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# Protecting Teen Drivers

A Guidebook for State Highway Safety Offices



## Introduction

**Teen driver.** Two words that elicit immediate attention, whether you are a parent, health care provider, insurance professional or public official responsible for improving highway safety. And that attention is for good reason – **motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15 to 20 year-olds.**<sup>1</sup> Teens aged 15 to 20 are significantly overrepresented in all types of traffic crashes. Just over 6% of all licensed drivers, teens in this age group accounted for 12% of all drivers in fatal crashes and 14% of drivers in all crashes in 2008.

The over-involvement of teens in traffic crashes makes it a topic of obvious concern. Because young people are lost to death and debilitating injury before having a chance to live a full life, teen drivers are often the focus of legislative, media, enforcement, and educational efforts to improve safety. Some of these efforts may improve safety for teen drivers; others are less likely to do so. The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and State Farm Insurance® convened an Expert Panel on Teen Driving to sift through and identify programs and policies most likely to improve driver safety outcomes for teens. The result of the Panel's work is the development of this **Guidebook** for State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) to assist in their efforts with teens and others who influence them. While many organizations have a role in teen driver safety, SHSOs can be leaders by directly promoting policies and funding programs that have been proven through research or evaluation to decrease teen death and injury on our highways.

<sup>1</sup> NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts: 2008 Data: Young Drivers*, DOT-HS-811-169, (2009).

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Additional strategies that show great promise in reducing teen involvement in risky driving behavior and crashes are also presented for consideration. This **Guidebook** was created to provide concrete strategies and showcase innovative programs that SHSOs can replicate in their own states to reduce the often tragic toll associated with teen drivers.

There is no single strategy or law that will absolutely protect young drivers as they take to the road. As with most complex problems, improving safety for teen drivers requires a combination of tactics that address many aspects of teen driving behavior. Enlightened state leaders recognize that a solid combination of effective laws, enforcement and education can help parents set limits on driving by teens, allowing young drivers to develop the experience and good driving habits that will help keep them safe.

This guide examines six strategies SHSOs can champion that have been proven to be effective or demonstrated significant promise in addressing teen driver safety. They are:

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A discussion about the specifics of each strategy, along with examples of current state efforts reflective of each approach, will give guidance to SHSOs on how to implement similar programs or strategies in their own state.

# Legislation/Policy

Laws and policies govern almost all aspects of driving; they tell us who, when, where, and under what circumstances someone can drive. Driving-related laws are parameters that define the act of driving and are applied to all drivers. Laws and policies aimed at young drivers set even more restrictions on teen drivers. And for good reason. With teen drivers' overrepresentation in all kinds of crashes, laws can limit driving behavior and set boundaries about acceptable driving practices for this subset of the driving population. Additional restrictions help young drivers develop habits necessary to be safe drivers while giving them further opportunities to practice important driving skills. The following paragraphs will discuss five policy areas that are particularly relevant to improving safety for teen drivers.

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## Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Laws

One of the most proven-effective policy strategies aimed at teen drivers, GDL laws, delay full licensure to allow new drivers time to gain critical driving skills under low risk conditions while reducing those things that cause the greatest risk.<sup>2</sup> According to the CDC,<sup>3</sup> general GDL principles include:

- Encouragement of low-risk supervised practice driving
- Keeping beginning drivers out of high-risk driving situations
- Limiting when and with whom teens can drive, once licensed
- Delaying full driving privileges until teen drivers are more experienced and mature
- Finding an appropriate trade-off between safety and mobility

Forty-nine U.S. states and the District of Columbia have adopted GDL systems that include three basic stages: a minimum supervised learner's period; once the driving test is passed, an

<sup>2</sup> NHTSA, *Countermeasures That Work: A Highway Safety Countermeasure Guide For State Highway Safety Offices* Fourth Edition, DOT HS 811 081, (Washington, DC: 2009), 6-6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> A. Greenspan, "Graduated Driver Licensing: Policy Strategy for Reducing Teen Deaths and Injuries," *Injury Prevention Through the Life Cycle*, NCSL Advisory Council Meeting, May 14, 2009.

intermediate license that limits unsupervised driving in high-risk situations; and a full-privilege driver's license available after completion of the first two stages. While the majority of states have all three licensing stages, the specifics of GDL restrictions vary significantly.<sup>4</sup> As a result, many states have opportunities to strengthen their laws by adopting policy elements that improve the application and/or operation of their GDL systems.

### *Application Improvements*

SHSOs can significantly impact teen driver safety by supporting policy improvements to GDL laws demonstrated to improve safety outcomes. By fine-tuning policies related to how and to whom GDL laws apply, policymakers can focus efforts more closely on teens exhibiting high risk behaviors. SHSOs could consider the following research-based improvements to support GDL laws:

- Delaying the age of initial licensing. Some GDL research suggests safety will be improved if a teen waits until age 16 to begin driving.<sup>5</sup> With an older age comes more maturity, generally a positive in terms of traffic safety outcomes.
- Increasing the supervised driving period for beginning drivers. The opportunity to acquire additional driving experience under controlled adult supervision can improve teen driver safety. Experts believe at least six months of supervised practice driving is advisable for this phase of an effective GDL system.<sup>6 7</sup> (see page 6)
- Requiring a responsible adult to oversee a teen driver's supervised driving period. Some states allow an older sibling or licensed peer to supervise a teen driver's practice driving during this period; experts believe that when possible, an older, more responsible adult is a better choice for this important task.<sup>8</sup>
- Banning teen drivers from having any young passengers for at least the first six months of the intermediate license phase. Passenger distractions can significantly affect inexperienced drivers. By restricting all young passengers during this critical learning period, research shows teens are better able to focus on mastering the driving task.<sup>9 10</sup>
- Beginning nighttime driving restrictions at 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m.<sup>11</sup> Nighttime driving restrictions are a key element of the intermediate license phase. Restrictions in many states do not begin until midnight or later. Researchers believe earlier nighttime driving restrictions beginning during early evening hours will not preclude essential driving by teens, but will limit high-risk recreational driving.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, *Licensing Ages and Graduated Licensing System*, [http://www.iihs.org/laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf). (March, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> A.F. Williams, "Young driver risk factors: successful and unsuccessful approaches for dealing with them and an agenda for the future," *Journal for Injury Prevention* 12 (2006): i4-i8.

<sup>6</sup> NCHRP, *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers* (Washington, DC: Transportation Research Board, 2007), V-10.

<sup>7</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-11.

<sup>9</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-4, 15.



## **New York strengthens its GDL law**

In the wake of a particularly deadly crash that killed five teens in 2007, the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (NY DMV) Commissioner channeled his strong interest in teen drivers to create a new Office of the Young Driver within the DMV to address 16 to 24 year old drivers. The heightened awareness of teen driving crashes in New York led the NY DMV to champion a package of improvements to existing GDL laws. In addition to a ban on portable electronic devices for all drivers that was effective in November 2009, the New York Legislature strengthened GDL laws to include the following: the required supervised driving time increased from 20 to 50 hours, 15 of which must be after sunset; young drivers must hold their permit for six months prior to receiving an intermediate level license; and the number of non-family member passengers under 21 allowed in the vehicle of a GDL restricted driver was reduced from two to one. Changes in the New York GDL law took effect on February 22, 2010; DMV officials plan to evaluate the impact of these improvements.

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- Prohibiting the use of electronic devices by GDL-restricted drivers. Due to driver inexperience and increased crash risk, teens should be prohibited from using all electronic devices such as iPods, GPS navigational devices or cellular telephones while driving.<sup>13</sup>
- Requiring GDL-restricted drivers to maintain a clean driving record free of GDL, moving, alcohol or seat belt violations prior to full licensure. Teens with problematic driving records should be required to complete an incident-free period of driving equal, at minimum, to the period required for intermediate licensing.<sup>14</sup>

### Operational Improvements

Even when a state GDL law includes all the optimal policy elements, improvements can be made to increase understanding, enforcement and support of these important laws. SHSOs are uniquely positioned to encourage the adoption of GDL improvements by state policymakers and highway safety stakeholders to increase teen safety. Operational enhancements of GDL laws SHSOs can consider include:

- Requiring parents of soon-to-be GDL license holders to complete an orientation or training on GDL basics before their teen begins the GDL process.<sup>15 16</sup> Instruction of this type could improve parental confidence in exerting authority over teen driving behavior and may increase parental support for enforcing passenger and nighttime driving restrictions.<sup>17 18</sup>
- Supporting comprehensive community safety programs that involve teens to encourage parental enforcement of GDL restrictions and other traffic safety laws with teen drivers.<sup>19</sup>

Enforcing GDL restrictions can be challenging for law enforcement officers. Proactive enforcement of GDL passenger and nighttime driving restrictions requires officers to make judgments about driver age before a vehicle has even been stopped. Operational changes that improve the ability of enforcement officers to identify and track GDL license holders are being explored in some states through a variety of innovative means.

