



# GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING



# Tool Kit

healthy states  
CSG's partnership to promote public health  
[www.healthystates.csg.org](http://www.healthystates.csg.org)





# Policy Overview: Graduated Driver Licensing

Although learning to drive is a rite of passage for American teenagers, it also is a time filled with danger. Young people die in car crashes three times more often than from firearms, the second most common cause of death.<sup>1</sup> Between 1995 and 2004, almost 31,000 people died in crashes involving 15- to 17-year-old drivers, the majority of which were passengers, occupants of other vehicles and pedestrians.<sup>2</sup>

With almost 8,000 young drivers aged 15-20 involved in fatal collisions during 2004, comprehensive graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems are a good first step toward reducing the needless tragedies taking place on America's streets every day. Comprehensive GDL systems can cut the involvement of 16-year-olds in fatal car crashes by up to 20 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## What is a GDL?

The idea of GDL began with two driving studies in North Carolina in the 1970s. Both studies showed younger drivers were involved in car crashes more often than middle-aged drivers, particularly between midnight and 6 a.m. Data also showed that when these new drivers had young passengers, they had a significantly higher chance of being involved in a crash.<sup>4</sup>

The ideal GDL system consists of three stages:

- A supervised learner's period that lasts at least six months;
- An intermediate period that allows unsupervised driving in less risky situations; and
- Full licensure.<sup>5</sup>

Although most states have some components of a GDL, no state has them all. See Appendix A for a state-by-state comparison of GDL Systems.

## How Well Does GDL Work?

Although state licensing requirements vary, the crash rates of 16- and 17-year-old drivers have been reduced after some form of graduated licensing was enacted.

One study found significant reductions in the number of fatalities in



## What is included in a model GDL law?

### Stage 1: Learner's Permit

Drivers should:

- Be at least 16 years old.
- Pass vision and knowledge tests.
- Hold the permit for at least six months.
- Be supervised at all times by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old.
- Complete basic driver training.
- Complete at least 50 hours of certified driving practice, including nighttime driving.
- Require all vehicle occupants to wear safety belts.
- Be free of at-fault crashes or convictions for at least six months before progressing to the next stage.
- Pass a road test given by an accredited agency before progressing to the next stage.

### Stage 2: Intermediate/Probationary License

Drivers should:

- Have a sixth month minimum holding period.
- Be allowed to drive without supervision during the day. At night, the driver should be accompanied by a licensed driver at least 21 years old between at least 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- Have a limited number of passengers. There should be no teen passengers, with the exception of immediate family members, for the first six months.
- Take and pass an advanced driver's education course during the year.
- Require all vehicle occupants to wear safety belts.
- Be free of at-fault crashes or convictions for at least six months before progressing to the next stage.

### Stage 3: Full/Unrestricted License

Drivers should:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Pass a final road test.

Source: Mayhew DR, Simpson HM, Singhal D, and Desmond K. *Reducing the Crash Risk for Young Drivers*. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, June 2006.

states with GDL systems that were ranked by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) as good. According to IIHS, "good" programs required a six-month learner's permit, restricted driving between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. or allowed only one passenger while driving unsupervised, and did not allow an unrestricted license before a driver turned 17.<sup>6</sup>

Programs ranked as "good" reduced the number of fatalities among 15- to 17-year-old drivers by more than 19 percent. If the same rate of lives saved could be applied across the country, it would mean saving an average of 4.6 lives in each state every year. Good programs, which usually have passenger restrictions, also reduced the number of deaths among 15- to 17-year-old passengers by almost 35 percent.<sup>7</sup>

### What is Included in a GDL System?

#### *Nighttime driving restrictions*

Night is one of the most dangerous times for a new young driver to be on the road. Inexperience, lower visibility, bright headlights and an increased likelihood of being in a car with other teenage passengers greatly increases the risk of a crash. During 2004, 40 percent of all motor vehicle crash deaths among teenagers occurred between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.<sup>8</sup>

Because driver inexperience factors into nighttime crashes, most GDL regulations in the United States include some curb on when new drivers can be on the road by themselves. Although the limitations vary by state, the most common restrictions ban driving for those in the intermediate licensing stage between midnight and 5 a.m. Only six states—Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota and Vermont—place no limits on nighttime driving.<sup>9</sup>

