving, 2010). It should be noted that no specific study was undertaken to measure the parent/teen orientation program's impact on teen crash reduction.

While DMV officials are pleased with the program's overall impact, they are not resting on their laurels. An initiative is underway to update the training curriculum, and a brochure and model parent/teen contract have been developed and included in the state's driver manual. DMV officials are also working with key partners, through the Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Teen Safe Driving, to develop and fund (through insurance industry support) a parent tool kit that will include a video, talking points, a guide, and other material to foster community engagement. The state also plans to benchmark parental awareness and attitudes through focus groups and surveys.

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### Massachusetts Trains the Parents

In neighboring Massachusetts, parents of novice drivers are also required by law to attend a minimum, two-hour education program. However, they attend without their teens. While there is nothing in the statute that mandates when a parent must take the course (which is concerning to state licensing officials), a AAA official and licensed driving school instructor who teaches the parent program noted that most parents take it before their teen's first classroom driver education session. Teens seeking a license under the State's GDL or *junior operator* license must complete 30 hours of classroom training, along with 12 hours of on-road instruction and six hours of in-car observation.

Instructors are required to follow a curriculum outline developed by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to ensure that parents are educated about the content of the state-mandated teen driver education program, the junior operator's law, and the driving skills and behaviors their teens will be learning through classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction. The program, which RMV officials view as a "train-the-trainer" initiatives also focuses on the importance of parents coaching and mentoring their teen drivers, supporting the GDL law, and serving as positive role models.

**“...The training gives [parents] the ammunition to stand firm and say to their teen ‘no you’re not a licensed driver after midnight’ when they insist they can drive after curfew.”**

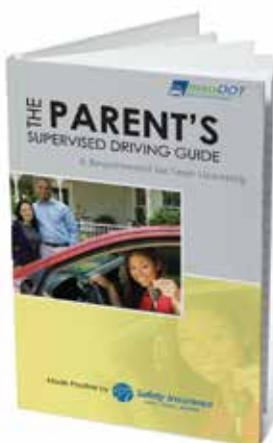
“We believe that parents need guidance in teaching their teens to drive and that’s why it’s one of the core topics discussed during the program,” stressed the RMV’s Community Outreach Coordinator. “But we also want to ensure that parents know the law and reinforce that awareness with their teens. The training gives them the ammunition to stand firm and say to their teen ‘no you’re not a licensed driver after midnight’ when they insist they can drive after curfew.”

Unlike Connecticut, there has been no formal assessment to gauge parents’ response to the mandate. Nor have any studies been undertaken to determine if the information parents receive in the training is helpful or prompted them do anything different with their teen driver. When queried about this lack of research, the AAA official pointed out that that there’s “no impetus” on the part of the state to survey parents since there was “no opposition” to the parent education requirement when it was being considered by the legislature. The RMV’s Community Outreach Coordinator concurred, pointing out that requiring parents to attend a program was viewed “as a no-brainer.”

The AAA official noted, however, that the organization does survey parents who participate in the sessions they instruct, and approximately 90% find it beneficial. In terms of knowledge gained, parents typically put a better understanding of the penalties associated with GDL violations at the top of the list. Parents ask a lot of questions during the facilitated program and find the discussion about how to make the most of the 40 hours of supervised practice driving their teen must log in the permit phase particularly helpful. It’s not uncommon for an instructor to be consulted by a parent after class about his or her teen’s special needs. “We stick around because parents want to talk and ask questions,” said the AAA official.

While it’s difficult to determine whether the parent training requirement has had a direct impact on teen driver safety in the State, SHSO and RMV officials indicate that the number of young drivers involved in fatal crashes has steadily declined from 88 in 2005 to 51 in 2010. They point to the enhancements made to the junior operator license in 2007, coupled with the Safe Driver Law ban on the use of any mobile electronic devices by drivers under the age of 18 (which took effect on September 30, 2010) as the contributing factors. Perhaps the AAA official put it best when he said, “the dialogue that goes on after we’ve ended the formal training program tells me that parents are walking out with far more knowledge than when they walked in.”

In addition to the mandatory training, Massachusetts parents are now receiving a copy of *The Parent’s Supervised Driving Guide* to help them coach and mentor their new driver. All learners permit recipients receive the guide. It may also be picked up at RVA offices where learner permits are offered and accessed online for downloading onto an e-reader for in-car reference at no cost to the state or parents. It



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## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

was developed and produced by the Safe Roads Alliance and Safety Insurance. The guide provides 11 lessons for helping teens build skill and includes a log to record the required supervised practice hours (40) as well as skills covered, time and weather conditions. The parent guide currently isn't being distributed and/or discussed at the mandatory parent training. However, as the Checkpoints research conducted in Michigan demonstrates, Massachusetts licensing officials may wish to consider adding discussion about the guide to the program outline to ensure parents know about it and how to use it to assist their novice drivers.

### KEY CONTACTS

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### Select Virginia Counties Mandate Parent/Teen Education

Further south, parents and teens in Virginia's Planning District 8, which includes Prince William, Fairfax, Loudon, and Arlington Counties, and the cities of Manassas, Manassas Park, Falls Church, and Alexandria, must attend a 90-minute safety program as part of the in-classroom portion of the state's driver education curriculum. Teens must meet this requirement to obtain a Driver Education Certificate of Completion card or DEC-1, which is needed to begin the state mandated 14 hours of behind the wheel training. The requirement was first piloted in Prince William County in 2004 and extended to the counties noted above through legislation enacted in 2009.

**The program has grown into a community health initiative aimed at reducing the incidences of teen car crashes, injuries and fatalities in the state by assisting school districts and communities develop and implement local PSTD programs.**

The parent training is just one component of a comprehensive driver education, training and outreach initiative developed and implemented by Partners for Safe Teen Driving (PSTD), with funding from the SHSO. Spearheaded by a media expert and a high school educator who had been approached approximately eight years ago by the Division of Motor Vehicles to develop an outreach campaign targeted at teens, the program has grown into a community health initiative aimed at reducing the incidences of teen car crashes, injuries and fatalities in the state by assisting school districts and communities develop and implement local PSTD programs. Currently, the program is active in 43 school districts, and parents (and — in most cases — their teens) are either required or encouraged to attend the training. The organizers would like to see the District 8 mandate extended statewide so that all teens and parents have access to the program. The PSTD program has been included in a NHTSA-funded evaluation of parent/teen programs that organizers hope will be of help to them in garnering legislative support.

What's covered in the parent/teen program? Like its northern counterparts, Virginia's program addresses the licensing process and the GDL law, with an emphasis on the restrictions, how to coach teenagers as they learn to drive,

and the newest driving techniques. Instructors also engage participants in a discussion about risk and unsafe behaviors including distracted, aggressive and impaired driving. Parents and teens receive a sample teen driving contract and spend part of the session discussing what it should include.

The Partners have also developed a *45-Hour Parent/Teen Driving Guide* (Virginia requires GDL holders to log 45 hours of supervised practice driving in the permit phase). The sequential lessons included in the guide are designed to help teens build skill and remain collision-free in both low and high-risk driving environments. The guide, along with a training kit that includes an array of documents (i.e., parent meeting agenda, sample letters from the school superintendent and chief of police, parent/teen contract, certificate of completion, evaluation form, etc.) that school districts and program instructors (driver education teachers) can use to promote and run parent/teen training sessions, are available on the PSTD website.

**Teen drivers who have completed the Prince William County Schools (PWCS) driver education program have the lowest crash rates in Virginia.**

According to PSTD officials, the program is having an impact. At least one county has experienced a significant reduction in crashes involving teens, while teen drivers who have completed the Prince William County Schools (PWCS) driver education program (which includes the parent training mandate) have the lowest crash rates in Virginia. "Virginia Department of Education Statistics from 2009 show that for every 100 students who complete the driver licensing process through the PWCS Driver Education Office, only 2.19 students (down from 17 students) have a crash in their first year as a driver. This compares to eight students and adults who learn to drive through commercial programs," said a PSTD official.

Recognizing that parents are the key to Virginia's juvenile licensing process, the Commonwealth is the only state in the nation that requires parents and teens to attend a licensing ceremony. Once a teen completes all of the driver education and training requirements (including the road test) mandated under the GDL program, the instructor issues the teen a 180-day temporary provisional (intermediate) driver's license and notifies the courts of that action as well. The teen then receives a notice to appear (in *appropriate* court attire) before a local Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judge, with a parent, within that 180-day time period to receive his or her intermediate license.

The ceremony typically lasts anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes and, depending upon the number of teens, may be held at a school. The license is handed to the parent, rather than the teen, to impress upon both parties the seriousness of licensure. In fact, a SHSO official remarked that it's common for a judge to end the ceremony with a stern warning such as, "this is the last time I want to see you in my courtroom."

**KEY CONTACTS**

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# 3

## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

### Georgia's Voluntary Parent/Teen Program

Despite just three states requiring parents to be active participants in their teens' licensure, a number of SHSO offices are either helping to develop, offer and/or fund voluntary education programs. In Georgia, a team of dedicated professionals at the Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute or GTIPI (an educational outreach unit of the University of Georgia), partnered with the SHSO office, driver education professionals, law enforcement officials, the PTA, and students in 2003 to develop an award-winning parent/teen program. Dubbed PRIDE (Parents Reducing Injuries and Driver Error), the free, two-hour course addresses the attitudes, knowledge and behavior of both parents and teens as the latter prepare to become new drivers.

Funded by a SHSO grant, the program is taught by trained volunteer instructors who include not only police officers (the largest segment of the instructor pool), but also EMS and fire officials, driving school instructors, and even parents who have gone through the program with their teens. Volunteers must complete nine hours of training: seven hours of classroom instruction that includes an overview of the PRIDE guidelines and how to promote the program, GTIPI, and the State's Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) as well as practice in presenting the program followed by a final exam; and two hours of observation. A newly certified instructor must schedule and teach his or her first PRIDE class within 60 and 90 days, respectively, of completing the initial training to obtain the program materials. Instructors must recertify annually by teaching four PRIDE classes and either attending a three-hour training or completing an online course, both of which include an exam. GTIPI officials admit that the instructor retention rate is approximately 40%. However, the bar is set high to ensure program and instructor quality and commitment.