- Adopting a statewide policy of affixing a GDL identifier to vehicles operated by teen drivers will improve the ability of law enforcement officers to correctly identify drivers operating with GDL-restricted licenses.<sup>20</sup>
- Clearly listing applicable GDL restrictions on teen driver licenses assists law enforcement in identifying appropriate violations.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-4.

<sup>14</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-8.

<sup>15</sup> New Jersey Teen Driver Study Commission, Recommendation Report, March 2008, [http://www.nj.gov/oag/hts/downloads/TDSC\\_Report\\_web.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/oag/hts/downloads/TDSC_Report_web.pdf) (July 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>17</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>18</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-19.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, i4-i8.

<sup>20</sup> New Jersey Teen Driver Study Commission, Recommendation Report, March 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-24.

- Providing a checkbox on the traffic citation form to specifically identify GDL violations would allow tracking of individual and statewide violation trends, providing useful feedback to policymakers and enforcement officials about teen driver compliance with GDL laws.<sup>22</sup>
- Supporting and providing training for law enforcement, prosecutors and the judiciary on the components and rationale for GDL laws and policies. Greater familiarity with key GDL provisions by critical stakeholders will increase successful enforcement, prosecution and adjudication of GDL violations, improving teen driver safety.<sup>23</sup>

Not all modifications proposed to improve GDL policies have the intended effect of advancing safety. While improvement efforts may be well-intentioned, changes have been suggested to GDL laws in some states that if ratified, would actually have a negative impact on teen driver safety. SHSOs are often in a position to offer guidance to policymakers interested in teen driving issues and can suggest alternative GDL improvements that will result in increased teen safety. The following are examples of policy change efforts proposed in some states that, if enacted, would be more likely to have a negative effect on teen driver safety.<sup>24</sup>

- Reducing the time GDL drivers are subject to restrictions or licensing periods in exchange for completing driving-related training.<sup>25</sup> While proposed to incentivize training, the result of this effort would trade off additional driving experience for a lower level of skill improvement. The desired effect of this change may be to improve safety, but the real effect is more likely to decrease it.
- Dismissing teen traffic violations in exchange for attendance at traffic safety classes.<sup>26</sup> Young drivers subject to GDL restrictions need the supervision and experience gained from the successful progression through three stages of GDL. If a teen's driving results in traffic violations, that signals a need for additional supervision or driving practice, rather than an educational experience repeating lessons presumably learned in driver education classes. More importantly, by dismissing traffic citations in exchange for attendance at a class, licensing authorities fail to learn of problematic driving behavior and the GDL licensed teen does not get the remedial attention and time needed to change poor driving habits.
- Lowering the age when a teen can begin driving in order to lengthen the permit phase.<sup>27</sup> Longer permit periods can

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-25.

<sup>24</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-9, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-14-15.

<sup>26</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-9.

<sup>27</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-11.



improve safety by providing more time for supervision and driving practice. But experts agree that delaying the onset of driving significantly improves overall safety for teens. Maturity and decision-making skills increase with age. Therefore, lowering the age at which a teen can drive – even if the permit phase is lengthened – increases teen risk and reduces the overall safety benefit.

### Primary Seat Belt Laws

The research on the safety benefits of using seat belts is well known: when used, lap/shoulder seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger vehicle occupants by 45% and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50%.<sup>28 29</sup> Data from fatal and injury crashes show teens have among the lowest seat belt use rates of the driving population. Research has clearly demonstrated that when seat belt laws are enforced as a primary offense, seat belt use rates tend to be higher than in states that do not allow primary enforcement. For this reason, a primary seat belt law covering all teen drivers and their passengers is an effective strategy SHSOs can support to significantly improve teen driver safety. Specific primary seat belt policy elements can further strengthen a law's effectiveness when it comes to teens. Recommended primary seat belt policy elements include:

- Primary seat belt laws should cover all seating positions in each motor vehicle.<sup>30 31</sup> Requiring every passenger in the vehicle to use seat belts, via a primary belt law, will save lives and prevent injuries.
- Violation of a primary seat belt law by a GDL-restricted driver should delay the young driver's progression to the next, less restrictive GDL phase.<sup>32</sup> Concern about triggering this delay will provide a considerable incentive for teens to buckle up. Teens cited for non-use of seat belts need additional time and supervision to improve their driving habits.
- In states using a point-based driver license system, points should be assessed for GDL-restricted drivers if cited for a seat belt violation.<sup>33</sup> The importance of seat belt use for young drivers as they develop the skills and experience necessary to drive safely cannot be understated. By assessing points for failure to use a seat belt, licensing authorities send a powerful message about the need for teens to use this important safety equipment.

<sup>28</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-11.

<sup>29</sup> NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts: 2008 Data: Occupant Protection*, Report DOT-HS-811-160 (2009).

<sup>30</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-27.

<sup>31</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 2-28.

<sup>32</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-9.

<sup>33</sup> Expert Panel

## Distracted Driving and Technology Laws

Driving while distracted by technology raises issues for all drivers, but even more so when an inexperienced novice driver is behind the wheel. Today's teens have been raised with multiple forms of technology and are confident users of the latest electronic gadgets. Communication with and between teens is often electronic, using texting and multi-function cell phones that make communication almost effortless. With a combination of technologically confident teens, readily available technology and the complex task of driving that has little room for distraction, it is easy to understand why young drivers using technology while driving are at tremendous risk on the road.

Teens may intellectually understand that using electronic devices while driving increases crash risk, but these devices are such a large part of their lives that they persist in using them while behind the wheel. Modifying the culture of instant communication to exclude the driver's seat will be challenging for this age group. Teens polled about what could get them to give up their cell phones while driving cited the threat of license suspension, a penalty usually reserved for very serious driving violations, as the number one motivator.<sup>34</sup> Recent research suggests teens may be more receptive to messaging that focuses on positive reasons for abstaining from cell phone use while driving. Teens who perceive benefits such as better attention to driving, being less likely to crash and following the law are more likely to not use a cell phone when driving.<sup>35</sup>

SHSOs can provide leadership on this issue, helping policymakers create enforceable laws that reflect best practices. Suggested policy standards for distracted driving with portable interactive electronic devices include:

- Banning texting for all GDL holders. Research using a driving simulator found teens spend up to 400% more time with their eyes off the road when texting as compared to when they are not.<sup>36</sup> Dubbed "reading and writing while driving" by one government official, texting while operating a motor vehicle is a serious distraction for any driver<sup>37</sup>, let alone teens learning to drive.
- Prohibiting cell phone use, including hands-free calling, for all teen drivers subject to a GDL law.<sup>38</sup> Research has found no cognitive difference between hands-free and hand-held cell phone use.<sup>39</sup> Use of any technology that diverts the attention of a young driver away from the driving task should be strongly discouraged.

<sup>34</sup> The Center for Injury Research and Prevention (CHOP)/ The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, *Driving Through the Eyes of Teens: A Research Report of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm* (Philadelphia, PA: 2007), 12.

<sup>35</sup> J. Hafetz, L.S. Jacobsohn, J.F. Garcia-Espana, A.E. Curry, F.K. Winston, "Adolescent drivers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of abstention from in-vehicle cell phone use." *Accident Analysis and Prevention*. (June 2010)

<sup>36</sup> T.M. Senserrick, "Reducing young driver road trauma: guidance and optimism for the future," *Injury Prevention* 2006, 12; i59.

<sup>37</sup> FMCSA, R.L. Olson, R.J. Hanowski, J.S. Hickman, and J. Bocanegra, *Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations*, 2009, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, FMCSA-RRR-09-042, <http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/32000/32600/32683/FMCSA-RRR-09-042.pdf> (January 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Vol. 19: A *Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-4.

<sup>39</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 4-8, 9.