A number of studies have consistently shown lower crash rates for teenagers when nighttime driving restrictions are in place. One study compared crash statistics in the early 1990s between Delaware and Connecticut, which allowed unrestricted driving at 16, and Pennsylvania and New York, which had nighttime driving restrictions. During the restricted hours, the number of crashes involving 16-year-olds was significantly lower in New York (by 65 percent) and in Pennsylvania (54 percent) when compared to the states without nighttime driving restrictions.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Passenger restrictions*

One of the biggest influences on whether teenage drivers are likely to be involved in a motor vehicle crash is if they have passengers in the car. Passenger restrictions, which can set limits on both the age and number of passengers allowed in a new driver's vehicle, are one way to prevent hundreds of deaths and millions in medical expenses each year.

A five-year study of fatal car crashes revealed that 16-year-old drivers with no passengers were more than twice as likely to die in a crash than drivers aged 30-59 with no passengers. If a 16-year-old has passengers in the vehicle, the chance of a fatal collision is more than four and a half times greater. If those passengers are two or

more teenagers, a crash becomes almost eight times more likely.<sup>11</sup>

Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia already have passenger restrictions. As with all other components of GDL systems, the regulations vary from state to state. The most common restrictions are no passengers younger than 18 for either the first three or six months, with exceptions made for family members. However, some states don't allow passengers younger than 21 or 25 in the car with a new driver.<sup>12</sup>

How effective passenger restrictions are depends largely on how well the law is followed by young drivers. But even with relatively low adherence, passenger restriction laws can be effective at saving lives. One study estimated that if only 20 percent of 16- and 17-year-old drivers complied with a law that forbade passengers younger than 20, there would be 7 percent fewer deaths (83 lives) annually in the nation. If 50 percent of teen drivers complied, road deaths would be cut by up to 22 percent (263 lives). If 70 percent of teen drivers obeyed the law, deaths could be reduced by up to 29 percent (346 lives).<sup>13</sup>

## Other Laws that Impact Teen Drivers

### *Primary safety belt laws*

Teenagers killed in motor vehicle collisions in 2004 were likely to not be wearing a safety belt. Of the more than 5,000 people aged 16-20 who lost their lives, 62 percent of them were not wearing proper restraints.<sup>14</sup>



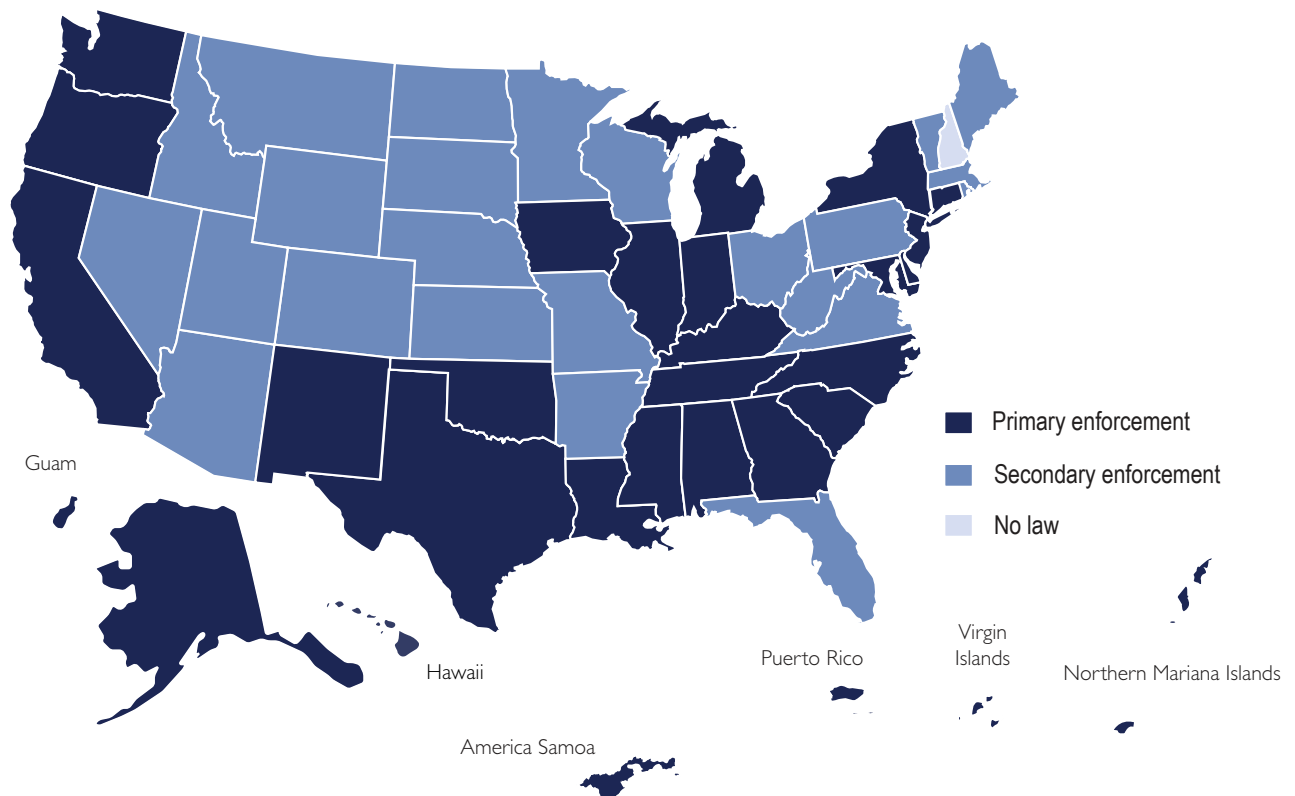
By changing a state's safety belt laws from secondary to primary enforcement, which increases the chances that motorists will buckle up, hundreds of lives could potentially be saved each year. In 24 states (see Figure 1), safety belt laws are secondary offenses, which means law enforcement cannot pull drivers over just because they are not wearing a safety belt. Drivers and passengers can be ticketed for not using restraints only if they are pulled over for another offense. In primary enforcement states, not wearing a safety belt is cause for law enforcement to pull a motorist over.