Unlike most parent/teen programs, PRIDE participants don't remain together throughout the training. Instead, parents and teens collectively participate in a 15-minute opening session and then split up into separate groups to facilitate more open discussion. Parents are given a handbook and then spend the bulk of their time gaining a better understanding of Georgia's GDL law and how they as parents can influence and impact their new teen driver. They're asked to rate their driving (teens also rate their parents while in their own session) and share this information with their teens when the groups come back together for the final segment of the program. The exercise is well-received by both audiences and generates significant discussion.

Teens, meanwhile, are engaged in discussions and activities designed to help them understand what it means to gain access to the keys as well as the consequences associated with failing to use this new found freedom wisely. During an exercise entitled, *What's most important to you?*, teens are asked to rank ten items from one to 10: family, trust, life, freedom, privilege, health, looks, license, money, and friends. They then watch a series



**Parents and teens collectively participate in a 15-minute opening session and then split up into separate groups to facilitate more open discussion.**

of videos and between each are instructed to remove two items from their list, eventually homing in on their top three. Teens typically cite family, life and friends as most important and are then challenged to protect these things by taking the *driving force oath* that ensures their *chance to live*.

The program ends with a presentation of the AT&T video, *Last Text*, which GTIPI officials noted has a “powerful impact” on everyone in the room (This component was added to the program in the past two years.) Both parents and teens are also asked to complete a pre-test evaluation form and post-knowledge test and then invited to stay and talk or ask questions. Sixty days and one year after completing the program, parents receive via e-mail a one-page “yes or no” survey asking if they’re using specific “methods to support, coach and protect” their teens as they “learn and continue to drive.” Additionally, they’re asked to indicate if their teen has been involved in a crash and/or received a ticket since completing the PRIDE program.

**There is a low incidence of crashes and violations involving teens who completed the training.**

Response rates for both the 60-day and one-year surveys average approximately 35%. As an inducement to complete the 60-day survey, parents are advised that they will receive a PRIDE certificate of completion for responding. GTIPI officials indicate that since parents self-report, it’s difficult to measure the validity of their responses. However, of the parents who do respond, there is a low incidence of crashes and violations involving teens who completed the training. No data comparison has been made between teens that do and do not participate in the PRIDE program, although there is interest on the part of GTIPI officials to do so.

An analysis of the pre- and post-knowledge test scores of teen and parent program participants show an increase in awareness and understanding of Georgia’s GDL law as well as the nighttime driving and passenger restrictions and the importance of seat belt use. Between October 2009 and September 2011, an average of 53% of parents improved their overall knowledge of Georgia’s teen driving laws, posting average before and after mean test scores of 83 % and 97%, respectively. Meanwhile, an average of 44% of teens improved their understanding of the State’s GDL law, recording average before and after mean test scores of 84 % and 96%, respectively.

While the PRIDE program is voluntary, it’s important to note that some teens and their parents are required to take the program under a juvenile court mandate because the teen has committed a traffic offense. (It’s currently the only program of its type in the state receiving court referrals.) Parents who are required to participate evaluate the program the same or higher than parents who come of their own fruition. In fact, GTIPI officials noted that these parents are more likely to stay at the conclusion of the program to chat with other parents and/or the instructor. Judges receive information about the program through continuing education conferences, which has sparked an uptick in teens attending the program as an alternative to sentencing.

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## Engaging Parents in Understanding, Supporting and Enforcing GDL

The program reaches approximately 1,200 teens a year. While the vast majority of parents and teens enroll in the training because they want to increase their knowledge (and parents want their teens to be safe), some are taking advantage of an insurance discount being offered by select companies and/or agents. The state's former insurance commissioner sent a letter to insurance agents endorsing the PRIDE program. GTIPI shares the letter with parents (a copy is included with the certificate of completion) and encourages them to forward both documents to their insurance agent.

### KEY CONTACT

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### Parental Alerts

While the states highlighted above are determined to engage parents at the start of the licensing process so that they understand the vital role they play in coaching their teens to become safe, responsible drivers, two states have online tools in place to alert parents when their teens fail to live up to the letter of the law. New York's TEENS or Teen Electronic Event Notification System launched in October 2009 and has been consistently upgraded to make the system seamless for parents.

TEENS allows the parent or guardian of a New York State permit, driver license or non-driver photo ID card holder under 18 years of age, to sign up for e-mail and/or regular mail notifications when a motor vehicle crash; moving violation conviction; or suspension or revocation of a permit, driver license or driving privileges are entered on a teen's driving record. Parents may automatically enroll to receive notices from TEENS when their novice drivers apply for a permit. Since the program went electronic, enrollment increased from an average of 30 a month to 6,000. Currently, DMV/SHSO officials estimate there are 50,000 active participants in the TEENS database.

Once a teen turns 18, their notification status becomes inactive. However, they're never removed from the TEENS system. While there are no plans to query the database for research purposes, DMV/SHSO officials admit that it's a data source "ripe for mining." For now, they view TEENS as a way to help parents play a more active role in addressing their teens' unsafe driving behaviors.

Illinois licensing officials also believe that parental access to their teens' driving records, along with notification when they run afoul of the law are important tools. A week after a minor teen obtains a permit, a letter is mailed to his or her parents containing a unique Personal Identification

**TEENS is a way to help parents play a more active role in addressing their teens' unsafe driving behaviors.**

**With just a few clicks of a mouse, parents living either in- or out-of-state can check their teen driver's license status, which details traffic convictions and supervisions, accident information, license suspensions or revocations, and other actions.**

Number, or PIN. Parents use their PIN to obtain access to their teen's driving record by signing up via [cyberdriveillinois.com](http://cyberdriveillinois.com), the state's online portal for conducting business with the Secretary of State's Office (the agency responsible for driver licensing). With just a few clicks of a mouse, parents living either in- or out-of-state (requires an Illinois driver license, ID or out-of-state assigned number for non-Illinois residents) can check their teen's driver's license status, which details traffic convictions and supervisions, accident information, license suspensions or revocations, and other actions.

The service is free, accessible from any computer 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and active until the teen turns 18. Parents, according to the state's Driver Education/GDL Coordinator (who works within the Secretary of State's office and regularly leads parent nights on teen driving), "love it. I've had parents tell me that thanks to the online access, they now know why their insurance bill went up."

Having access to this information is another way to get parents involved. It appears to be working – state officials report that the service generates up to 200,000 parent checks annually. In addition to this service, under Illinois' enhanced GDL law, when a teen under 18 years of age is convicted of any moving violation, his or her parents receive a warning letter from the Secretary. "While there's nothing stopping a teen from running to the mailbox and grabbing the letter before mom or dad," said the State Driver Education/GDL Coordinator, "the warning is also posted on the driving record for parental access."

**KEY CONTACTS**

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# 4

## Strengthening Driver Education and Training

### An Overview

Ask a group of teens what's the first thing they'll need to do to obtain a driver's license, and they're likely to answer take driver ed. Taught for nearly a century, driver education is considered to be the principal means by which all new drivers learn the rules of the road and basic vehicle operation (Chaudhary, Bayer, Ledingham, & Casanova, 2011). Driving, however, has changed dramatically since motorists first took to the road. Has driver education kept pace with the demands of today's driving environment?

While teen driving and driver training experts agree that driver education should be an integral part of any Graduated Driver License program, the longstanding debate regarding its validity and effectiveness has not been fully addressed. There are also questions about how much training novice drivers need, what they should be taught, and who should teach it.

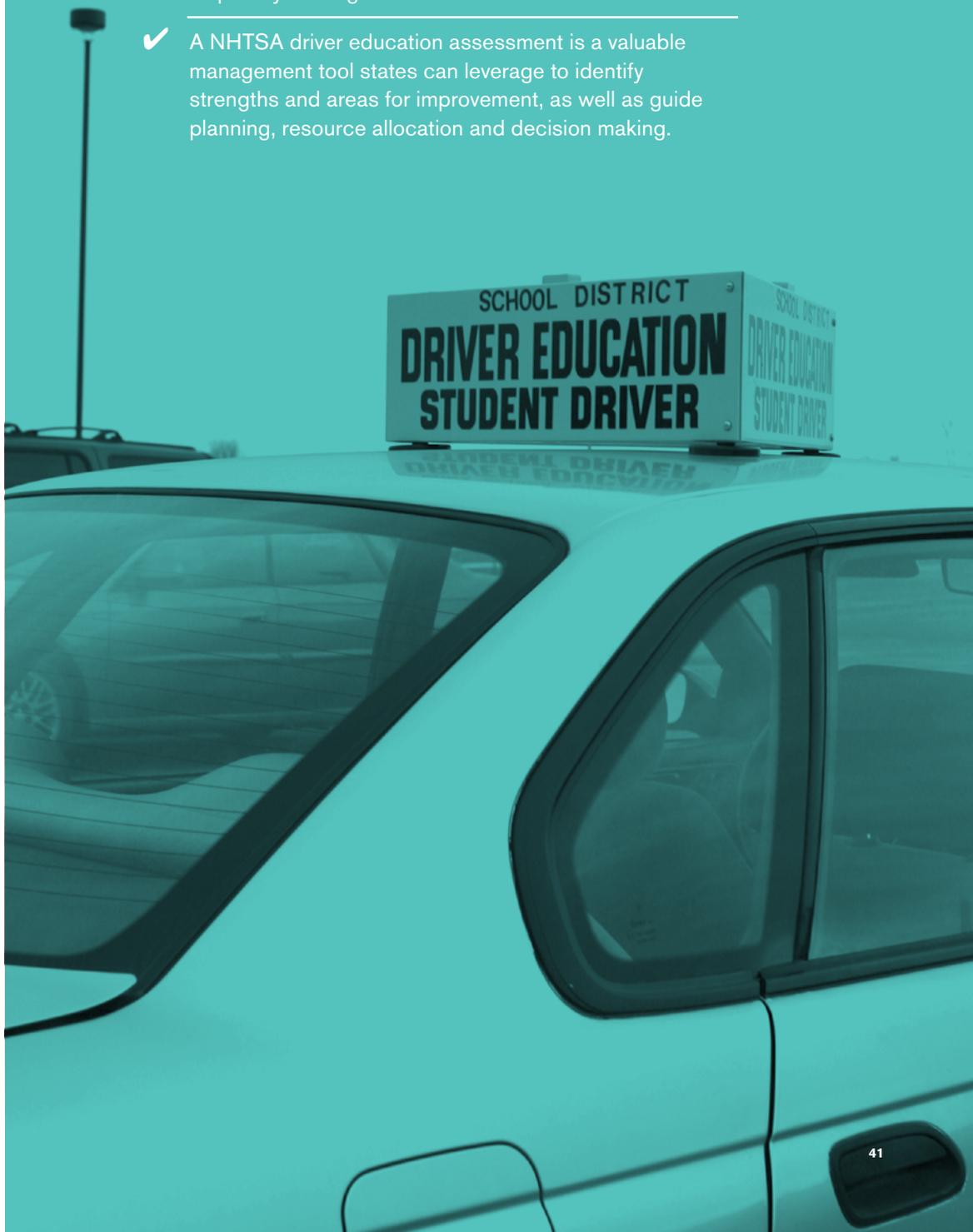
Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards, that call for 45 hours of classroom instruction and 10 hours of both behind the wheel and in-car observation, have been developed and endorsed by the nation's lead safety and driver education organizations, including NHTSA, AAA, Driver Education and Training Administrators (DETA), Driving School Association of the Americas (DSAA), American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA), GHSA, Transportation Research Board (TRB), and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), but states continue to cling to the decades old model of 30 hours of classroom and 6 hours of behind the wheel instruction. Add to that budget issues that are prompting high schools to outsource or do away entirely with their driver education and training programs, a lack of ownership on the part of a single state government entity, and minimum or no state curriculum standards, and it's a wonder driver education has survived at all.

