



Promoting Teen Driving Safety:

Strategies and Tools for Community Programs



This fact sheet provides strategies and resources for community organizations to use in developing and implementing motor vehicle safety programs for teens. Here is how you can use the information:

- **Scope of the Problem:** Use these facts to support the need for your program.
- **Evidence-Based Strategies:** These are drawn from comprehensive, expert reviews of research. Use these strategies to increase the likelihood that your program will improve the safety of teens in your community.
- **Information and Materials for Program Implementation:** Once you have planned your program, use these tools to find the resources you need to carry it out.
- **Partners for Successful Community Programs:** These agencies and groups can provide contact information for local advocates and professionals, sources of funding, data, and other resources.

The Children's Safety Network (CSN) created this tool for State Maternal and Child Health and Injury and Violence Prevention Programs to disseminate to local health departments and community organizations interested in promoting teen driving safety.

Scope of the Problem

Teenagers contribute to and suffer from the consequences of motor vehicle collisions at a disproportionate rate:

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year olds.¹
- In 2006, 3,490 15-to 20-year-old drivers were killed and an additional 272,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes.¹
- Drivers between the ages 15-20 are 6.4 percent of all licensed drivers in the U.S. but are involved in 12.9 percent of all fatal crashes.¹

The factors that put teenage drivers at risk for motor vehicle injuries differ from those that put older drivers at risk. Compared with

crashes of older drivers, teen driver crashes more often involved:

- driver error
- lack of safety belt use
- excessive speed
- single vehicle crashes
- increased risk with every additional passenger
- nighttime fatal crashes
- alcohol (in the later teen years)²

Among teen drivers, the most often cited behavioral limitations include immaturity, inexperience, and a propensity for risk-taking.³

Evidence-Based Strategies

What Works?

Comprehensive reviews of high-quality evaluations show consistent, significant reductions of motor-vehicle-related injuries involving teens when the following strategies are used:

- **Graduated drivers licensing (GDL) systems**, which are publicized and enforced and which include the following elements:
 1. supervised driving for beginning drivers^{5,6} for at least 6 months⁴
 2. a night driving restriction^{5,6,7} beginning at 9 p.m.⁴
 3. passenger restrictions (prohibiting teenaged passengers unless the driver is being supervised by an adult driver)^{4,5,6,7}
- **Safety belt laws** for young drivers that are publicized, enforced, and adjudicated^{4,8}
- **Drinking and driving laws** for teen drivers that are publicized, enforced, and adjudicated⁴, including the Minimum Legal Drinking Age and Zero Tolerance for Drinking and Driving Laws.

These strategies are most effective when used in combination.

What Might Work?

Research indicates that parent-teen safe-driving contracts, especially if they are part of a program that promotes parental monitoring of teens, may help reduce collisions involving young drivers. Research also reveals that the use of cell phones (including hands-free cell phones) by young drivers is associated with an increase in collisions.^{4,5,6,7} Restrictions on the use of cell phones may decrease collisions, but current research is inconclusive.

Since drinking and driving is a collision risk factor for older teens, it is important to prevent young people under the legal drinking age from obtaining alcohol. One approach that has been shown to be effective in addressing this problem is training alcohol servers and retailers in responsible service, accompanied by enforcement of laws prohibiting selling alcohol to minors.⁹

Information and Materials

The following resources can be used by community programs to educate parents, teens, educators, government officials, law enforcement professionals, and the public about the importance of GDL systems, safety belts, and drinking and driving laws.

The Allstate Foundation Website features resources on teen driving, including the following:

- A Teen Driving site with links to materials for parents and teens, a Parent-Teen Driving contract, and information on GDL laws, which can be found at <http://www.allstate.com/foundation/teen-safe-driving.aspx>
- Drive It Right: Talking To Teens About Safe Driving, a school-based program available at <http://allstate.discoveryeducation.com/>

A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Young Drivers (Guidance for Implementation of the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Volume 19) describes the problem of crashes involving young drivers as well as strategies to prevent these collisions. This guide is available at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_500v19.pdf.