Motorists are more likely to wear safety belts in states with primary enforcement. One study showed that in states with primary enforcement, motorists are 9 percent more likely to buckle up than in states with secondary laws. The higher the fine for motorists who break the law also increases the likelihood they will use a safety belt. If a state with secondary enforcement and a \$10 fine for violations changes to primary enforcement and a \$50 fine, it could see a 15 percent increase in safety belt use.<sup>15</sup>

### *Alcohol Restrictions*

Since 1995, each state has adopted a zero-tolerance law that lowers the maximum blood-alcohol content (BAC) for juveniles while driving. Zero tolerance laws are based on the idea that since it is illegal for anyone younger than 21 to use alcohol, it should be illegal for them to drive with any alcohol in their system. State zero tolerance laws vary from a BAC of 0.00 to 0.02, while adults can be charged with driving under the influence with a BAC  $\geq 0.08$ . But alcohol still is playing a role in the lives of many young people today.

Figure 1: Enforcement of Adult Safety Belt Laws in the United States, July 2006



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Safety Belt Use Laws as of July 2006." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/restrain3.html](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/restrain3.html), Aug. 8, 2006.

In 2003:

- Almost 45 percent of high school students reported drinking alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days;
- More than 28 percent of high school students reported binge drinking (taking five or more drinks of alcohol in a couple of hours) during the past 30 days; and
- Alcohol was an important risk factor in the largest cause of death for youth—motor vehicle crashes.<sup>16</sup>

Zero tolerance laws save lives. A systematic review of zero tolerance laws found that they reduced fatal crashes involving young drivers by 9 to 24 percent.<sup>17</sup>

### *Parental enforcement issues*

Parents are the main enforcers of any state's GDL system. They often are the ones who establish driving rules, pay for gas and provide the car for their teenagers. Yet, many parents appear to be unaware of the greatest risks for their new drivers. Educating parents should be a prime concern among state legislators.

Although studies show how dangerous it is for new drivers to drive at night or have teen passengers in the vehicle, parents underestimate the risk. The most common restrictions imposed by parents in several studies were no drinking and driving and no driving without a safety belt, which have long been the subject of public safety campaigns. While 71 percent of parents imposed a nighttime curfew, just 38 percent put a limit on teen passengers—a risk that can increase the chances of a crash by four to eight times.<sup>18, 19</sup>

When parents are educated about the contents of and reasons for GDL, it helps them focus on the most dangerous driving conditions for their teenagers and may even lead to parents creating stricter driving limits than the state requires.<sup>20</sup> GDL also can be an ally for parents who wish to limit their teen's driving, but feel pressured by other parents to let teens ride with their new driver.