Driver education is still required in 29 states (Chaudhary et al., 2011). Meanwhile, in some states where it's not required, high schools offer it as a means to satisfy safety education requirements included in core curriculum content standards, while others use it as an inducement for early licensure. Despite the lack of a single curriculum or even curriculum standards in many states, what is being taught in driver education mirrors what's in ADTSEA's model curriculum. Recent studies of driver education and training programs in Oregon and Nebraska also point to the positive impact these initiatives are having on reducing risk and increasing teen driver safety (Shell, Newman, Cordova-Cazar, 2011; Raymond, Johns, Golembiewski, Seifert, Nichols, & Knoblauch, 2007). Additionally, a national stakeholder group, with financial support from NHTSA, is developing a strategic plan to implement the national novice teen driver standards referenced above (rollout is expected later this year).

**Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards, that call for 45 hours of classroom instruction and 10 hours of both behind the wheel and in-car observation, have been developed and endorsed by the nation's lead safety and driver education organizations.**

## **Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success**

- ✓ Driver education – along with parent involvement, stronger driver testing and longer training periods – should be an integral part of a state's GDL system.
- ✓ Driver education is required in more than half of all states, but a lack of formal ownership at the state level impacts its priority ranking and resource investment.
- ✓ A NHTSA driver education assessment is a valuable management tool states can leverage to identify strengths and areas for improvement, as well as guide planning, resource allocation and decision making.



# 4

## Strengthening Driver Education and Training

The GHSA survey of SHSO offices found that 16 states are involved in efforts to strengthen their driver education and training requirements, with the vast majority focused on improving curriculum rather than standards. Most of these efforts are also being undertaken by entities other than SHSOs, prompting the question, should the SHSOs be involved?

SHSO officials in Oregon, where driver education is subsidized through constitutionally dedicated transportation funds, seem to think so, calling it the one countermeasure that will help states get to zero fatalities. “We need to change the driving culture and focus on providing a good foundation to teens so that we’re not retraining them when they’re in their 30’s, 40’s or 50’s,” said the SHSO Director. “But we have to get over the perceived barrier that the SHSO can’t get involved in driver education due to funding and other issues. Driver education and training is just as important as the other programs we fund.”



### Driver Education Assessment Tool

States looking to plan and implement effective driver education systems that positively impact teen driver safety should review the national driver education standards that address critical administrative issues (i.e., program administration, education and training, instructor qualifications, parental involvement, and coordination with driver licensing). NHTSA has developed a technical driver education program assessment tool to help facilitate this process. Mirrored after other highway safety and emergency medical services (EMS) program assessments, states can use the tool to identify their driver education program’s strengths and accomplishments, as well as determine where improvements can be made. Used as a management tool, the assessment can guide planning and help states make decisions about how best to leverage limited resources.

States interested in conducting an assessment should have the agency responsible for driver education and/or the SHSO contact the NHTSA Regional office in writing. Once that occurs, NHTSA’s Enforcement and Justice Services Division (which is responsible for driver education programs) coordinates and facilitates the assessment. While an assessment lasts approximately four to five days and costs between \$25,000 and \$35,000 (states may use Section 402 – federal grant funds to offset these costs), states typically spend three to six months gathering data and other key information for inclusion in a briefing package, securing meeting space, determining who will make presentations or be interviewed, arranging travel and hotel accommodations for team members, and handling other logistics.

The assessment team is made up of six individuals (including the NHTSA program representative) with expertise in the areas outlined in the national standards. They work with an administrative consultant who is responsible

**States can use the tool to identify their driver education program’s strengths and accomplishments, as well as determine where improvements can be made.**

## Strengthening Driver Education and Training

for production of the final report. After meeting with state-selected individuals who have expertise in program management, legislation, regulation and policy, driver education and training, instructor qualifications, parental involvement/communication, driver licensing/enforcement, and program evaluation and data, the team convenes to review and analyze all information, develop recommendations, and draft a report. The team compares the state's program components to the novice driver standards, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each. While each team member brings their own expertise and perspective to the discussion, what's ultimately included in the report represents the consensus of the team. Additionally, the recommendations are based on the "unique characteristics of the state (i.e., political structure, demographics, mortality and morbidity profiles, institutional support) and what the team members believe the state can reasonably do to improve the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of its driver education program" (NHTSA, 2011).

On the final day of the assessment, the team briefs state officials on their work, summarizing major findings and recommendations. The state is then responsible for reviewing the report and identifying any technical corrections. If the assessment team determines that the corrections are warranted, the changes are made and the report is then forwarded to the appropriate state officials (NHTSA, 2011).

To date, three states have taken advantage of the Driver Education Program Technical Assessment tool: Maryland, Oregon and, most recently, Vermont. Officials in all three states give the driver education assessment high marks and agree that there is no "downside" to determining how a state is doing.

### KEY CONTACT

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### Maryland Leads the Way

In Maryland, where driver education is offered through private providers rather than high schools, state officials pointed out that having the assessment done by a third or independent party, helped bring everyone to the table. (The state requires all new drivers to complete 30 hours of classroom and six hours of behind the wheel training provided by licensed instructors, along with 60 hours of supervised practice.) There has been some push back since driver education was privatized (i.e., it's a burden on low income families, is it really necessary for novice older drivers?), but the assessment has helped state officials make the case for driver education. The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), which oversees driver

**Maryland requires all new drivers to complete 30 hours of classroom and six hours of behind the wheel training provided by licensed instructors, along with 60 hours of supervised practice.**

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## Strengthening Driver Education and Training

education, has also leveraged the recommendations outlined in the report to hire a curriculum specialist and gain traction in enhancing instructor qualifications and training, as well as support of quality assurance visits.

MVA's Director of Driver Programs pointed out that states should allow at least six months to plan for and execute an assessment, as well as determine up front what it wants to get out of the process. The MVA obtained a \$30,000 grant from the SHSO to fund the assessment, and is now working with the agency as well as law enforcement, driver educators, parents, and other interested parties to address the recommendations outlined in Maryland's final report.

Priority recommendations outlined in the report include: establishing an advisory board of stakeholders that has input into implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and enforcement of driver education; establishing a statewide review committee to compare the state's curriculum and texts with the ADTSEA standards; increasing advanced instructor training; requiring parents to participate in a driver education/GDL orientation session and complete a debriefing with their teens' behind-the-wheel instructor; strengthening driving school oversight; requiring the submission of practice driving log books; and improving the security and integrity of the testing system.

"We established an Advisory Committee that meets quarterly to help carry the water and bring the recommendations to life," said the MVA Director. "But we aren't trying to implement all of them at once," he stressed. "We mapped out a five-year plan that includes both short-and long-term goals and just finished year one. We have a lot to do, but we're definitely moving in the right direction."

### KEY CONTACT

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### Oregon Looks to Better Its Program

Why would Oregon, which has one of the most progressive driver education programs in the nation, need an assessment? "We wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to make our program better," said the SHSO Director. Oregon's new drivers, unlike their Maryland counterparts, don't have to complete driver education to obtain an intermediate or provisional license. However, teens who complete a course offered through their high school or a commercial driving school need to log only 50 hours of supervised practice rather than 100. In addition to the 50-hour credit, the state also encourages participation in a driver education program by subsidizing the training.

**"We mapped out a five-year plan that includes both short- and long-term goals and just finished year one."**

**The report also calls on the state to enhance its 30-and six-hour driver training standards to mirror the ADTSEA model and require a “second stage education of at least 10 hours.”**

So what did Oregon learn from its driver education assessment? The team recommended that ODOT’s Transportation Safety Division (the SHSO), which oversees driver education and training, establish a yearly audit for approved driver education programs as well as develop a process to ensure all providers and their staff are properly licensed and credentialed. ODOT is currently undertaking a curriculum revision, so a recommendation that the revision team review its over-reliance on PowerPoint and consider video enhancements is timely. The report also calls on the state to enhance its 30- and six-hour driver training standards to mirror the ADTSEA model and require a “second stage education of at least 10 hours.”