- Banning the use of all interactive, portable electronic communication, navigation or entertainment devices by GDL-holders (e.g., iPods that require physically manipulating the device).<sup>40</sup>
- Violations of portable interactive technology-aided distracted driving laws by a GDL-holder should delay the young driver's progression to the next, less restrictive GDL phase.<sup>41</sup> The use of portable interactive electronic devices has become such an ingrained part of our culture that teens report needing the threat of serious consequences for using portable interactive electronic devices before they would consider discontinuing their use.<sup>42</sup>
- In states that use a point system, driver license points should be assessed for GDL-holders if cited for violations of portable interactive technology-aided distracted driving laws.<sup>43</sup> By assessing points for using portable interactive electronic devices while driving, licensing authorities send a powerful message about the need for teens to fully concentrate on the driving task. (see page 12)

### Underage Drinking Laws

While some believe underage drinking is a normal “rite of passage,” teens have a far greater risk of death in an alcohol-related crash than the overall driving population, despite their inability to legally purchase or publicly possess alcohol in any state. Part of this risk stems from the actual consumption of alcohol by underage drivers, but risk is also increased by the tendency of teens to drive during high-risk evening hours.

Underage alcohol use can have both immediate and potentially tragic consequences, as well as long-range harmful outcomes. Research is clear: youth under the age of 21 who consume alcohol are at greater risk of being involved in a fatal crash, criminal behavior, injury, risky sexual behavior, brain damage, chronic alcohol addiction, poor school performance, and suicide. The 2003 report<sup>44</sup> on this subject published by the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine documents the wide ranging and devastating consequences of youth consumption of alcohol and estimates an annual societal cost of at least \$53 billion.

Underage drinking has been the focus of many teen driving initiatives over the years, and significant progress has occurred

<sup>40</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Driving Through the Eyes of Teens*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>44</sup> National Academy of Sciences, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, Washington, DC: 2003.



## Maryland bans texting while driving

On October 1, 2009 Maryland made texting while driving illegal. Maryland drivers are no longer allowed use of a text messaging device to write or send a text message while operating a motor vehicle. Violators are subject to primary enforcement of the ban, face a misdemeanor offense, up to \$500 in fines and the addition of three points to their driving record.

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in this area. Alcohol use by teens varies considerably by chronological age, with relatively low usage rates among 16-year-old drivers. Alcohol use peaks among drivers in the 18-24 year-old range.<sup>45 46</sup> Age-related differentiations in alcohol use are important to bear in mind when considering policy solutions to deal with underage drinking, as the message must be balanced with the relative incidence of the problem among various young driver age groups.<sup>47</sup>

SHSOs are often leaders in state discussions on underage drinking and teen safety issues. Some policy solutions are directed at youth; other underage drinking policies are aimed at adult providers of alcohol. Both policy solutions are important and can be useful. To improve the safety outcomes for teen drivers, SHSOs can support the following underage drinking policy strategies directed at youth.<sup>48</sup>

- Maintaining and enforcing the Minimum Drinking Age law of 21 years of age.<sup>49 50 51</sup> Recent efforts to reduce the minimum drinking age law to 18 have gained a measure of national publicity, but are strongly refuted by research. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates the minimum drinking age law of 21 has saved 27,052 lives since 1975.<sup>52</sup>
- Maintaining and enforcing zero tolerance laws.<sup>53</sup> Because young drivers are barred from purchasing or publicly consuming alcohol in all 50 states, the maximum BAC level for drivers under 21 has been set at .02 or less. Violations often lead to license suspension penalties for young drivers when illegal alcohol use is combined with driving.
- Consistent buy, sell and possession of alcohol laws.<sup>54</sup> Most states have laws addressing possession or purchase of alcoholic beverages by teens, but irregularities exist in several states when it comes to alcohol consumption, attempts at purchasing alcohol, or the ability of teens under 21 to sell alcohol. SHSOs can improve safety for teens and young adults by supporting policies and laws that are consistent with the 21 Minimum Drinking Age law. (see page 14)
- Amnesty programs, or “911 laws” for teens who report alcohol use to prevent injury or death due to alcohol poisoning.<sup>55</sup> Most young people are aware they may be subject to stiff penalties if they are found drinking underage. Many alcohol poisoning tragedies have occurred when friends fail to seek prompt medical attention for a teen in medical distress due to alcohol or other substances out of

<sup>45</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>46</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, III-3, V-26.

<sup>47</sup> Senserrick, i59.

<sup>48</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-49, 50.

<sup>49</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, III-3.

<sup>50</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-49.

<sup>51</sup> CDC, Guide to Community Preventive Services. Reducing excessive alcohol use: enhanced enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors. [www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/lawsprohibitingsales.html](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/lawsprohibitingsales.html). (May 2010).

<sup>52</sup> NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts: 2008 Data: Young Drivers*, DOT-HS-811-169, (2009).

<sup>53</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-47.

<sup>54</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-49.

<sup>55</sup> Expert Panel



## Minnesota “ZAP”s underage drinking

Based upon a successful program in St. Paul and Ramsey County, MN, the Minnesota “Zero Adult Provider” or ZAP program addresses the reduction of underage access to alcohol. Zeroing in on adult providers of alcohol as well as underage drinkers, local law enforcement, prosecutors, probation officers and judges collaboratively target underage drinking parties. ZAP communities treat underage drinking party sites as crime scenes where suspect identification, interviews and further investigation are the norm. Once trained in ZAP protocols, law enforcement officers aggressively seek out underage drinkers and adult alcohol providers; courts employ chemical use assessments and threaten contempt of court citations for underage drinkers’ failure to divulge sources of alcohol. Serious criminal charges, fines, jail and probation await adult providers of alcohol to teens.

The ZAP approach has been modified to meet rural concerns and now operates in 19 counties across Minnesota. Aggregated results by these counties show a 278% increase in illegal provider arrests in the first year of implementing ZAP protocols. An annual *Lessons Learned* conference is held for interested communities to learn more about successful ZAP projects. The one-day event for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, court personnel, probation/corrections, public health, and community coalitions lets participants hear directly from previous grantees about challenges and successes faced while implementing ZAP projects. The program is funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) Block Grant Program administered by the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety. The ZAP approach has shown that when the justice system focuses on reducing access to alcohol, providers of alcohol can be identified and held accountable.

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fear of the consequences for underage drinking. Although it is important for states to have strong laws to deter underage alcohol use, experts agree that if a teen's life is at stake, persons seeking medical attention for a drinking teen should not be punished for doing so.

- Violations of underage drinking and driving laws by a GDL-holder should delay the young driver's progression to the next, less restrictive GDL phase.<sup>56</sup> Delaying the next phase of licensure is a consequence that forces teens to take this violation seriously and will deter them from choosing to drive after drinking. Teens using alcohol while driving are committing a dangerous violation that must be addressed.
- In states that use a point system, driver license points should be assessed for GDL-holders if they are cited for violations of underage drinking and driving laws.<sup>57</sup> By assessing points for underage drinking and driving violations, licensing authorities send a clear and convincing message to teens about the seriousness of combining alcohol and driving.

While some underage drinkers acquire alcohol on their own or from peers, more than 70 percent of alcohol used by teens is purchased or received without cost from adults.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, strong policies must also be in place to deter adults from selling or providing alcohol to underage persons. SHSOs can provide leadership to policymakers on this issue, as adults are the primary source of alcohol for teens. Strategies to be considered include:

- Social host laws.<sup>59</sup> "Social host" refers to adults who knowingly or unknowingly host underage drinking parties on a property they own, lease or otherwise control. When used to address underage drinkers, social host liability laws hold adults responsible for damages caused by teens attending these parties, regardless of who furnished the alcohol.<sup>60</sup> Social host ordinances have passed at the county and community level in many states that do not have social host laws.<sup>61</sup>
- Keg registration laws.<sup>62</sup> In an effort to deter youth drinking parties, keg registration laws require beer kegs and other large beer containers to be tagged with identification markers that record the purchaser's name, address and location where the keg is to be used. If minors are served alcohol from the keg, or if kegs are abandoned after a teen drinking party, law enforcement officials can track down the adult provider/purchaser and pursue applicable criminal charges.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies, *The NSDUH Report – Underage Alcohol Use: Where Do Young People Get Alcohol?* (Rockville, MD: November 20, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 1-49.

<sup>60</sup> MADD, What is Social Host? <http://www.madd.org/Parents/Parents/Programs/View-Program.aspx?program=20> (January 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 1-50.

<sup>63</sup> MADD, Keg Registration, <http://www.madd.org/Drunk-Driving/Drunk-Driving/laws/Law.aspx?law=9> (January 2010).

- Selling or furnishing alcohol to minors laws.<sup>64</sup> While all states have prohibitions against adults selling or providing alcohol to underage persons, policymakers interested in further deterring this behavior may need to assess current laws for sufficiency. To stop adult providers, penalties for violating these laws may need to be increased or laws clarified to aid in enforcement.