## What Can Legislators Do?

Legislators can play a variety of roles when it comes to improving GDL systems in a state. They can strengthen existing laws, propose new ones, provide needed funding for training and education programs and use their position to spread the word about the dangers facing teen drivers.

To make educating parents and law enforcement officers easier, GDL should be simple and easy to understand. When restrictions become too complicated or cumbersome, they are less likely to be enforced. GDL also should focus on rewards for good behavior rather than on penalties for bad behavior. Many states require young drivers to stay crash- and conviction-free before moving on to the next phase of licensing.

Ways legislators can improve their state's GDL system include:

### 1. Education:

- Consider funding for law enforcement agencies to do more promotional work in their communities about GDL and to conduct highly-publicized checkpoints, which helps raise community awareness.
- Consider introducing a resolution that urges family physicians to talk to parents and teens about what poses the greatest risk for new drivers.

### 2. Passenger restrictions:

- Consider proposing legislation that would limit the number and age of passengers that new drivers can carry if your state doesn't already do so.
- If your state already has passenger restrictions, re-evaluate the age and number of people allowed to ensure it provides maximum protection. A driver with two or more teen passengers is almost eight times more likely to die in a crash than someone who is 30-59 years old with two passengers.

### 3. Nighttime driving restrictions:

- If your state doesn't have nighttime driving restrictions, consider passing legislation to do so.
- If your state has nighttime restrictions, re-evaluate what the regulations require. Examine when nighttime crashes are happening and the age of drivers involved to see if starting times need to be adjusted. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety recommends optimal starting times at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m.

Ways legislators can improve other laws that impact teen driving include:

### 1. Alcohol restrictions

- Consider providing funding for law enforcement agencies to hold training sessions on your state's zero tolerance (alcohol limit) laws, since research has shown that the laws are more likely to be enforced if officers know them and their limitations well.
- Support legislation that keeps young drivers with alcohol infractions in the GDL system longer if your state doesn't already do so.

### 2. Safety belt laws

- Introduce legislation to change your state's safety belt law to primary enforcement if it is secondary.
- Re-examine the fine for violating your state's safety belt law, since research has shown that higher fines mean a greater adherence to the law.
- Consider introducing legislation to require that occupants in every seating position be properly restrained in either child passenger restraints or safety belts.

Learning to drive takes time and effort. GDL systems are designed to provide a longer learners permit licensing period, more supervision and a limited exposure to the riskiest types of driving. It should be stressed that GDL is not a punishment aimed at all new drivers for the actions of those few who become involved in crashes. It is a way to provide protection for adolescents and all those who share the road with them.

While all states have enacted some components of GDL, no state has fully enacted a model system. Legislators need to evaluate their own licensing systems and see if they are doing all they can to protect their state's youth.





## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. Accessed May 26, 2006. Available from [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars)
- <sup>2</sup> AAA. "Teen Crashes—Everyone is at Risk: People Fatally Injured in Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving 15- to 17-Year-Olds."
- <sup>3</sup> Chen, Li-Hui; Baker, Susan P.; and Li, Guohua. "Graduated Driver Licensing Programs and Fatal Crashes of 16-Year-Old Drivers: A National Evaluation." *Pediatrics* 2006; 118; 56-62.
- <sup>4</sup> Waller, Patricia F. "The genesis of GDL." *Journal of Safety Research* 34 (2003) 17-23.
- <sup>5</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America, August 2004." Accessed from [www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/blueprint.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/blueprint.pdf) May 30, 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> Morrisey, Michael A.; Grabowski, David C.; Dee, Thomas S.; and Campbell, Christine. "The Strength of Graduated Drivers License Programs and Fatalities Among Teen Drivers and Passengers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 38 (2006) 135-141.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Fatality Facts 2004: Teenagers." Accessed from [www.iihs.org/research/fatality\\_facts/pdfs/teenagers.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/research/fatality_facts/pdfs/teenagers.pdf) June 2, 2006.
- <sup>9</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers, Laws as of May 2006." Accessed from [www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf) June 7, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Ferguson, Susan A.; Leaf, William A.; Williams, Allan F.; and Preusser, David F. "Differences in young driver crash involvement in states with varying licensure practices." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 28 (1996) 171-180.
- <sup>11</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The effect of teenage passengers on the fatal crash risk of teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.
- <sup>12</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers, Laws as of May 2006." Accessed from [www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf) June 7, 2006.
- <sup>13</sup> Chen, L-H; Braver, E.R.; Baker, S.P.; and Li, G. "Potential benefits of restrictions on the transport of teenage passengers by 16 and 17 year old drivers." *Injury Prevention* 7 (2001) 129-134.
- <sup>14</sup> Miller, Ted R.; Lestina, Diane C.; and Spicer, Rebecca S.; "Highway Crash Costs in the United States by Driver Age, Blood Alcohol Level, Victim Age, and Restraint Use." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 137-150.
- <sup>15</sup> Houston, David J.; and Richardson Jr., Lilliard E. "Getting Americans to buckle up: The efficacy of state seat belt laws." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37 (2005) 1114-1120.
- <sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "General Alcohol Information." Accessed from [www.cdc.gov/alcohol/factsheets/general\\_information.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/factsheets/general_information.htm) May 31, 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> Shults, R.A.; Elder, R.W.; Sleet, D.A.; Nichols, J.L.; Alao, M.O.; Carande-Kulis; V.G.; et al. "Reviews of evidence regarding interventions to reduce alcohol-impaired driving." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 21 (45) (2001) 66-68.
- <sup>18</sup> McCartt, Anne T.; Shabanova, Veronika I; and Leaf, William A. "Driving experience, crashes and traffic citations of teenage beginning drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 35 (2003) 311-320.
- <sup>19</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The effect of teenage passengers on the fatal crash risk of teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.
- <sup>20</sup> Hartos, Jessica L.; Simons-Morton, Bruce G.; Beck, Kenneth H.; and Leaf, William A. "Parent-imposed limits on high-risk adolescent driving: are they stricter with graduated driver licensing?" *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37 (2005) 557-562.



# Graduated Driver Licensing: What Works

Although learning to drive is a rite of passage for American teenagers, it also is a time filled with danger. Motor vehicle crashes were the number one cause of death for young people 15 to 19 during 2003. The number of young people dying in car crashes was more than three times the number of teens dying from firearms, the second most common cause of death among adolescents ages 15-19.<sup>1</sup>

While the crash risk for all teenagers is high, it is especially dangerous for 16-year-olds. The crash risk per mile for a 16-year-old driver is twice the risk faced by 18- to 19-year-olds and seven times the risk for a driver who is 30 to 59 years old. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), fatal wrecks involving teenage drivers “especially 16-year-olds, more often are single-vehicle, run-off-the-road collisions, more often involve speeding, and more often include multiple passengers.”<sup>2</sup>

Graduated driver licensing (GDL), an idea that has been around since the 1970s, has helped reduce the number of crashes new drivers have. GDL laws limit a new driver’s exposure to high-risk situations, such as driving at night or carrying teen passengers. The limitations are lifted gradually as the driver gains experience.

With almost 8,000 young drivers aged 15-20 being involved in fatal crashes during 2004, comprehensive GDL laws are a good first step toward reducing the needless tragedies taking place on America’s roadways every day.<sup>3</sup>

## Why GDL Laws are Needed

Driving is a complex task that takes time and practice to master. The first month of driving after a teenager obtains his/her license is the most dangerous time, with a crash rate of 5.9 collisions per 100 licensed drivers. It drops sharply to 3.4 crashes during the second month and continues to fall during the next 10 months.<sup>4</sup> And because 77 percent of the fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers in 2003 were attributed to driver error, it is reasonable to believe that driver inexperience is the major cause of these crashes.<sup>5</sup>

New drivers are not the only ones at risk. Between 1995 and 2004, almost 31,000 people died in crashes involving 15- to 17-year-old drivers. Of all those deaths, 64 percent were passengers, occupants of other vehicles and pedestrians.<sup>6</sup> Crashes due to teen drivers cost the country an estimated \$40 billion annually.<sup>7</sup>

## What is GDL?

The idea of GDL programs began with two driving studies in North Carolina in the 1970s. Both studies showed younger drivers were involved in car crashes more often than middle-aged drivers, particularly between midnight and 6 a.m. Data also showed



# What is included in a model GDL law?

## Stage 1: Learner's Permit

Drivers should:

- Be at least 16 years old.
- Pass vision and knowledge tests.
- Hold the permit for at least six months.
- Be supervised at all times by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old.
- Complete basic driver training.
- Complete at least 50 hours of certified driving practice, including nighttime driving.
- Require all vehicle occupants to wear safety belts.
- Be free of at-fault crashes or convictions for at least six months before progressing to the next stage.
- Pass a road test given by an accredited agency before progressing to the next stage.