The report also commends ODOT for its investment in instructor training – ODOT pays for all instruction, subsidizes speakers for the annual state training conference, and provides scholarships to the Pacific Northwest Driver Education Conference. The report also calls on the agency to develop a list of approved continuing education topics (instructors must obtain 15 CEUs every two years). Additionally, the state should establish a procedure for providing an end-of-course evaluation or progress report to parents, mandate approved driver education for all teen drivers and require that practice driving logs be notarized and signed by parents.

### KEY CONTACT

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## Assessment Helps Vermont Respond to Legislature

Vermont’s driver education assessment couldn’t have happened at a more opportune time. Held the first week of December, 2011, the report generated by the assessment team helped the SHSO and Department of Education (the latter is responsible for training and qualifying instructors) compile a report on novice teen driver education for the legislature that was due on January 15, 2012. Organized by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and funded by the SHSO, the DOE, according to DMV officials, “reluctantly” signed on to the project. However, after participating in the briefings and receiving the team’s final report, the agency now views it as a “worthwhile endeavor.” In fact, DOE planned to not only reference information from the assessment final report, but include a copy of the entire document with its report to the legislature.

The assessment, SHSO and DMV officials admitted, was long overdue. Vermont has not made any changes to its driver education program since 1966. Under the current requirements, teens must complete 30 hours of classroom instruction and six hours of behind the wheel training. While 80% of teens complete the training requirement through a high school-offered program, the remaining 20% employ the services of a commercial driving school.

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## Strengthening Driver Education and Training

**“The recommendations will not only help us move in the right direction, but get the manpower we need to address the issues.”**

While there were no surprises in the final report, the DMV official who coordinated the assessment was expecting the team to “tear [the state] apart.” Instead, she noted that the “assessment team was very respectful” and the State’s “speakers were heard.” She went on to add, “clearly, we’re not doing everything we need to do, particularly in the area of monitoring and oversight. The recommendations will not only help us move in the right direction, but get the manpower we need to address the issues.”

Priority recommendations outlined in Vermont’s report include: establishing an advisory board of stakeholders (similar to what was suggested for Maryland); increasing DOE and DMV staffing levels as well as providing for a full-time, funded state administrator to coordinate, oversee and support the program; funding these positions through a dedicated revenue source; developing or adopting curriculum standards; increasing behind the wheel instruction from six to 10 hours; requiring parents to participate in a driver education/GDL orientation session and receive an end-of-course briefing with the driver training instructor; and automating the issuance of driver education completion certificates.

Like Maryland, Vermont officials cited the value of having the assessment conducted by an independent entity and will work to implement the measures over time. “We’re looking at the recommendations as a roadmap and will be working to address the low hanging fruit first, followed by more long-term initiatives,” said the DMV officials. “There are definitely recommendations in the report that can be accomplished for little or no cost. Like other states, we’re dealing with difficult budget issues.”

### KEY CONTACT

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## **Priority recommendations outlined in Vermont's report include:**

- Establishing an advisory board of stakeholders (similar to what was suggested for Maryland)
- Increasing DOE and DMV staffing levels as well as providing for a full-time, funded State administrator to coordinate, oversee and support the program.
- Funding these positions through a dedicated revenue source; developing or adopting curriculum standards.
- Increasing behind the wheel instruction from six to 10 hours.
- Requiring parents to participate in a driver education/GDL orientation session and receive an end of course briefing with the driver training instructor.
- Automating the issuance of driver education completion certificates.



**DRIVER EDUCATION**  
STUDENT DRIVER

# 5

## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

**While adults may think they're the best teachers and role models, research confirms that giving teens some of the responsibility for developing and delivering the message is essential for sparking greater interest, understanding and acceptance among this age group.**

### An Overview

Ask a teen what GDL stands for, and his or her response (i.e., that G-D-Law, Cinderella license, restricted license, the adults' way of controlling us) is likely to carry a less than favorable connotation. Ensuring that teens understand not only *what* is also in a novice driver system, but *why* it is in there essential for prompting greater acceptance and compliance. Teens need to understand that there are risks associated with driving.

But who is in the best position to explain these risks and suggest ways to address them? While adults may think they're the best teachers and role models, research confirms that giving teens some of the responsibility for developing and delivering the message is essential for sparking greater interest, understanding and acceptance among this age group. In this case, peer pressure, which is customarily viewed as negative, has "practical implications for prevention and intervention among young drivers" (Sela-Shayovitz as cited in Henk & Fette, 2010). For teens, their peer group not only has the power to "destroy" feelings of "safety or worth" by withholding social support, but can bolster it as well (Varenhorst as cited in Henk et al., 2010).

What are SHSOs doing to engage teens in understanding and addressing the risks associated with driving? Nearly three-quarters of states have developed print materials, such as educational pamphlets, flyers and posters, to reach teens with safe driving and GDL messages. Classroom presentations, conducted either by SHSO staff or in partnership with other entities are employed by more than half of the SHSOs. A dozen states (29%) sponsor or help fund regional or statewide workshops either specifically for teens or the adults who work with them. As for leveraging social media (a tool near and dear to teens' hearts), 44% of states have developed (and/or fund) websites with content geared directly to teens, while just 12% have a dedicated Facebook page.

What about peer-to-peer programs? States are employing this tactic – usually through school-based interventions – to help teens not only identify those things that are causing them the greatest risk on the road, but also recognize that they have the ability and power to address them. A school serves as a teen's primary social hub, making it the optimal location to reach this age group. Programs that take an educational approach to teen driving risk typically focus on "changing knowledge and beliefs, modifying attitudes and teaching new skills" (Juarez, Schlundt, Goldzweig, & Stinson, 2006). Some peer-to-peer programs employ incentives to induce teens to change their behavior (i.e., buckle up, put down the phone). Incentive-based initiatives, as well as ones that prompt friendly competition among teens (whether in the same school or in schools across a county or state), can be effective.

## Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success

- ✓ To garner teen buy-in, teens must understand not only *what* is in a state's GDL program, but *why* and *how* it works to help them be good drivers.
- ✓ Giving teens responsibility (with *helpful* rather than *prescriptive* guidance) in their school and community for developing and delivering the novice driving message prompts greater interest, acceptance and engagement.
- ✓ Incentives, competition and hands-on learning opportunities spark participation.
- ✓ Pre- and post-awareness surveys administered by teens are critical for establishing understanding of the novice driver problem and measuring success following implementation of peer-led activities.



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## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

Programs that not only engage teens, but their families, school, neighborhood, and community may also be important for influencing and modifying behavior. The most successful take a comprehensive approach that includes “high intensity media campaigns combined with school social programs and/or community interventions” (Juarez et al., 2006).



### Teens in the Driver Seat

When it comes to changing risky teen driving behaviors, researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) which is affiliated with Texas A&M University, recognize the importance of putting teens in the driver seat and launched a program bearing that name in 2003. Today the “nation’s first widespread, grassroots, peer-to-peer program focused exclusively on teen driver safety” has not only reached more than 500,000 teens throughout Texas (through 500 high schools) but, with NHTSA support, has spread to Georgia and California as well as communities in North Carolina and Connecticut (Henke & Fette, 2010).

Unlike other programs that may focus on a single issue such as alcohol or texting, Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) addresses the five risks that are most common for teen drivers: nighttime driving, speeding, distractions caused by cell phones and other teen passengers, low seat belt use, and alcohol. As for ensuring that it’s a true peer-to-peer program, teens are in charge – they (not adults) develop and implement the safety messages and activities. TDS also reaches not only high school-age students, but middle schoolers and college-coeds as well.

TDS officials stress that the program works best when teens follow a four-step process that’s designed to be “helpful” rather than “prescriptive.” Teens start by identifying team and project leaders (usually 10-12 teens work best) who represent a cross-section of students (rather than a single organization) and grade levels. Working with an adult sponsor (school faculty or administration), the team develops its action plan for designing and delivering safety message to their peers. The action plan is based on the findings of a pre-assessment – a questionnaire all students in the school are asked to complete to determine their level of awareness of the top five risks for young drivers (as detailed above). Next, the team executes their action plan, starting with a teen-led press event (described in more detail in the media engagement section of this report). They follow that up with a series of activities (i.e., pledge drives, observational surveys, assemblies, activities at sporting and other extra-curricular events, etc.) designed to sustain message delivery throughout the school year. The four-step process concludes with a post-program assessment to gauge changes in risk awareness and/or driving behaviors.

The TTI staff is available to provide professional support to the peer-led teams. However, the goal is to leave as few “adult fingerprints” as possible, so the program remains credible with teens. The staff has developed a

**Unlike other programs that may focus on a single issue such as alcohol or texting, TDS addresses the five risks that are most common for teen drivers: nighttime driving, speeding, distractions caused by cell phones and other teen passengers, low seat belt use, and alcohol.**

## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

TDS playbook populated with dozens of project ideas to help schools get started, along with media training, free promotional items (i.e., t-shirts, wristbands, key chains, etc.), and survey analysis. TTI will also, upon request, generate an executive summary to help a school chart its progress and plan for the coming year.

To ensure that the program stays relevant and fresh, TDS established a student advisory board that includes representatives from across the state. "It's a big deal to be selected," said a TTI official. "Teens have leveraged it to secure college scholarships." The board meets quarterly via video conference to vet new materials, ideas and concepts presented by the TTI professionals, and share what's happening in their respective regions and schools. Two years ago, the TDS Cup was established (based on an advisory board recommendation) to recognize the outstanding small, medium and large schools throughout the program's footprint. Additionally, teens are invited to nominate a hardworking TDS teacher or community member for a *Sponstar* award.