### Motorcycle-Related Laws

Motorcycles are a risky form of transportation even when used by experienced riders. Per vehicle mile travelled in 2007, motorcyclists were about 37 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in traffic crashes and 9 times more likely to be injured.<sup>65</sup>

When the riskiness inherent in motorcycle travel is combined with operator inexperience, the result can be particularly dangerous for teen drivers. Policymakers interested in improving the safety of teen motorcycle riders have a number of strategies to consider that may help them address this risk.

- Some states' GDL laws effectively prevent teens with GDL restrictions from riding motorcycles. States may consider requiring full or adult licensure before granting a motorcycle license to keep young drivers off motorcycles.<sup>66</sup> This would be a very stringent policy for young drivers, but it could help improve safety by restricting motorcycle use to more experienced drivers.
- All teens riding motorcycles should be required to wear federally approved motorcycle helmets.<sup>67</sup> Helmets are estimated to be 37 percent effective in preventing fatal injuries to motorcycle riders,<sup>68</sup> especially important for inexperienced drivers.
- All young riders should be required to complete a motorcycle rider training course prior to receiving a motorcycle endorsement or license.<sup>69</sup>
- Violations of motorcycle laws should delay progression of a teen driver to the next, less restrictive GDL phase to increase accountability.<sup>70</sup>
- Driver license points should be assessed for young rider infractions of motorcycle laws.<sup>71</sup> The increased risk posed by motorcycle law violation committed by a young driver should be underscored by formal action on the GDL.

<sup>64</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 1-49.

<sup>65</sup> NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts: 2008 Data: Motorcycles*, DOT HS 811 159, 2009, 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-35.

<sup>67</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 5-6.

<sup>68</sup> *Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-35.

<sup>69</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



# Enforcement

Numerous teen driving laws and policies have been supported by SHSOs and enacted by legislatures and stakeholders with authority over novice drivers. Varying levels of threat are used to compel compliance and deter illegal driving behavior of teens. Privileges may be granted for conformance with driving laws, while sanctions for disobeying these laws range from fines, to administrative license actions that remove or restrict driving privileges, to criminal penalties leading to incarceration. Compliance with teen driving laws is gained through understanding of the laws and enforcement. Young drivers must be aware of the laws that apply to them as well as perceive that if they do not follow them, sanctions will be administered.

The majority of young drivers follow driving rules out of respect for authority or out of fear of penalties for misbehavior. But some teens are not constrained by authority or perceived consequences. For these teens, the existence of laws is not sufficient to compel legal driving behavior. Many laws related to safe driving behavior must be adequately enforced to ensure compliance.<sup>72</sup>

Publicity and strict enforcement of teen driving laws, along with consistent and fair adjudication is essential for developing safe teen driving behavior. SHSOs are in an important position to publicize laws, encourage and possibly fund enforcement efforts, as well as provide information and training for stakeholders involved in the sanctioning process. Approaches that support these activities include:

## Key Enforcement Strategies

- High visibility enforcement such as checkpoints coupled with publicity, targeted enforcement for GDL, alcohol, seatbelt, cell phone use, and speed violations can be carried out in areas surrounding high schools and near establishments frequented by teens, such as malls, theaters and sporting venues. This may reduce risky driving by teens.<sup>73 74 75</sup> (see page 18)
- Encouraging enforcement of Minimum Drinking Age<sup>76 77</sup> and Zero Tolerance laws<sup>78</sup> through aggressive “party patrol” and “shoulder tap”<sup>79</sup> operations aimed at deterring underage drinking. By promoting and focusing on underage drinking enforcement efforts, reductions in alcohol-related crashes and fatalities involving young drivers will occur.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 6-19.

<sup>75</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-23, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-49.

<sup>77</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-26.

<sup>78</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 6-19.

<sup>79</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 1-49.

<sup>80</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, I-2.



## New Jersey implements GDL checkpoints and GDL decals

To improve compliance with GDL restrictions, the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety funded two projects for law enforcement officers to conduct GDL checkpoints near high schools and other locations frequented by young drivers. The focus of the checkpoints is to give law enforcement the opportunity to interact with teen drivers and educate them about GDL laws and safe driving. While the focus of the checkpoint is not on writing tickets, teen drivers are cited for observed GDL violations.

A key issue in GDL enforcement is the difficulty officers have in reliably identifying teens driving under GDL restrictions. To address this concern, the New Jersey Teen Driver Study Commission called for the development of a GDL identifier to be affixed to a vehicle driven by a permit or probationary driver license holder. New Jersey policymakers responded with legislation to require this identification in 2009. The effort was named Kyleigh's Law in honor of 16 year old Kyleigh D'Alessio, killed in a teen driving crash in 2006. Licensing officials developed a Velcro-backed red reflectorized decal to affix to the front and rear license plates of vehicles operated by any driver under 21 operating with a permit or provisional license. New Jersey was the first state in the nation to require this kind of notification when the law went into effect May 1, 2010.

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## **Nevada spreads the word at *Thursday Night Lights* Football**

Nevada traffic safety officials used a non-traditional venue to reach both parents and teens with safety and enforcement messaging during a new broadcast program created by the CW and My LVTN, popular Nevada television stations. *Thursday Night Lights*, a teen safety effort supported by Nevada's Strategic Highway Safety Plan, capitalizes on the popularity of Nevada high school football. Local TV stations aired the biggest local football game every Thursday evening during football season, and for eleven weeks, winning media spots created and produced by local teens involved with PACE (Prevent All Crashes Everyday), a Nevada Office of Traffic Safety young driver safety initiative, were aired during the football game. Two minute traffic safety-related interviews were conducted with law enforcement and other safety professionals during halftime; interview content was aimed at parents and teen drivers, providing critical information on key teen driving laws and issues. In addition, numerous mentions of safety and teen driving were made during the game both on the air and on the field for those attending the game in person. Information booths were present on both the home and visitor sides of the football field, providing teen driver safety program information for game attendees and conducting surveys on teen attitudes about safe driving.

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- Promoting Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) enforcement and compliance checks of establishments selling alcohol. Holding non-compliant establishments accountable for underage alcohol sales will promote greater adult responsibility and deter underage persons from trying to purchase alcohol.<sup>81</sup>
- Effectively publicizing enforcement efforts increases the perception of enforcement, resulting in safer teen driving behavior.<sup>82</sup> (see page 19)
- Working jointly with youth-led organizations to encourage youth support and recognition of increased enforcement.<sup>83</sup>

*Enforcement Process Improvements*

- Provide meaningful sanctions for GDL and other traffic violations that cannot be avoided by young drivers.<sup>84</sup>
- While sanctions must be certain, severe and swift to deter future infractions, extreme sanctions for teen driving violations should be avoided. Consistency of sanction application is more important so that young drivers cannot engage the “sympathy factor” of parents, law enforcement and judges.<sup>85</sup>
- Criminal justice system issues with juvenile arrests should be addressed to avoid overburdening the courts.<sup>86</sup> Explore innovative programs such as juvenile holdover programs that focus on special issues associated with underage detention in ways that minimize the impact on courts.<sup>87</sup>
- Alternative sanctioning programs may be useful with youth alcohol offenders. The “Youth Visitation Program” provides alcohol education and a coroner’s presentation to participants referred by the courts. Visits to local emergency room or trauma centers expose teen violators to real-life outcomes from alcohol-related incidents.<sup>88</sup>

While effective traffic law enforcement is critical to improving safety for teen drivers, not all enforcement agencies are supported in their young driver enforcement efforts. In addition to finding sufficient financial resources to support teen traffic safety enforcement, other challenges exist that can undermine aggressive enforcement targeting young drivers.

- In most states, law enforcement officers are unable to accurately identify and take enforcement action on teen

<sup>81</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>82</sup> J.T. Shope, “Influences on youthful driving behavior and their potential for guiding interventions to reduce crashes,” *Journal for Injury Prevention*, 12, (2006), i13.

<sup>83</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> NHTSA, APPA, OJJDP, *An Implementation Guide For Juvenile Holdover Programs*, DOT HS 809 445 (Washington, DC: 2001).