Teen Driver: A Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety provides parents with guidance for helping their children learn how to successfully complete the process of becoming a safe driver (<http://teedriver.nsc.org/parents.aspx>).

Graduated Licensing Toolkit includes information on how to explain the merits of GDL to potential program partners, how parents can enforce GDL compliance, and information on other effective strategies (including safety belt and alcohol restriction laws). The toolkit can be found in the publications section of the Council of State Governments Website (<http://www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/>).

Improving the Health of Adolescents & Young Adults: A Guide for States and Communities, while not focusing on teen driving initiatives, provides a framework for helping communities establish priorities, take collective action, and measure progress toward achieving adolescent health goals (<http://nahic.ucsf.edu/download.php?f=/downloads/niah/Complete2010Guide.pdf>).

Novice Driver's Road Map: A Guide For Parents helps an adult coach guide a novice driver through a series of practice drives. It also provides information on being a positive role model, promoting safe driving practices, and a teen/parent driving agreement. Available for \$15 from <http://www.trafficsafety.org/worklife/novice.asp>





The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Website features resources to promote increased seat belt use, implementation of GDL systems, and reduction of teens' access to alcohol. To find these and related resources, visit the NHTSA Website (<http://www.nhtsa.gov/>):

1. Go to the Quick Clicks navigation bar on the NHTSA homepage.
2. Click on Teen Drivers.
3. Select from a variety of resources, research, and publications on seat belt use, GDL systems, and youth access to alcohol.

Several items on the NHTSA site are also available from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety:

- Questions and Answers – Graduated Driver Licensing at <http://www.iihs.org/research/qanda/gdl.html>
- Beginning Teenage Driver at http://www.iihs.org/brochures/pdf/beginning_drivers.pdf

NOYS National Youth Traffic Safety Month Toolkit contains program ideas, tools for working with the media, educational resources, and other materials for youth to use as part of community projects (<http://noys.org/YouthTraSafe/toolkit.html>).

The Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent And Reduce Underage Drinking: An Action Guide For Communities provides information about underage drinking and suggests ways that community organizations can work to end this problem. The *Call to Action* also includes action guides for educators and families. The action guides can be downloaded:

- <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/CommunityGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/EducatorGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/FamilyGuide.pdf>

Evaluating Traffic Safety Programs: A Manual for Assessing Program Effectiveness includes information on designing an evaluation, presenting results, and identifying resources (<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/1441/2/80789.0001.001.pdf>).

The Art of Appropriate Evaluation provides guidance on implementing a practical evaluation appropriate for the size, scope, and resources of the program being evaluated (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/ArtofAppEvWeb/index.htm>).

Partners for Successful Community Programs

State highway safety offices can help you identify:

- Law enforcement and traffic safety professionals interested in collaborating
- Funds from the State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program
- Local data on motor vehicle crashes
- Educational materials and resources

For the office in your State, visit <http://www.ghsa.org/html/links/highwaysafetyWebsites.html>

State Health Department Injury Prevention, Maternal and Child Health (MCH), and Adolescent Health Programs can help you identify:

- Public health professionals who can help you develop and implement your program
- Funding from State health departments
- Local data on injuries and fatalities due to motor vehicle crashes
- Educational materials and resources

For the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Director in your State, go to Member Resources and click on Contact Information By State at <http://www.stipda.org>. For the MCH Director and Adolescent Health Coordinator in your State, contact CSN@edc.org.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving can provide contact information for chapters in your area. Visit <http://www.madd.org/>

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) is a peer-to-peer youth prevention organization that may have a chapter in your State. To find a chapter, visit <http://www.sadd.org/scoordinators.htm>

Insurance companies often fund safety-related programs in the State or region they serve. Allstate, for example, provides grants through both its national foundation and its local affiliates. For more information on Allstate, go to the Allstate Foundation Website (<http://www.allstate.com/foundation.aspx>). Click on Teen Driving on the left navigation bar and then click on the Local Programs and Funding Guidelines links on the right navigation bar.



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Children's Safety Network
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel St.
Newton, MA 02458

(617) 618-2230
csn@edc.org

www.ChildrensSafetyNetwork.org

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