TDS is sponsored in Texas by the Texas Department of Transportation and State Farm®. In 2011, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving the Houston-Galveston region, signed on as a TDS funder. "It's a low cost investment with great outreach and a solid rate of return," said the MPO's Director of Safety & Operations. "It's brilliant. Teens are invested in this program and the result is a reduction in crashes."

TTI has been monitoring the program's impact and found in a detailed comparison of 10 Texas counties with and without TDS, that injury and fatal crashes involving teen drivers decreased an average of 14.6% in the TDS counties. Meanwhile, an analysis of fatal crashes between 2003-2008 involving 13-19 year old drivers in the TDS counties of Bexar (which includes the city of San Antonio), Dallas (which includes the city of Dallas) and Harris (which includes the city of Houston) revealed declines of 37%, 49% and 71%, respectively. In Travis County (the control; including Austin), where TDS had not been implemented, fatal crashes for this age group increased 11% (Henk et al., 2010).

A detailed case study of the cities of Garland, where TDS is employed in all seven high schools, and Mesquite, a neighboring city with no TDS program, also garnered similarly impressive results. In the four years prior to TDS deployment in Garland, teen drivers were involved in 28% of all crashes, resulting in 12 fatalities. Teen involvement in crashes has dropped to 16% – claiming just one teen life – in the three years TDS has been in the Garland School District. Meanwhile, in the control city of Mesquite, teen involvement in crashes (24% pre-TDS versus 22% post-TDS) and teen fatalities (4 pre-TDS versus 3 post-TDS) have remained relatively stable (Henk et al., 2010).

In addition to crash reductions and lives saved, TTI researchers point to the economic benefits of the TDS program – \$500 million annually in savings calculated based on a conservative 25% net improvement

**Analysis of fatal crashes between 2003-2008 involving 13-19 year old drivers in the TDS counties of Bexar, Dallas and Harris revealed declines of 37%, 49% and 71%, respectively.**

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in teen crashes in Texas and the USDOT's estimate that \$5.8 million is the value of a life saved. Considering that TDS' annual operating budget is \$500,000, the program's benefits clearly outweigh its costs by a significant margin (Henk et al, 2010).

Results like these are why the Traffic Operations Division of the Georgia Department of Transportation piloted the TDS program in Georgia in 2007. Using grant funds, the program has grown slowly, but steadily and is now entrenched in 47 schools. Several Georgia high schools have been honored for their activities through the TDS Cup program, and in April 2011, Cara Tripodis, a member of the TDS leadership team at Johns Creek High School, was crowned Miss Georgia National Teenager. She's using her title to promote teen safe driving and the TDS program across the state.

While GDOT officials indicate that they have not been able to show a measurable decrease in crashes involving teens in the TDS schools, they are seeing an increase in awareness of teen crash risk. For example, post-assessment surveys completed by students at Cedar Grove High School reveal increases in awareness of risks associated with driving at night and speeding when compared to the pre-assessment findings at Duluth & Rockdale High Schools (Henk & Martinez, 2011). Similar gains are expected as more Georgia teens at TDS-participating schools complete the post-assessment survey.

In North Carolina, TDS was implemented in two high schools – South Johnston and Princeton – by the Johnston County Teen Coalition in February 2011. According to TDS officials, pre- and post-assessments at South Johnston showed a 150% improvement in awareness of four out of the five teen driving risks, while teens reporting *never* having engaged in risky behaviors including street-racing, not buckling up, running a red light, and driving with unbelted passengers improved by an overall average of 26%. Princeton High School students, meanwhile, increased their awareness of the risks associated with failing to wear a seat and driving distracted by 115% and 82%, respectively. Overall the Princeton teens' risk awareness, as a result of participating in the TDS program, increased by 50%.

Has this awareness prompted changes in teen driving behavior in Johnston County? According to a TDS review of fatal crashes involving teens between 2007 and 2009, seven to 11 young people died annually. A review of 2011 teen crashes for the first nine months of the year, revealed that the deadliest months for teen drivers (May through August) were fatality-free. In fact, the last fatal crash in the County involving a teen occurred in January 2011. Despite these gains, TDS officials report that the program ended in September 2011 due to a lack of funding.

In California, the SHSO has awarded a grant to SafeTREC, the Safe Transportation Research & Education Center at the Institute of Transportation Studies at Berkley, to launch TDS in the Golden State.

**According to a TDS review of fatal crashes involving teens between 2007 and 2009, seven to 11 young people died annually. A review of 2011 teen crashes for the first nine months of the year, revealed that the deadliest months for teen drivers (May through August) were fatality-free.**

## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

Working in partnership with TTI, SafeTREC officials are analyzing city and county teen crash data to identify the top 50 high risk areas. The goal is to have 20 schools on board for the start of the 2012-2013 school year.

SafeTREC officials stress that their goal is to imbed TDS in schools, show success and have it become a long-term program. "We know this program has worked in Texas and feel that the same outcomes can be achieved in California," said SafeTREC's Associate Director. Initially, TTI will handle outreach and school recruitment, while SafeTREC will oversee program evaluation with the eventual goal of taking complete ownership of TDS in California.

SHSO officials are equally optimistic about the program's success and believe that TDS' "plug and play" format (the four-step process outlined above) will be well-received by teachers and school administrators. As for teens, both SHSO and SafeTREC point to the fact that they're highly interested and motivated in addressing the social issues affecting them and their friends, and view TDS as an effective way to give them a strong voice for raising awareness about teen driver safety. Additionally, SafeTREC officials will be working with the Friday Night Live (FNL) Partnership to identify opportunities for collaboration as TDS gains traction in the state.

Founded in 1984, FNL is active in nearly all 58 counties in California and imbedded in high schools via a six-region, chapter network. The program works to change the culture around traffic safety through teen-led social norming activities. FNL is committed to the belief that a youth development framework, which is inclusive, comprehensive, youth-driven, and founded on current research, will improve the lives of young people and the communities in which they live. Like TDS, the FNL Partnership has a middle school component (Club Live) and has also broadened its reach beyond school campuses to include recreation facilities, housing projects, youth centers, and youth in detention centers.

FNL has reached more than one million teens since its inception. In 2011, the organization hosted a statewide teen safe driving summit, which brought together youth leaders from across the State and resulted in new methods to encourage their friends, classmates and peers to drive safely. From roadside safe driving rallies and new social media internet sites, to *X the TXT* pledge drives and distracted driving surveys on busy streets near high schools, FNL helped teens join forces to call attention to and reduce distracted driving collisions which are prevalent among teens. The partnership with TDS is likely to spark even more opportunities to reach teens with critical safe driving messages.

### KEY CONTACTS

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**Friday Night Live works to change the culture around traffic safety through teen-led social norming activities.**

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## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

**First launched in Tazewell County in 2007, Operation Teen Safe Driving (OTSD) engages teens in identifying and addressing risky driving behaviors through peer-to-peer and community outreach initiatives.**



### **Operation Teen Safe Driving**

The death of 15 teenagers in motor vehicle crashes over the course of 15 months sparked a teen safe driving initiative in Illinois that has grown from reaching teens in seven high schools to more than 105 across the state. First launched in Tazewell County in 2007, Operation Teen Safe Driving (OTSD) engages teens in identifying and addressing risky driving behaviors through peer-to-peer and community outreach initiatives.

All Illinois high schools (approximately 900) are invited to participate in the program by submitting an application explaining how they would address traffic safety in their school and community. Applications are reviewed in October by a panel of traffic safety experts, who select and announce the top 15 schools in the six regions of the state. Each school is then awarded a \$2,000 grant from the SHSO in November to implement their peer-to-peer/community outreach programs from December through March. Schools must then submit a final report in April outlining all program elements and outcomes, including press coverage (referenced in the media section of this report).

The program concludes with the selection of the top school in each region, based on the strength of their final report. The winning schools each receive prize money to host a post-prom event, while all schools submitting a report receive program continuation funds. Additionally, the top five schools from each region are invited to send students to a *Driving Skills for Life (DSFL), Ride and Drive* event sponsored by the Ford Motor Company Fund. During a DSFL event, teens observe professional drivers on two separate courses demonstrating critical driving skills and then have the opportunity to drive the same courses with tips and guidance provided by the professionals. The program helps novice drivers build skill in four key areas that contribute to

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more than 60% of teen crashes – speed/space management, vehicle handling, and hazard recognition.

Teens are responsible for handling all aspects of the OTSD program, but can seek guidance and assistance from adult liaisons with expertise in traffic safety. The program is managed by three full-time staff, but as many as 100 (primarily volunteers from partner agencies) can be working on the program when it's in full operation. OTSD is funded by the Illinois DOT Division of Traffic Safety (SHSO), The Allstate Foundation and Ford Motor Company Fund. SHSO officials point out that for every \$1 of public funding provided to OTSD, another \$5 is raised in private sector funding.

Is this investment generating a positive return? Although Illinois traffic fatalities were at an 80-year low in 2006 and 2007, teen deaths were not declining at the same rate. In 2007, 155 teens lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes. That number dropped to 93 in 2008 and has continued to fall steadily through 2010. And what has been the impact in Tazewell County? Not one teen has died in a motor vehicle crash since the advent of OTSD. Illinois' Secretary of State, who led the effort to strengthen the state's GDL program, credits the combination of tougher novice driver requirements and OTSD with sparking a 56% reduction in teen driving deaths over the past four years (Illinois Dept. of Transportation, 2011).

What's next for OTSD? In addition to continuing its highly successful run in Illinois, SHSO officials in Michigan have rolled out a program modeled after OTSD dubbed *Strive for a Safer Drive* or S4SD. Approximately 300 high schools in the 11 counties with the most teen traffic fatalities and serious injuries were invited to take part in the initiative. Fifty schools are now leveraging \$2,000 grants from AAA Michigan to help fund peer-to-peer campaigns focusing on seat belt use, speeding, and impaired and/or distracted driving. Just like Illinois, schools determined to have the top campaigns will be eligible to send students to a free DSFL clinic.