<sup>88</sup> NHTSA, *Community How To Guide On... ENFORCEMENT. Underage Drinking Prevention series Volume 5*, DOT HS 809 209 (Washington, DC: 2001), 12.

drivers because officers cannot precisely determine a driver's age or licensing status. Unless an officer is familiar with a particular driver, the officer must try to determine, via visual cues, if the driver might be young enough to be subject to GDL restrictions. Employing vehicle-based methods of identifying GDL-restricted drivers would be useful to officers conducting young driver enforcement, as well as a reminder to teens that they may be subject to additional enforcement scrutiny. (see page 18)

- In some communities, enforcement officials may be hesitant to give novice drivers citations for poor driving behavior, preferring to give them stern warnings instead of taking formal action. Unfortunately, few law enforcement agencies are able to track enforcement warnings, making it likely that poor teen driving behavior will be repeated in the absence of real sanctions. Without written citations, licensing officials cannot take licensing actions on teen driving behaviors that may signal the need for remedial driving attention.<sup>89</sup>
- In some areas, community norms do not support enforcement efforts targeting teen traffic or underage drinking violations. In many cases, parents of teen violators do not support the enforcement of GDL and other teen-related laws; believing that “kids will be kids” or that certain activities, like underage drinking, are a youthful “rite of passage.” These attitudes can be challenging for enforcement agencies trying to uphold laws, improve safety and hold teens accountable for their actions. In these cases, it is vitally important to educate community leaders and the media about the risks and dangers of novice driving, so that enforcement efforts aimed at keeping teens safe can occur.<sup>90</sup>
- Judges and prosecutors must also understand and support the enforcement of teen driving and underage drinking laws by assessing consistent and meaningful penalties for violations. If violations are routinely dismissed or reduced, enforcement will be only marginally effective in increasing compliance with important safety laws and licensing restrictions.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-24.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

## Parental Programs

Experts on young driver behavior are in substantial agreement that more effective parental involvement in mentoring novice drivers holds significant promise for further reducing young driver crashes.<sup>92 93</sup> While many parental activities serve to prevent teen crashes, the most important role a parent takes in a teen's driving may be that of an enforcer. Law enforcement and licensing officials often face significant challenges in enforcing GDL restrictions; however, parents of teen drivers can be effective GDL enforcement agents. Teen compliance with GDL restrictions can be greatly enhanced if parents are clear that driving privileges are dependent upon compliance with state GDL laws.

SHSOs can be strong advocates for increased parental involvement by supporting activities and programs that equip parents for this important role in their teen's novice driving experience. Two types of programs will help parents become actively and effectively involved in their teen's learning-to drive experience: first, basic parental education about the risks associated with and laws governing teen driving in their state; and second, information about management tools parents can use to supervise teen drivers. Parents should also be reminded that teens constantly observe their parents' driving habits; positive everyday habits such as not using cell phones to talk or text while driving, using seat belts and driving posted speeds serve as powerful examples for novice drivers.

### *Parental Education*

Understanding the risks associated with teen driving as well as appreciating the complexity of state laws governing novice drivers can be an eye-opening experience for a parent. Creating a greater awareness and understanding of policies such as GDL laws will go a long way in assisting parents to help their children become safer drivers. SHSOs can support activities that help parents learn about teen driving, including efforts to:

- Require parental attendance at a training or seminar on the basics of a state's GDL law prior to a teen starting the GDL process.<sup>94</sup> By requiring parental education before a teen begins the GDL process, parents will more fully understand GDL restrictions and stages, preparing parents to more confidently guide teens through the learning-to-drive experience.<sup>95</sup> ([see page 23](#))

<sup>92</sup> J. Hedlund, R. A. Shults and R. Compton, "What we know, what we don't know and what we need to know about graduated driver licensing," *Journal of Safety Research* 34(1), (2003), 107-115.

<sup>93</sup> B. Simons-Morton, "Proceedings of an expert conference on young drivers: Reducing young driver crash risk," *Injury Prevention* 8 (Supplement II) (2002), ii1-ii2.

<sup>94</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*



## Oregon involves parents in driver education

The use of a single driver education curriculum in Oregon reduces inconsistencies between public and private driver education instruction. At the heart of the Oregon curriculum is parent involvement, and parents are required to attend a parent meeting as a part of driver training for teens. Parents are provided with “The Oregon Parent Guide to Teen Driving,” a resource completed through a joint partnership with the Transportation Safety Division and Driver and Motor Vehicle Services. The Guide supports the important partnership between state driver licensing, driver education, teen drivers and their parents by emphasizing the critical role of parents. The Guide also provides parental tips for supervising teen drivers and highlights resources parents can use to set teen-parent driving agreements and driving guidelines.

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## **New York keeps parents informed through TEENS** *(Teen Electronic Event Notification Service)*

To help parents effectively manage a teen’s driving experience, knowledge is essential. The New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) created the TEENS program to help parents stay informed about traffic enforcement incidents and actions involving their teen driver. TEENS notifies parents of drivers under age 18 when specific events are added to the driver record of the teen. These events include traffic violation convictions, driver license suspensions and certain crashes.

Parental enrollment in TEENS is voluntary and no fee is charged for participating in the program. Parents may enroll in the program at a DMV issuing office when their child first gets a permit, or via a single page enrollment form which can be found online or picked up at a DMV issuing office. Once completed, the form must be mailed back to the DMV. When a young driver reaches their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, enrollment in TEENS is automatically discontinued.

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- Educate parents that teens need extensive driving practice in a wide range of situations and circumstances. Parents should control when and where driving takes place for the initial months of driving, and should understand that calm, supportive, patient and non-distracting communication is key when helping teens learn to drive.<sup>96</sup>
- Support driver licensing agencies in efforts to require parental participation as a part of driver license acquisition. In Virginia, after all licensing requirements have been met, the parent and teen must appear before a judge to receive the teen's driver license, emphasizing the gravity of the privilege and highlighting the role of parental responsibility for a teen's behavior.<sup>97</sup>
- Provide parents with information on safer vehicle choices for teen drivers. Parents should know that teens with their own vehicle face higher rates of cell phone use while driving, speeding and risk of being involved in a crash than teens that do not have their own vehicle. Parents must also understand the effects of vehicle choice on teen safety outcomes.<sup>98 99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-30.

<sup>97</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-29.

<sup>98</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-35, 36.

<sup>99</sup> Garcia-Espana F, et al. Primary Versus Shared Access to Vehicles and its Association with Risky Teen Driving Behavior and Crashes: A National Perspective. *Pediatrics*. October 2009.

<sup>100</sup> Ginsburg K, et al. Associations Between Parenting Style and Adolescent Driving Safety-related Behaviors and Attitudes. *Pediatrics*. October 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, I-3, V-28.

<sup>102</sup> Countermeasures That Work, 6-17.

<sup>103</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-28.

<sup>104</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-23, 32.

<sup>105</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, I-3, V-5.

<sup>106</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-34.

<sup>107</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers, V-30.

### Parental Management of Teen Drivers

Parents often have more influence over teens than they imagine. From when and under what conditions teens are permitted to drive to what kind of vehicle a teen is allowed to drive, parents often hold the keys, both literally and figuratively, to a teen's driving experience. Teens that say their parents set rules and support them are half as likely to crash as teens who say their parents are not as involved.<sup>100</sup> SHSOs can champion and support programs like the following that encourage parents to actively manage their teen's driving at different points in the process.<sup>101</sup> (see page 24)

- Programs that facilitate parental supervision of teens as they first learn to drive can: help parents effectively supervise early driving experiences;<sup>102 103</sup> determine the timing of driver licensure; govern access to family vehicles;<sup>104</sup> govern the choice of vehicles driven;<sup>105</sup> impose restrictions on driving privileges;<sup>106</sup> and provide a highly salient model of driving behavior.<sup>107</sup>
- Activities that aid parental management of intermediate drivers can: help parents successfully create parent-teen driving agreements where expectations and responsibilities of both parents and teens are spelled out; explore new monitoring technologies like DRIVE-CAM, tiwi, CarChip

and MyKey that can be used to track new driver performance;<sup>108</sup> set driving limits and govern access to family vehicles;<sup>109</sup> and help with parental determination of licensing timing and when, where and under what conditions teens are allowed to drive.<sup>110</sup> (see pages 28)

Parental involvement in teen driving activities may be improved through programs that are readily accessible and that motivate parents to use materials and tools designed to help them coach novice drivers. Other elements that may improve parental participation include:

- “Brief interventions” by credible authorities such as family physicians or pediatricians give parents encouragement and resources to influence teen driving behavior. These discussions may give confidence to parents to become more involved in monitoring their teen’s driving. A teen’s driver education instructor may also be able to reach out to parents in a similar fashion.<sup>111</sup> (see page 27)
- Community-based support strategies that target teens, their families, schools, neighborhoods and surrounding communities may be helpful in encouraging greater parental involvement.<sup>112</sup> Modeled after community Child Passenger Safety programs,<sup>113</sup> these prevention-based approaches typically include a combination of increasing knowledge content, social norming, personal commitment and resistance skills training aimed at developing safer teen drivers. To be most effective, media campaigns that focus on keeping teen drivers safe should also be an integral part of this type of program.<sup>114</sup>

SHSOs may be challenged to inspire a significant number of parents to participate in parental programming, as finding ways to consistently access parents on a large scale can be difficult. Not only is the infrastructure necessary to reach and assist parents of beginning drivers often lacking, but no clearly established guidelines for what a parent should actually do as a driving supervisor have been definitively established. Simply handing out educational or advisory materials is unlikely to change parental behavior as driving supervisors.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-32.