## Stage 2: Intermediate/Probationary License

Drivers should:

- Have a sixth month minimum holding period.
- Be allowed to drive without supervision during the day. At night, the driver should be accompanied by a licensed driver at least 21 years old between at least 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- Have a limited number of passengers. There should be no teen passengers, with the exception of immediate family members, for the first six months.
- Take and pass an advanced driver's education course during the year.
- Require all vehicle occupants to wear safety belts.
- Be free of at-fault crashes or convictions for at least six months before progressing to the next stage.

## Stage 3: Full/Unrestricted License

Drivers should:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Pass a final road test.

Source: Mayhew DR, Simpson HM, Singhal D, and Desmond K. *Reducing the Crash Risk for Young Drivers*. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, June 2006.

that when these new drivers had young passengers, they had a significantly higher chance of being involved in a crash.<sup>8</sup>

The ideal GDL law consists of three stages—a supervised learner's period that lasts at least six months, an intermediate period that allows unsupervised driving in less risky situations, such as during the daytime and without passengers, and then full licensure.<sup>9</sup>

Although most states have a three-stage GDL law, the specific components vary widely and no state has implemented all the pieces included in the model law. For a list of what GDL laws are in effect in each state, see Appendix A.

## How Well Do Systems Work?

Comparing crash statistics among states that have enacted GDL laws can be difficult, since each state's requirements may vary. But several studies have shown reductions in the crash rates of 16- and 17-year-olds after enacting some form of graduated licensing.

### *North Carolina*

In 1997, North Carolina adopted a three-phase licensing system for those who are at least 15 and younger than 18. Its GDL includes a:

- Level 1 learner's permit stage, which allows only supervised driving and must be held for one year. If there are no traffic violations and after passing a road test, the young driver moves on to level 2.
- Level 2 provisional or intermediate, which allows them to drive unsupervised from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. or supervised at any time. After six months with no violations, they proceed to the next level.
- Full licensure.<sup>10</sup>

After the first group of young people completed the system in 1999, a study found that 16-year-olds were 23 percent less likely to be involved in a crash as compared to before the GDL law was enacted. The number of fatal injury crashes was cut in half—although the total number of fatal collisions was low—and 16-year-olds were 43 percent less likely to be involved in a crash during the restricted nighttime hours. Crashes during the day also decreased by 20 percent.<sup>11</sup>

### *Multi-state studies*

Another study found significant reductions in the number of fatalities in states using GDL laws that were ranked by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) as good. According to IIHS, "good" state GDL programs required a six-month learner's permit, restricted driving between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. or allowed only one passenger while driving unsupervised, and did not allow an unrestricted license before a driver turned 17.<sup>12</sup>

According to the study, programs ranked as "good" reduced the number of fatalities among 15- to 17-year-old drivers by more than 19 percent. If the same savings in lives could be applied to all of the country, it would mean saving 4.6 lives in each state every year. Good programs, which usually have passenger restrictions, also reduced the number of deaths among 15- to 17-year-old passengers by almost 35 percent.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

Graduated licensing programs do work. Although all states have some GDL components, these vary widely. Some states allow for licensing as young as 14, while others require driver education if the person is younger than 18. Some have no required minimum amount of supervised driving time, while other states require 60 hours. Legislators should take a second look at their own statutes and see how their regulations measure up. Strong GDL laws save money and lives.