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), which is coordinating the initiative, is hoping that the S4SD will be as successful as OTSD in addressing teen crash risk in the State. In 2009, teens and young adults, ages 16-24, made up 14% of Michigan's driving population, but represented over 22% of drivers in all crashes and nearly 19% of drivers in fatal crashes (Michigan State Police, 2011). While the state's GDL program is credited with improving teen driver safety in Michigan, safety experts stress that additional strategies, in particular peer-to-peer programs, must be employed to address the number one killer of teens.



**The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Program (OHSP), which is coordinating the initiative, is hoping that the S4SD will be as successful as OTSD in addressing teen crash risk in the state.**

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**The program addresses attitudes and behaviors that can put novice drivers at risk through a variety of on-site activities, including a Fatal Vision® goggle course, the Quick Click Seat Belt Challenge, and a distracted driving simulator.**

### Rule the Road

In Indiana, SHSO officials believe that ensuring teens become good drivers requires more than a phased-in licensing period (teens may obtain a learners permit at 15 years of age with driver's education, 16 without, and must hold the permit for at least 180 days). That's why four years ago they launched *Rule the Road* (RTR), a full-day event held at locations around the state (four are planned for 2012) that's designed to give newly or nearly licensed teens the opportunity to learn and practice critical skills with professionals. Additionally, the program addresses attitudes and behaviors that can put novice drivers at risk through a variety of on-site activities, including a Fatal Vision® goggle course, the Quick Click Seat Belt Challenge, and a distracted driving simulator.

Teens are also given the opportunity to learn and practice maintaining vehicle control in snow and ice conditions through the use of a device called a drift lift. The technology, which is fitted to a vehicle, allows the front or rear wheels to be raised so that they reduce contact with the pavement, resulting in a skid. Driving school instructors and police, who are trained to operate vehicles in extreme and emergency situations, work with the teens who control the wheel to recover from a skid. The activity is not only one of the most popular with participants, but eye-opening as well.

"Most of the teens who come to *Rule the Road*, don't want to be there," admits the SHSO Director. "But we gradually see an attitude shift prompted by their interaction with the professionals and the time they spend driving. The activities are designed to challenge their pre-conceived notions about driving and help them walk away with a better understanding of the responsibility that comes with obtaining a license. We think that's important since the average age of the teens participating in the program is 15 – we're getting them before they're driving independently."

All teens who participate in the program complete a pre- and post-knowledge test to assess how well they "rule the road." They're asked to answer a series of true and false questions to gauge their awareness of teen crash risk and Indiana's cell phone law (GDL holders are prohibited from using cell phones while driving). The test also briefly outlines four driving situations teens may encounter on the road and asks them to choose what they would do. Pre-test scores average 89%, but increase to 94% following completion of the program.

RTR, which reaches approximately 1,000 teens annually, has a modest annual budget (approximately \$20,000) that's supplemented through donations of time and materials. "We partner with law enforcement and driving schools to provide both manpower and vehicles," said the SHSO Director. "Having police involved in the training helps teens realize that they're not the enemy."

While RTR is reaching a small cadre of teen drivers (driving schools and the state's 300 SADD chapters help get the word out), SHSO officials

believe that programs like this, coupled with strong GDL laws, do help. Rates per 100,000 population for drivers 16 and 17 years of age in fatal crashes in Indiana have declined steadily since 2004, to become the lowest of any group in 2010: 16.5% as compared to 31.7% and 29% for 18-to 20-year-olds and 21-to 24-year-olds, respectively. Since 2006, the number of young drivers in fatal crashes has decreased by 9% annually, though the number increased from 2009 to 2010 (Nagle, 2011). Safety officials will continue to monitor the data and may want to examine whether teens who receive instruction through *Rule the Road* do just that in comparison to their untrained counterparts.

### KEY CONTACT

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**Teens have responded enthusiastically to the campaign, which five years after its rollout continues to be widely recognized and accepted by young drivers.**

### Don't Drive Stupid

While Indiana's teens are encouraged to rule the road, Utah has taken a slightly different approach. Launched in 2006 under the direction of a statewide Teen Safe Driving Task Force, the *Don't Drive Stupid* campaign highlights how failing to buckle up, using a cell phone while driving, following too closely, speeding and weaving in and out of traffic, drinking and driving, and not being familiar with your car "can really make you look bad." All of the outreach materials (i.e., palm card, poster, tent card, etc.) prominently feature the image of a female teenager sporting a black eye, a large jagged scar on her cheek and a cut lip. Teen focus groups were convened to ensure that the theme, image and safety tips resonated with the target audience. Teens have responded enthusiastically to the campaign, which five years after its rollout continues to be widely recognized and accepted by young drivers.

According to SHSO officials, *Don't Drive Stupid* is a large-scale project (overseen by the Utah Zero Fatalities program) that involves numerous partners including state and local health departments, law enforcement officials, the Department of Transportation (which provides much of the funding), schools, and safety organizations. Teens were first introduced to the program through school-based presentations (i.e., driver education classes, assemblies) delivered by health educators.

In 2009, a peer-to-peer component – *Don't Drive Stupid, Let's Make it a Zero Fatalities Year* – was developed to engage teens in conveying the message. A tool kit that includes *Don't Drive Stupid* outreach materials, as well as suggested monthly activities, incentives (i.e., t-shirts, pens, lip balm, etc.) and other information was distributed to interested schools (typically a student organization with the support of a faculty advisor took

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the lead). To bolster participation, all schools were invited to submit a final report outlining their activities for the year. Outstanding campaigns were selected based on student population, and the winning schools each received \$1,000, \$500 of which must be used for driver education, while the remaining \$500 can be used for any purpose. Approximately 35 (or 20%) of Utah's high schools have participated annually in the program since its inception.

Teens are also reached through poster and video contests. The poster contest, which began in 2009, gives teen artists the opportunity to learn about and illustrate safe driving messages. Winning posters are featured in a Zero Fatalities calendar that's distributed throughout the state. Teens entering the video contest, meanwhile, must write and produce a 25-second safe driving PSA. The top 10 finalists are invited to attend a highly publicized premier at a movie theater, where the winning entries are announced. According to SHSO officials, the video contest, which is in its second year, has grown from 13 entries to 50, and teens travel from the "far corners of the state" to participate in the screening.

Are all of these moving parts helping to drive down teen crashes in Utah? Since the State's GDL law took effect in 1998, motor vehicle fatalities among teens have decreased 61%. SHSO officials point out, however, that between 2006 and 2010, the decline was particularly significant, as teen fatalities fell 30%. Gains were also made during this time period in reducing property damage (down 27%) and injury crashes (down 35.5%) involving teen drivers. It's also important to note that while crashes overall are down in Utah during this time period, crashes involving teens are down at a higher rate (Utah Department of Public Safety, 2012).

Staff responsible for overseeing the *Don't Drive Stupid* campaign currently only measure program reach. While this is not an indicator of success, the numbers are noteworthy – between 2006 and 2010, 94,282 teens (through 785 events) have heard the young driver message. However, SHSO officials recognize that a more formal evaluation process is needed to ensure that the resources invested in this initiative are not only resonating with teens, but also prompting them to refrain from *driving stupid*. Additionally, they understand the need to include teens at the table not only to help evaluate the data, but also to implement strategies that are meaningful for their peers.

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**Between 2006 and 2010, 94,282 teens (through 785 events) have heard the young driver message.**

The program is credited with sparking a 16% increase in teen belt usage over a 12 month period in one of the State's most seat belt-resistant counties.



### Seat Belts Are for Everyone

Getting teens to buckle up is at the heart of Kansas' Seat Belts Are for Everyone (or SAFE) program. Created and piloted in 2008 by the Sheriff of Crawford County, the program is credited with sparking a 16% increase (an additional 306 students) in teen belt usage over a 12 month period in one of the state's most seat belt-resistant counties (Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Center, 2010). Four years later, SAFE is being implemented in more than 90 high schools in 29 counties.

While Kansas teens, like their counterparts across the country, are the age group least likely to comply with seat belt laws (the state does have a primary belt use law for teens and adults [it's secondary for adults in the back seat]), they're more likely to be involved in crashes and suffer higher injury rates. To counter what SHSO officials describe as "a sense of invincibility," the SAFE program capitalizes on "an even stronger predilection of teens – buying power – by utilizing both positive and negative rewards to change behavior." Teens have six chances each month (during the school year) to win \$25 Visa gift cards in return for signing a pledge to buckle up. This incentive is coupled with a high visibility, youth-focused enforcement campaign that carries the threat of a \$60 fine if they fail to live up to that promise. These incentives and sanctions are incorporated into a schedule of outreach and educational activities planned and implemented by teens during the school year.

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While SAFE is a peer-to-peer initiative, SHSO officials point out that adults play a key role in helping to guide and support the program. Each county-based SAFE initiative has a local adult coordinator who recruits representatives from law enforcement agencies, schools, safety organizations, businesses, the media, and other interested entities. This coalition then works in partnership with the teen-led SAFE Club (which typically has a school sponsor – an administrator, faculty member or parent) to firm up the program schedule, solicit monetary and in-kind support, and generate earned media coverage.

Teens and law enforcement are also trained in implementing scientifically valid seat belt surveys, which are conducted unannounced at least twice during the school year – prior to the start of the SAFE campaign (October) to establish a seat belt use baseline and after all educational and enforcement activities are completed (March). A mid-campaign survey (January) is also encouraged to monitor the initiative's progress as well as raise awareness about the importance of buckling up. All survey data is shared with the SHSO, which tracks how schools and counties are doing and assesses the program's overall impact.

Competition among schools is encouraged through the production of county-specific pledge cards that feature street signs imprinted with the participating schools' mascots. Awards ceremonies are held in each county at the end of the school year following receipt of the final observation survey results. In addition to conducting the last monthly Visa gift card drawing, program results are shared and a grand prize is awarded to the schools with the highest overall seat belt usage rate and largest increase in seat belt usage.