<sup>109</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-23.

<sup>110</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-32.

<sup>111</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-29.

<sup>112</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 1-51.

<sup>113</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-29.

<sup>114</sup> P. Juarez, D.G. Schlundt, I. Goldzweig, N. Stinson, Jr., “A conceptual framework for reducing risky teen driving behaviors among minority youth,” *Journal for Injury Prevention* 12 (2006), i51.

<sup>115</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-29.



## California uses adolescent screening and brief intervention to halt teen drinking

Using a strategy proven to reduce alcohol-related injury in adults, the California Office of Traffic Safety sponsored a program with medical centers in Sacramento and Placer Counties to provide screening and brief intervention services to alcohol-positive adolescent patients admitted to emergency departments. The project provides intoxicated adolescent patients and their parents with a brief intervention and resources for treatment. A resource guide detailing community services was developed and dispersed to families at all the facilities. The project is tracking adolescent patients who receive the brief intervention and monitoring their behavior for recidivism. Through hospital participation in the Sacramento Youth and Alcohol Coalition, screening and brief intervention efforts were amplified through coalition partnerships with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, local high schools, colleges, and organizations in the provision of reinforcing educational alcohol prevention programs for the community. Over 128 alcohol-positive adolescent patients between the ages of 12-17 were admitted to the three facilities over the past year. Approximately one-third of the adolescent patients consented to participate in the program and tracking has been initiated.

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## Checkpoints Teen Driving Program

*Checkpoints* is a multi-faceted program designed to help parents and beginning drivers understand the risks and complexity of the driving task for novice drivers. Developed by Dr. Bruce Simons-Morton at the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, *Checkpoints* has been shown to increase parental management and improve the safety of teen drivers. The central feature of the *Checkpoints* program is a written agreement signed by parents and their teens. The agreement limits teen driving under high-risk driving situations; additional program communications provide further support for parental management of novice drivers.

*Checkpoints* has been tested in several states; experts are optimistic that the increased parental limit setting reported by parents participating in the program will lead to fewer risky teen driving behaviors, traffic violations and crashes. After several years of evaluation, *Checkpoints* is now available for public use by government and non-profit organizations which agree to use the materials as designed. Information about and access to *Checkpoints* materials can be found at the program website <https://checkpoints.nichd.nih.gov>.

## Education

Efforts to advance teen driver safety must also focus on improving the training and education teens receive both before and while learning to drive. Traditional driver training and education programs have existed in most states for many years. Depending on the state, young driver instruction has been offered as a part of public school curricula, through commercial driving schools, or some combination of the two. Teen driver education is an established part of many teens' learning-to-drive experience and SHSO leadership can help to improve its value by supporting both student-focused and administrative improvements to novice driver education. Changes in the teen educational environment can also positively affect teen driver behavior.

### *Student Education*

- Resources to improve driver education content and administration have been developed and are available to states seeking guidance in this area. A model driver education curriculum was developed by NHTSA and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA).<sup>116</sup> In addition to the model curriculum standards, several national experts and representatives of national driver education groups recently developed national administrative standards for driver education.<sup>117</sup> Together, SHSOs can use these resources to enhance consistency and provide a comprehensive framework for state driver education systems.
- SHSOs could support efforts to begin education about driving well before a student seeks a driving permit.<sup>118</sup> Elements of driver education such as social responsibility and crash dynamics can be incorporated into regular classroom curricula beginning at the elementary and middle school levels, helping students to understand key driving concepts before they are behind the wheel.<sup>119 120</sup>
- Schools can be a great help in magnifying the effects of public information efforts to educate teens about laws that apply to novice drivers. Working with schools to publicize current GDL, Minimum Drinking Age, Zero Tolerance, and primary seat belt laws in addition to updating students about new teen driving laws can help keep teens informed.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> ADTSEA, *Driver Education Curriculum 2.0*. <http://www.adtsea.org/adtsea/curriculum/v2/default.aspx> (March 2010).

<sup>117</sup> Driver Education Working Group. *Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards*. Report from National Conference on Driver Education, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (October 2009).

<sup>118</sup> Expert Panel

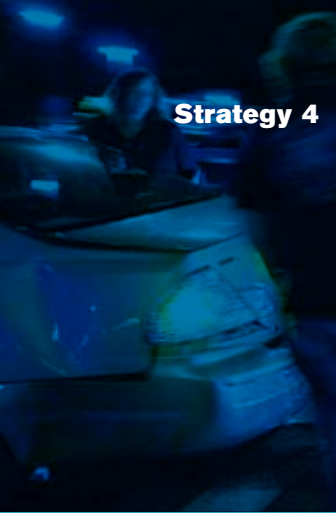
<sup>119</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 1-53.

<sup>120</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>121</sup> Vol. 19: *A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, 1-2.

### *Administrative Strategies*

In many states, no single agency is responsible for or "owns" the issue of teen driving. With responsibilities split between State Departments of Education, Public Safety, DMVs or SHSOs, issues of accountability and



## **New Jersey Statewide Driver Education Forum**

In response to a recommendation of the New Jersey Teen Driver Study Commission, Rutgers University sponsored the third Statewide Driver Education Forum in May 2009. The one day event brought together more than 300 New Jersey driver education teachers, school resource officers, traffic safety officials, and state and local law enforcement representatives for updates on the work of the Teen Driver Study Commission, changes to the GDL law, driver education core curriculum content standards, and new web resources. The Forum also included workshops highlighting new programs and research focusing on teen drivers.

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## New Jersey's Teen Driver Study Commission

In response to a series of fatal teen crashes in New Jersey, legislation was introduced to establish a 15-member Teen Driver Study Commission to review all aspects of teen driving in the state. Signed into law in March 2007, the Commission was charged with conducting an in-depth review of national and international teen driving research as well as evaluating New Jersey licensing practices, crash and motor vehicle violation data. The Commission examined teen licensing requirements in other states and countries and held three public hearings to gather information at a grassroots level. They also met with experts from law enforcement, driver education and child psychology to gain further insight into issues affecting teen drivers.

In March 2008, the Commission released a comprehensive report to the Governor and Legislature detailing 47 recommendations to help reduce teen crashes in New Jersey. Recommendations were

divided into seven key categories: the Graduated Driver License (GDL), driver education, driver training, enforcement/judicial, insurance industry, schools, and technology. Each recommendation included a "champion," defined as the entity or entities charged with ensuring recommendation implementation. Of the 47 report recommendations, the Commission identified 14 essential recommendations for immediate consideration, calling for immediate implementation of the key recommendations to prevent further teen crashes in New Jersey.

The Teen Driver Study Commission's report was a clear focus point for New Jersey to move forward in creating policies and programs that support teen driver safety. To date, five of the 14 key recommendations have been adopted either through legislation or administrative rule; several more report recommendations have been implemented or are pending.

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proper focus for teen driving efforts can be challenging. SHSOs are often in a position of state leadership – both formal and informal – when it comes to teen driving. SHSOs can use this position of leadership to work with all involved state agencies to establish which state agency “owns” and will be responsible for driver education.<sup>122</sup> Through this process, SHSOs can help the “owners” identify funding streams to help improve driver education in their state. Additional ideas for improving driver education programs include:

- Encouraging a state level commitment to ensuring consistency in what and how driver education and training is taught, to certification and monitoring of these programs, and to uniformity of cost for all novice drivers.<sup>123 124</sup> (see page 31)
- Working with the agency responsible for young driver education and training to improve the content and delivery of driver education and training.<sup>125</sup> Current thinking in driver education suggests effectiveness can be improved through training teens on hazard perception rather than just basic vehicle control skills.<sup>126</sup> By training “wise” rather than simply “skilled” drivers, teens can be taught to better recognize dangerous situations and make safer driving decisions. “Skills and insight” training helps young drivers recognize and understand their own limitations and provides teens with insight and awareness of risks while driving.<sup>127 128</sup> (see page 30)
- Supporting efforts that focus on “basic” driver education and training that *prevents* risky driving situations and behaviors rather than on “advanced driver training” programs that concentrate on teaching teens how to *recover* from risky driving maneuvers.<sup>129</sup> In general, teens taking driver education courses need additional behind-the-wheel driving experience; this additional experience should be integrated into driver education and training curricula.<sup>130</sup>
- Using driver education to address lifestyle issues related to risky driving behavior. One program that tackled alcohol misuse prevention contained an element of refusal skills training and had a positive effect on novice drivers’ first year serious driving offenses.<sup>131</sup>
- Adopting a multi-stage approach to driver education and training where the focus during the pre-licensure phase is on vehicle handling. To date, Michigan is the only state that has adopted a two-stage system of driver education. Once a student has greater experience behind the wheel and has been licensed, the focus of training shifts to acquisition of more advanced cognitive/ judgment skills.<sup>132</sup> With this approach, the program content is more appropriately linked with a teen’s driving experience.<sup>133</sup>
- Utilizing technology such as computer-based simulation can effectively expose novice drivers to hazardous situations without

<sup>122</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>123</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-40.