**During the 2010-2011 school year, the program reached 40,100 students in 94 schools; 96% of those schools experienced a positive change in seat belt use.**

Is SAFE prompting more teens to buckle up and recognize the lifesaving value of seat belts? SHSO officials, along with the program's many funders, including KDOT, State Farm®, AAA, the Kansas Trauma Fund, the Department of Health & Environment, and Kansas Trauma Units, believe that it's changing the attitudes and behaviors of teens across the state. During the 2010-2011 school year, the program reached 40,100 students in 94 schools; 96% of those schools experienced a positive change in seat belt use. The average baseline survey for all participating schools was 64%, and the average final survey was 78% – an increase of 14%. Increases in belt usage by participating counties ranged from 2% to a high of 68%, while six counties recorded final seat belt survey usage rates ranging from 96% to 100%. As for statewide impact, the observational seat belt survey rate for 14-17 year olds has increased from 61% in 2009 to 71% in 2011, prompting the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office to proclaim that "SAFE works" (Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office, 2011).

Meanwhile in Crawford County, the birthplace of SAFE, belt use has increased from 65% in 2008 to 85% in 2011, a 20% gain. Teen driving-

## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

related crashes in the county have also fallen by 96% between 2009 and 2011, from 76 to 3. And there have been no teen driving-related fatalities in the county since 2008. Prior to that, there was at least one teen death a year (Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office, 2011).

**In Crawford County, the birthplace of SAFE, belt use has increased from 65% in 2008 to 85% in 2011, a 20% gain.**

What's next for the SAFE program? The State SAFE Coordinator indicated that a distracted driving component is being piloted in five counties during the 2011-2012 school year. SAFE Club members are using the same observational survey instrument and timeline used to collect seat belt data to gauge how many teens are talking on cell phones and/or texting while driving. Additionally, high visibility enforcement will be used to ensure compliance with Kansas' distracted driving law, which bans all permit and intermediate license holders (14-17 years of age) from using a wireless communications device while driving. (A primary texting ban applies to all drivers 18 and older.)

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Missouri's Battle of the Belt program uses surveys, campaigns and incentives to generate teen awareness of belt use.

### Battle of the Belt

Teen seat belt use is also the focus of a statewide peer-to-peer program in Missouri. Dubbed *Battle of the Belt*, the program uses observational surveys and educational campaigns to generate greater teen awareness of the importance of buckling up and complying with the State's seat belt law. The latter presents a particular challenge to SHSO and law enforcement officials. The law is primary for eight to 15-year-olds, but secondary for all drivers and passengers 16 and older. Since teens in Missouri may obtain a permit at 15 and an intermediate license at 16, newly licensed teen drivers can't be stopped and ticketed for failure to buckle up unless they've committed another motor vehicle offense. This disparity in the law sets a dangerous precedent that is claiming young lives. Between 2008

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## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

**A strong support system has been a key reason for the program's steady growth – last year 155 high schools in the state's 10 regions participated.**

and 2010, 180 of the 265 teenagers (68%) 13 to 19 years of age killed in motor vehicle crashes in Missouri were unbelted (MoDOT, 2011).

First introduced in southwest Missouri by the Missouri Emergency Nurses Association and St. John's Hospital, *Battle of the Belt* was expanded statewide in 2006 by the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety in conjunction with American Family Insurance. In 2011, the Missouri College of Emergency Physicians signed on as a sponsor as well. A statewide coordinator, who is affiliated with the SHSO, oversees the program and works with seven regional coordinators located around the state. This strong support system has been a key reason for the program's steady growth – last year 155 high schools in the state's 10 regions participated.

*Battle of the Belt* runs over a six week period in the fall (October-November), beginning with a surprise seat belt observation survey during week one. Between weeks two and five, teens implement a variety of educational activities and presentations to promote the importance of seat belt use to their peers. The student planning group (with the support of an administrator, faculty member or parent) is encouraged to take advantage of educational resources available through the State Highway Patrol (i.e., SIDNE or Simulated Impaired DrivINg Experience, safety belt convincer, videos and seat belt presentations), the SHSO (i.e., PowerPoint presentations, television and radio spots, posters, young driver statistics), ThinkFirst Missouri (which addresses the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries which are often caused by car crashes), and the Emergency Nurses Association (i.e., assemblies, presentations). During the final week of the program, teens conduct a second surprise observational survey to determine if their peers' belt use increased.

In addition to the educational campaign, schools are also invited to submit 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) communicating the importance of teens using seat belts whenever they ride or drive in a motor vehicle, regardless of who is driving. An expert panel of judges evaluate the PSAs for originality, creativity, persuasiveness, clarity of message, and quality. All entries must also include the *Buckle Up/Arrive Alive* message.

Schools are required to submit their survey results, an outline of their educational campaigns and PSAs to the SHSO at the conclusion of the program. Two schools in each of the 10 Missouri regions are honored based on the number of students who buckled up, not for their educational campaigns. Competition results are tallied using the difference between the two surveys to determine the school with the highest overall belt use rate and the most improved seat belt use. The winning schools receive \$500 for future seat belt educational initiatives. Schools are also recognized for achieving gold (99-100%), silver (95-98%) or bronze (91-94%) levels of seat belt use and receive a banner donated by the Missouri College of Emergency Physicians. The top three PSAs are also selected

## Engaging Teens in Understanding and Addressing the Risks

from the video entries and the winning schools awarded cash prizes to further seat belt education.

Are Missouri teens, despite a secondary seat belt law, buckling up? SHSO officials report that teens are responding enthusiastically to the Battle of the Belt and the chance to compete with neighboring schools. Plus, the seat belt surveys conducted at participating schools show an increase in proper restraint year after year. In the Northeast Region, for example, the 2011 most improved seat belt use award was presented to Nodaway High School where teen belt use increased from 31% to 69%, a 122% gain. Meanwhile, the students at Osborn High School, winner of the Northeast Region's highest overall seat belt use award, achieved a 100% usage rate (Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety, 2012).

Overall teen belt use across the state is climbing, albeit slowly, from 61% in 2009 to 66% in 2010 and 67% last year. However, it's still below the current statewide belt use rate of 79% (Missouri Safety Center, 2010). That's why, explained the Statewide Coordinator, "we're starting to dig deeper to see where we can make inroads in communities with seat belt usage rates of 50% or less." Currently 36 schools have been identified. The state and regional coordinators will be working with police, emergency nurses, safety advocates, and school and elected officials to help communities understand that their teens are at risk. "If we can get adults and, in particular, parents to recognize and reinforce the importance of seat belts and buckle up, their teens will be more likely to do so, too."

**Overall teen belt use across the State is climbing, albeit slowly, from 61% in 2009 to 66% in 2010 and 67% last year.**

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# 6

## Garnering Consistent Media Coverage of Teen Driving

### An Overview

The media plays a critical role in helping to increase awareness of teen driving and the impact novice drivers have on all roadway users. News stories, however, are usually prompted by fatal teen crashes or the introduction of legislation calling for tighter licensing restrictions. Encouraging the press to regularly cover novice driving as well as leveraging social media in a manner that informs, educates and engages key audiences present both opportunities and challenges for SHSOs.

**The key, said one veteran television reporter, is to “mine out the gems of information that the press doesn’t hear about” to sell the topic and generate coverage.**

For example, ask a reporter to write a story about the importance of driver education and his response is likely to be, “sure I’ll get right on that after I file my story on teaching grade schoolers how to multiply and divide.” But couch that request with information about how many teens fail the driving test on their first attempt and what’s tripping them up, and the reporter is more apt to be interested, even intrigued. The key, said one veteran television reporter, is to “mine out the gems of information that the press doesn’t hear about” to sell the topic and generate coverage.

Reporters call these gems *news hooks* and they expect the people pitching the story to provide them, regardless of the topic. Take statistics, for example: SHSOs often announce how their respective states are doing in reducing roadway crashes, injuries and fatalities via press releases or at news conferences filled with numbers. While this information typically garners press coverage, media professionals are trained to look beyond the *who* and *what* to the *when*, *where* and *why*. And that last – the *why* – is what particularly entices journalists.

“We like data,” said a longtime newspaper reporter. But when it comes to teen driving data, he stresses, reporters not only want to know how many teens are crashing, but *when* (i.e., after school, at night, on a certain day of the week?), *where* (i.e., on highways, local roads, at a particular intersection?) and *why*. Helping reporters understand the causation factors or *why* for teens (i.e., distraction/inattention, inexperience, speeding, etc), will not only make for a better story, but will also establish the individual and/or organization providing the issue as an expert on the topic. “Experts are important to us,” the newspaper reporter added. “We rely on them to provide important background information and will go back to them if they’re resourceful and readily available.” Plus, if an expert has an idea to pitch or news to share, reporters are more likely to listen.

Research is also of interest to journalists, especially illuminating research. The key to leveraging research, however, is to give it a local slant, make it easily understandable and offer up individuals who can talk about how

## Key Take-Aways for Ensuring Success

- ✓ Don't assume the media knows the magnitude of the novice driver problem.
- ✓ Research the media outlet and/or reporter before making the pitch to ensure suitability.
- ✓ Mine your state's teen driving data and information to identify unique news hooks.
- ✓ Simplify the research and give it a local slant by offering up individuals (i.e., teens, parents) who can discuss how they're impacted by the findings.
- ✓ Provide web content, particularly hyperlinks, to *traditional* as well as online media outlets.
- ✓ Establish your SHSO as the leading source for teen driving information and be proactive whether the news is good or bad.
- ✓ Train and incentivize teens to promote their events and deliver the message to the media.



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## Garnering Consistent Media Coverage of Teen Driving

**“When you do make a pitch,” stressed one reporter, “be discerning about what you have to offer.”**

it impacts them. For instance, research confirming that a passenger restriction is effective for reducing novice driver crash risk could generate a few column inches or a brief mention on the evening news. But help reporters understand that teen passengers distract novice drivers, that the state's current novice licensing law doesn't include a passenger restriction, and that 50 teen passengers (driven by their peers) died in motor vehicle crashes last year, and the research takes on a whole new dimension. Offer to help the reporter get in touch with several teen drivers and their parents, including one who lost a child who was riding in a vehicle driven by a teen, and that's a story.