<sup>124</sup> *Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards*.

<sup>125</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, I-3.

<sup>126</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-38.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Senserrick, i59.

<sup>129</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>130</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-39.

<sup>131</sup> J.T. Shope, M.R. Elliott, T.E. Raghunath, et al., “Long-term Follow-up of a High School Alcohol Misuse Prevention Program’s Effect on Student’s Subsequent Driving,” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*. 2001; 25:403-10.

<sup>132</sup> *Countermeasures That Work*, 6-16.

<sup>133</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers*, V-38.



having to confront them in the real world. Some studies have shown that young drivers with simulation experience tend to react more like experienced drivers than other young drivers.<sup>134</sup> If this type of technology is used, SHSOs are encouraged to support the use of computer-based simulator training that has been evaluated and tested or require rigorous evaluation as part of program implementation.<sup>135</sup>

### *Environmental Strategies*

Advances in young driver safety can also be made through changes in the teen educational environment. SHSOs can work with both community traffic safety leaders and education policymakers to advocate for implementation of strategies that positively affect novice driver safety within the school environment.<sup>136</sup> Policies for SHSOs to consider include:

- Eliminating early high school start times. Driving while sleepy or tired can result in a reduced capacity to operate a motor vehicle safely. Research has shown that teenagers need more sleep than either adults or younger children, and need to be asleep in the early morning hours. By moving school start times back to 8:30 a.m. or later, dramatic improvements in academic performance and behavior have been demonstrated, along with reductions in teen driver crashes.<sup>137</sup>
- Abolishing open campus lunch policies. In some high schools, some or all high school students are allowed to leave the school facility during the lunch period. Research has demonstrated the rate of crashes involving teen drivers from schools with open lunch policies to be three times that of schools with a closed campus between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Teens from open campus schools involved in crashes also carried more passengers with them at the time of the crash than teens from closed campus schools.<sup>138</sup>
- Promoting the use of school bus transportation for high school students rather than encouraging students to drive themselves to school. With rising student transportation costs, some school districts encourage students to find their own way to school. However, school buses are the safest form of transportation for teens. On a per-trip basis, students are 44 times more likely to be killed in a vehicle with a teen driver than while riding a school bus.<sup>139</sup>
- Encouraging the adoption of school policies that limit school parking privileges to students with good driving records and/or upperclassman status. Limiting student parking privileges to students with good driving records will incentivize legal driving behavior. If grade restrictions are applied, students allowed to drive to school will be older and likely to have more driving experience. (see page 34)

<sup>134</sup> Vol. 19: A  
Guide for Reducing  
Collisions Involving  
Young Drivers, V-39.

<sup>135</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>136</sup> Vol. 19: A  
Guide for Reducing  
Collisions Involving  
Young Drivers, I-3.

<sup>137</sup> Vol. 19: A Guide  
for Reducing Collisions  
Involving Young  
Drivers, V-41, 42.

<sup>138</sup> Vol. 19: A  
Guide for Reducing  
Collisions Involving  
Young Drivers, V-42.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



## New Jersey leverages school parking privileges

In September 2009, the New Jersey Attorney General and the Department of Education Commissioner distributed model language that may be added to the current *Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials*. The paragraph, which addresses sharing student traffic offense information, states: “The Chief of Police or Station Commander agrees to notify the chief school administrator or his or her designee of any GDL law or traffic violation, committed within the school district, by a student enrolled in the school district.” As a result, several New Jersey schools have adopted this model and are temporarily rescinding students’ parking privileges based on traffic violation information received from local police. In addition, the School Administrators Association and the New Jersey School Boards Association are alerting their members about this initiative.

Other New Jersey high schools are tying the privilege of high school parking to mandatory parental attendance at a teen driver orientation program such as the National Safety Council’s “Alive at 25.” To assist with these programs, the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety developed and posted a “how to” guide to implementing teen-parent safe driving community programs on its website.

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## Peer Education

Educational strategies that target teen drivers typically involve changing teen knowledge and beliefs, modifying attitudes and/or teaching new skills.<sup>140</sup> Some educational programs, like basic driver education and training, involve traditional models of instruction where adults instruct teens on specific subject matter. Peer education is another approach to reaching teens with safe driving information and skill development opportunities; it involves programs where students teach other students. SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) is a familiar example of a teen peer-to-peer education program that effectively exposes students to anti-drinking and driving information in schools.<sup>141</sup>

SHSOs can support the development of peer-delivered prevention education programs as well as encourage state and local educators to embrace such strategies as another way to improve teen driver safety. A peer-to-peer education or service learning approach can be an effective alternative to traditional public health education campaigns. By utilizing this approach, students learn and develop positive driving attitudes for themselves as well as mentoring peers through active participation in organized service that is:

- Conducted in and meets the needs of a specific community. By tailoring programmatic elements to align with individual community needs, safety education for teens will have increased relevancy. Community differences stemming from distinctions such as urban or rural locations, or demographic or cultural diversity can be addressed with subject matter that is pertinent to a given teen community. [\(see pages 36 and 37\)](#)
- Developed with input from teens involved in the service learning experience. Teen buy-in as both instructors and participants will be increased if program developers are committed to both hearing and utilizing teen input.<sup>142</sup>
- Coordinated with a secondary school or institution of higher learning so that the peer education experience is integrated into and enhances the core academic curriculum of the participating students. Ideally, peer education focused on improving teen driver safety reinforces other academic activities and promotes civic responsibility in both peer “teachers” and “learners.”<sup>143</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Juarez, i49-i55.

<sup>141</sup> NHTSA, *Evaluation of Youth Peer-to-Peer Impaired Driving Programs*, DOT HS 808 309, (1995).

<sup>142</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>143</sup> Juarez, i49-i55.



## Texas puts *Teens in the Driver Seat*

Most teens are unaware of the driving restrictions imposed upon them by GDL laws and the common causes of teen driving crashes. *Teens in the Driver Seat* (TDS) was created to address this lack of knowledge by involving young drivers in developing and delivering safety messages to their peers. In addition to teen inexperience as a major factor in teen crashes, TDS focuses its efforts on educating teens about the top five causes of teen crashes: driving at night; distractions such as cell phones, texting and having too many teenage passengers; speeding; not wearing seat belts and alcohol.

Schools participating in the program must agree to follow a general program format but are encouraged to customize the program to meet student needs. Promotional items, posters, videos, fact sheets, presentations and a website are available to help teens get key safety messages out to their peers. Schools must participate in anonymous student questionnaires and/or field studies both prior to implementation and at the end of the program to assess program impact. More than 300 high schools and 15 middle schools in Texas currently have active TDS programs and risk assessments conducted as part of the program show positive results. Risk awareness levels have increased by up to 200 percent, cell phone use while driving at some TDS schools dropped by 30 percent and seat belt use has increased an average of 14 percent in active TDS schools. Initiated statewide in 2003, Texas is the only state in the nation to show a decrease in fatal crashes involving teen drivers every single year since that time.

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## **Illinois creates** *Operation Teen Safe Driving*

In 2007, 155 teens lost their lives in Illinois motor vehicle crashes. To combat this devastating loss, the Ford Motor Company Fund, the Governors Highway Safety Association and the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety joined forces to create a community-based program to empower high school students to educate their peers about safe driving skills. The *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program addresses the major reasons teens are killed or seriously injured in traffic crashes: not wearing safety belts, impaired driving, speeding, fatigue, distracted driving and lack of driving experience. The program provides materials and seed funding to schools for students to develop peer-led activities that have a positive impact on teen drivers.

Each year, all high schools in Illinois are invited to apply for the program and 105 are selected to participate, 15 in each of seven geographic regions. Schools are required to develop and implement teen-led *Operation Teen Safe Driving* programs that utilize the Ford Motor Company Fund's "Driving Skills for Life" program. Program activity reports are judged, with the top five schools in each region receiving cash prizes to fund post-prom events. Winning schools are also invited to participate in Ford Motor Company Fund's "Driving Skills for Life" Ride and Drive events held in Chicago and Springfield. At these events, teens observe professional drivers demonstrating critical driving skills and then drive the courses themselves with professional drivers in the passenger seat to provide tips and assistance.

The Allstate Foundation is another key partner in this ongoing effort, providing seed money for program development in each school. Students use the Allstate "Keep the Drive" program in the development of their school's program to educate peers and promote teen safe driving. The *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program also receives significant support from the Illinois State Police, local law enforcement agencies, local Ford dealers, area Allstate agents and numerous community leaders and volunteers.

In the three years since its inception, *Operation Teen Safe Driving* reached close to a quarter of a million high school students. During the same period of time, Illinois experienced a significant reduction in the total number fatalities of 16-20 year olds. Fatalities among teens were reduced 49 percent from 192 deaths in 2007 to 98 in 2009.

For more information, e-mail [teen.safety@Illinois.gov](mailto:teen.safety@Illinois.gov) or visit [www.teensafedrivingillinois.org](http://www.teensafedrivingillinois.org).



- Able to provide structured time for students or participants to reflect on the service learning experience.

Beyond “service learning” programs, SHSOs can look for peer-to-peer programs that have been pilot-tested for process and/or evaluated for effectiveness. Also, programs that can demonstrate they are theoretically grounded may provide higher rates of success.<sup>144</sup>

As with many strategies aimed at changing behavior, setting up peer education programs that are sustainable over the long term can be challenging. For that reason, experts caution that peer education programs should not be a stand-alone response to improving teen driver safety. SHSOs can most effectively support these programs as a complementary component of a comprehensive teen driving program.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Winston FK, Jacobsohn L. A Practical Approach for Applying Best Practices in Behavioural Interventions to Injury Prevention. *Injury Prevention*. 2010 16: 107-112.

<sup>145</sup> Expert Panel

## General Strategies

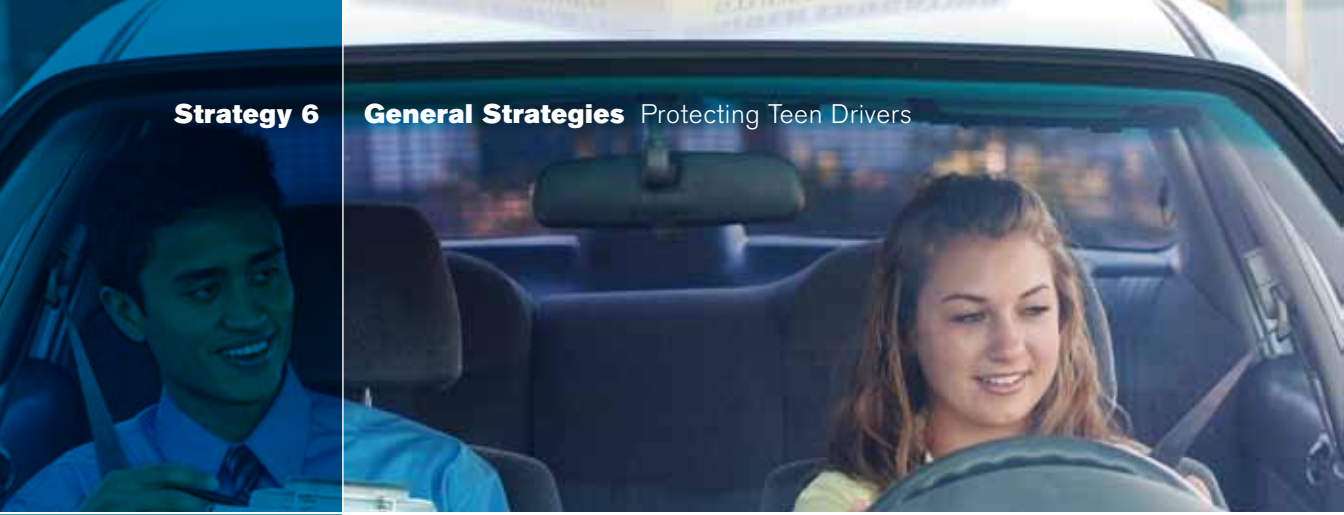
While tactics discussed in the previous sections of this **Guidebook** directly address safety issues dealing with teen drivers, other general safety-related strategies can be useful in creating a comprehensive approach to improving teen driver safety.<sup>146</sup> Many aspects of state highway safety programs impact the safety of teens and additional strategies in the following areas deserve the support and attention of SHSOs:

- Public/private partnerships aimed at improving teen driving safety can be instrumental in reaching both teens and parents. Key messages about safe driving can be amplified by coordinating with strategic partners with the means to effectively reach target audiences. For instance, SHSOs across the country are working with a variety of organizations and companies (automobile manufacturers, cell phone manufacturers and insurance companies) to educate teens and their parents about the risks associated with distracted driving. (see page 40)
- Relevant public information and education (PI&E) programs that bolster enforcement activities and awareness of specific teen driving laws. With a constant stream of new faces entering the novice driver system each year, parents and teens must receive information about key teen driving laws through traditional and non-traditional media channels. Using PI&E activities to increase perceptions of enforcement risk is also important to improving teen traffic safety outcomes. Communication campaigns supporting enforcement and other programmatic efforts aimed at young drivers can increase the safety benefit of such efforts.
- Inclusion of teen driving safety strategies as a part of state Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs).<sup>147</sup> SHSPs are statewide, coordinated safety plans every state department of transportation is required to develop to provide a comprehensive framework for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.<sup>148</sup> By including teen driving safety as a focus area for SHSP efforts, awareness of teen driving issues will be increased among all state safety stakeholders. This

<sup>146</sup> Vol. 19: A  
*Guide for Reducing  
Collisions Involving  
Young Drivers*, V-6.

<sup>147</sup> Expert Panel

<sup>148</sup> FHWA, *Strategic  
Highway Safety Plans*,  
<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/shspquick.cfm> (February 2010).



## **Ford and GHSA's *Driving Skills for Life***

The Ford Fund and GHSA jointly developed the Ford *Driving Skills for Life* Program in 2003. Since that time, the innovative teen driving program that gives particular attention to distracted driving has partnered with SHSOs in at least 30 states to teach teens the skills they need to be safe drivers.

More information is available at [www.drivingskillsforlife.com](http://www.drivingskillsforlife.com)

## **Minnesota and AT&T partner to prevent distracted driving**

With the introduction of AT&T's *Be Sensible* teen driver program in 2002, this comprehensive teen driving resource has been provided at no charge to thousands of teachers across the country. Used to educate nearly 12.5 million students about managing driver distractions so far, 95% of educators who have used the program plan to use it again. The Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) partnered with AT&T to distribute these materials and has launched an extensive print and radio campaign to educate drivers about Minnesota's two-year-old law banning texting while driving. The OTS campaign is also supported by co-branded AT&T television spots that feature actual texts sent or received by victims of fatal or serious injury crashes.

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will create additional buy-in and support for strategies aimed at improving traffic safety outcomes for teens.

- Advancing improvements to emergency medical and trauma system services. Emergency medical systems are critical to the success of a comprehensive highway safety program, as crash outcomes often depend on the quality and swiftness of medical response. When changes to emergency and trauma services improve crash response and system effectiveness, all roadway users, including teens, benefit.
- Advocating for upgrades to state data systems. Enhancing data systems that track teen licensing elements, crashes and violation information, and ensuring such data systems can communicate with one another, will provide valuable feedback to parents and law enforcement. Timely coordination of teen driving information can facilitate the provision of remedial actions or education, helping authorities and parents address risky teen driving behaviors.

## Conclusion

No single strategy discussed in this **Guidebook** will “fix” the problem of teen overrepresentation in traffic crashes. Experts agree that the “fix” must be a multi-layered, comprehensive approach that addresses the complexity of teen driving from many angles. Targeted laws and policies, enforcement, education and many other strategies must be enlisted to move teens from being inexperienced novice drivers into safe and responsible road users.

The work of improving teen driving safety is challenging and ongoing. Being a teen driver today means navigating the dual challenges of gaining mobility and personal independence in a world of rapidly changing personal and transportation technology. SHSOs play a critical leadership role in helping teens make these transitions safely. With this **Guidebook**, SHSOs can access the best practices of highway safety experts and researchers to provide creative guidance to decision-makers, parents and others concerned with keeping novice drivers safe.

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