In addition to leveraging data and research, entities trying to garner media coverage – regardless of the medium (i.e., radio, television, print, online) – need to know who they're pitching to. Reporters, editors and producers all stress the importance of doing your homework. For example, look at how a television station typically packages a story – what's covered during the 5 o'clock news will look and feel much different than what's featured on a weekend morning show. Review a selection of a columnist's work to get a feel for the tone, content and audience to determine if the writer is a good fit for teen driving. Listen to radio stations to gauge what on-air personalities are talking about (taking particular note of whether they mention being a parent) and visit press websites to determine who is responsible for not only covering stories, but also assigning them. “When you do make a pitch,” stressed one reporter, “be discerning about what you have to offer. There are fewer and fewer of us and we're all wearing many hats. If you go to a reporter or media outlet too often with irrelevant or tedious information, we'll shut down.”

While the Internet provides additional opportunities to generate *earned* (or free) coverage of teen driving information through a variety of channels (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Four Square, YouTube, etc.), advocates shouldn't discount traditional media outlets – they have websites, too, and are looking for good content. “When I write a story for the paper,” said one reporter, “I'm also thinking about the web component. Are there databases, studies and other information that I can include in the story as hyperlinks?” Providing this information to reporters without their prompting will help them do their job and expand the story's reach to a larger audience. Visuals are also critical and used by all media channels.

Reporters are also interested in important anniversary dates or significant milestones (i.e., first anniversary of a state's GDL law, a full decade of GDL) as well as report cards (i.e., how a state's GDL ranks in comparison to its neighbors and/or nationwide) and survey results (i.e., parent and teen support of GDL programs and provisions, teen compliance with GDL restrictions, etc.) “I keep a tickler file and go through it regularly for story ideas,” said one reporter. “It's all about feeding the beast,” said another long-time journalist. “We rely on people to share ideas and information with us. If you've got a good story idea, buy a reporter a cup of coffee.”

## Garnering Consistent Media Coverage of Teen Driving

When it comes to teen driving, reporters are in agreement that they want to hear the good news, too. “Absolutely,” said a newspaper reporter. “If there’s been a notable decline in teen driving deaths over the past couple of years, I’m interested. But I expect the source to take a look at what’s prompting the reduction – what’s working. I’d also like to know how this decline compares to other states or municipalities.”

At the same time, journalists stress that teen driving advocates should get “out in front” when a serious injury or fatal crash occurs. “We’re going to cover these crashes, so this is your opportunity to offer insight into teen driving and help frame the story,” said a television reporter. At the very least, SHSOs should be proactive and reach out to the press to offer background on teen driving risk, crash rates and causation factors.



**The GHSA survey of SHSOs found, not surprisingly, that 75% regularly write and disseminate press releases and 48.7% host teen driving events to prompt press coverage.**

### The Media Takes the Lead

So what are SHSOs doing to enlist the media’s support in covering teen driving on a consistent basis? The GHSA survey of SHSOs found, not surprisingly, that 75% regularly write and disseminate press releases and 48.7% host teen driving events to prompt press coverage. Just a handful of states (7.3%) conduct polls or surveys, regularly meet with key reporters or editors (12.1%), or write op-ed pieces or letters to the editor (14.6%). As for using social media to bolster awareness, 17% of SHSOs Tweet, while 14.6% use Facebook.

Several of the SHSO initiatives profiled earlier in this report capitalized on the work of a teen driving task force or commission to generate news stories over an extended period of time. In Illinois, however, the teen driving stories, rather than the task force, came first. In 2006, the *Chicago Tribune* launched a year-long series on teen driving that was prompted by an editor whose twin sons were taking high school driver education. After learning how dangerous driving is for teens and how little it’s covered in the press, the editor, according to a reporter who worked on the series, challenged the staff to “sink their teeth” into the issue and come up with story ideas that got at the “root cause” of the problem.

**Teens at the Wheel** not only addressed such heady issues as why teens crash, what’s the best and most appropriate driver training, and how brain development factors into the equation, but also what parents can do, how teens who survived a crash are helping to educate their peers, and what the legislature is doing to beef up the licensing system. The newspaper also committed to writing an in-depth story on every teen killed in the Chicago metro area (covering six counties) that year. Fifty-nine teens lost their lives in 49 teen driving crashes, and all were memorialized in the publication. By the time the series ended, the *Tribune* had written more than 60 stories and editorials on teen driving. The Illinois Secretary of State, who is recognized for his focus on safety, took note of the coverage

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## Garnering Consistent Media Coverage of Teen Driving

**By planting the seed and staying in touch with key reporters, producers and editors, states will be better positioned to secure media coverage as opportunities present themselves.**

several months into the series, convened a task force and the rest, as noted in the first section of this report (on page 12), is history.

What lesson can the SHSOs learn from this effort? Most notably that they shouldn't assume that the press recognizes the magnitude of the teen driving problem. "I didn't realize until I started researching the issue that car crashes are the number one killer of teens," said a veteran Tribune reporter and the author of many of the teen driving articles. "And even then I didn't think there would be much interest in our series. But I was proven wrong after the first story. We received a lot of letters and e-mails confirming that people really do care about teen driving."

The Tribune reporter admits that this lack of knowledge results in complacency among the press. "If we thought a disease was taking 5,000 teens lives every year, we'd be interested in trying to figure out a way to cut into this number. But it's car crashes – something we all seem to think kids just have to get through." SHSOs, therefore, should take the time to educate journalists about teen driving recognizing that the stories may not come right away. By planting the seed and staying in touch with key reporters, producers and editors, however, states will be better positioned to secure media coverage as opportunities present themselves.



### **States Leverage Commissions, Programs to Generate News**

Being proactive with the media, as illustrated by New Jersey's Teen Driver Study Commission (detailed in the GDL section of this report on page 14), can pay *big dividends*. The SHSO office continuously provided Commission updates to the press and posted information on its website. Six months later, when the Commission issued its report to the Governor, every major print and broadcast media outlet in the state was in attendance, along with reporters from neighboring New York and Pennsylvania. The press continued to heavily cover teen driving over the course of the next three years, regularly calling on the SHSO, which had established itself as the lead source for teen driving information, for comment and assistance.

What else can SHSOs do to engage the media? In Texas, the officials behind *Teens in the Driver Seat* (TDS) recognize that teens, in addition to adults, can play an active and productive role in addressing the novice driver issue (the program is detailed in the teen engagement section of this report on page 50). From the initial press event kicking off a TDS program in a school, to pre- and post-assessment teen risk awareness survey results, to the end of the year wrap-up, teens are trained to lead and call press events, issue press releases (TDS provides fill-in-the-blank press releases that can be localized by teens), and respond to media inquiries. The news teens are sharing is good, not tragic. They're focusing

## Garnering Consistent Media Coverage of Teen Driving

on the gains made in getting teens to recognize and address risk, the actions they're taking to educate their peers, and how those efforts are helping to reduce the incidence of crashes in their community. The effort is paying off – the program has consistently recognized huge gains in media engagement over the past four years and generated more than \$3 million in earned media in Texas and Georgia.

TDS officials, who collect and analyze the teen risk awareness data from all participating schools across the State, also leverage this database to inform the media about the attitudes of Texas teens. The information is not only of interest to Lone Star State media, but has been featured in stories in *USA TODAY* and on the CBS Evening News. The program also uses Facebook and YouTube to help teens promote their safe driving message to peers.

Meanwhile, teens participating in Illinois' *Operation Teen Safe Driving* (OTSD) peer-to-peer program (described in the teen engagement section of this report on page 56) are required to engage the media in covering their school and community-based teen awareness programs. This effort must be detailed, through press clips and coverage information, in the schools' final report that's submitted to OTSD officials. Regardless of media market size, the press requirement is weighted the same for every participating school and factored into the program judging. "We want teens to understand that the media can be a powerful partner in getting the word out about teen driving," said a SHSO official, "and that teens, not adults, are the most appropriate spokespersons."

Both the Kansas and Missouri teen-led seat belt programs (detailed in the teen engagement section of this report on pages 63-65) also include a media component. However, neither program evaluates the teens on their ability to inform and engage the media. Rather, they focus on improvements made in seat belt use and share this data with the media.

Finally, events that give the press the opportunity to interact with teens in the driving environment have sparked strong media coverage. From Indiana's *Rule the Road* program and OTSD's *Driving Skills for Life* component to teen-led seat belt and cell phone checks in school parking lots, SHSOs are and should continue to make the press aware of these highly visual opportunities to talk directly with teens about the issue that claims more young lives than the next three leading causes combined.

**SHSOs are and should continue to make the press aware of these highly visual opportunities to talk directly with teens about the issue that claims more young lives than the next three leading causes combined.**

## Conclusion

States are making headway in addressing teen driver safety through the initiatives outlined in this publication (as well as many others that are not detailed due to space limitations). While there's no doubt that Graduated Driver License programs coupled with strong enforcement are helping to reduce the number of teens dying on our nation's roadways, parent and teen engagement, driver education and training, and media coverage are, to varying degrees, also helping to spark greater awareness and safety gains nationwide.

However, continued research and ongoing evaluation is needed (measuring not just impact, but outcomes) to determine what initiatives have the greatest impact and are truly working. For example, what is the most appropriate licensure age? Do teen-led programs prompt long-term attitude and behavioral change that results in fewer crashes and convictions for motor vehicle offenses? Do parent programs facilitate greater understanding and enforcement of GDL provisions, resulting in fewer teen crashes and convictions? What is the right amount of training needed to ensure novice drivers build skill and reduce risk? And, does media coverage of teen driving prompt sustained awareness and action or simply cursory interest while it's on the front page? By answering these and other important questions, States will be better positioned to **do something about teens** and make significant gains in achieving zero fatalities, not only for experienced motorists, but also for our most vulnerable drivers.





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