In the following sections, three aspects of GDL restrictions are further explored, as well as two other laws that are not usually addressed by GDL systems but have a major impact on teen driving:

- Aspects of GDL
  - Nighttime driving restrictions;
  - Passenger restrictions; and
  - Parental enforcement issues
- Other important laws
  - Alcohol restrictions; and
  - Safety belt restrictions



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. Accessed May 26, 2006. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars>
- <sup>2</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Statement before the Maryland House Committee on Environmental Matters: Passenger Restrictions for Young Drivers." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/testimony/pdf/testimony\\_slo\\_020905.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/testimony/pdf/testimony_slo_020905.pdf) May 26, 2006.
- <sup>3</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic Safety Facts 2004 Data. Young Drivers. DOT HS 809 918. Accessed from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2004/809918.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> McCartt, Ann T.; Shabanova, Veronika I.; and Leaf, William A. "Driving experience, crashes and traffic citations of teenage beginning drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 35 (2003) 311-320.
- <sup>5</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Statement before the Maryland House Committee on Environmental Matters: Passenger Restrictions for Young Drivers." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/testimony/pdf/testimony\\_slo\\_020905.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/testimony/pdf/testimony_slo_020905.pdf) May 26, 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> AAA. "Teen Crashes—Everyone is at Risk: People Fatally Injured in Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving 15- to 17-Year-Olds."
- <sup>7</sup> Drive for Life, The National Safe Driving Test & Initiative. "Teen Drivers on the Road: It's Expensive and Dangerous, Too." Accessed from <http://www.aaapublicaffairs.com/Assets/Files/20061171529330.AAAGDL-Guidelines.DOC> May 30, 2006.
- <sup>8</sup> Waller, Patricia F. "The genesis of GDL." *Journal of Safety Research* 34 (2003) 17-23.
- <sup>9</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America, August 2004." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/blueprint.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/blueprint.pdf) May 30, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Foss, Robert D.; Feaganes, John R.; and Rodgman, Eric A. "Initial Effects of Graduated Driver Licensing on 16-Year-Old Driver Crashes in North Carolina." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2001: 286: 1588-1592.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Morrissey, Michael A.; Grabowski, David C.; Dee, Thomas S.; and Campbell, Christine. "The Strength of Graduated Drivers License Programs and Fatalities Among Teen Drivers and Passengers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 38 (2006) 135-141.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.



# Graduated Driver Licensing: Passenger Restrictions

One of the biggest influences on whether teenage drivers are likely to be involved in a motor vehicle collision is if they have passengers in the car. Teen drivers are much more likely to be involved in crashes if they have passengers, and the likelihood of a crash increases as the number of teen passengers increases.

Driver inexperience, peer pressure to take more chances, distractions and the increased likelihood of loud music and alcohol all add to a young driver's chances for becoming involved in a potentially fatal crash. Implementing passenger restrictions, which can set limits on the age, number and relationship of passengers allowed in a new driver's vehicle, is one way to prevent hundreds of deaths and millions in medical care expenses each year.

## What are the Risks?

A five-year study of fatal car crashes found that 16-year-old drivers with no passengers were more than twice as likely to be involved in a fatal crash than drivers 30-59 with no passengers. If a 16-year-old has passengers in the vehicle, the chance of a fatal accident is more than four-and-a-half times greater. If those passengers are two or more teenagers, a crash becomes almost eight times more likely.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons that teenage drivers with passengers are more prone to crashes are not entirely known, but a few factors seem likely to be part of the cause. Overall, teen drivers regularly overestimate their driving ability.<sup>2</sup> Alcohol also may play a role. In one study, 16- and 17-year-olds involved in fatal crashes were more likely to have a blood alcohol concentration  $>0.01$  if there were two or more passengers in the car.<sup>3</sup>

By taking steps to reduce the number of teen motor vehicle crashes, legislators can reduce the millions of dollars in medical expenses that are the result of these crashes. Collisions due to teen drivers cost the country an estimated \$40 billion annually.<sup>4</sup>

## How Well Do Passenger Restrictions Work?

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia (see Appendix A) already have passenger restrictions. As with all other components of graduated driver licensing (GDL), the specific regulations vary from state to state. The most common restrictions are no passengers younger than 18 for the first three or six months, with exceptions made for family members. However, some states don't allow passengers younger than 21 or 25 in the car with a new driver.<sup>5</sup>

California revised its GDL in 1998 to include a restriction that license holders under 18 aren't allowed to have passengers younger than 20 years old for the first six months. After the law was enacted, teen drivers were carrying fewer passengers; an effect which only increased with time as people became more aware of the law. During the first three years after the provision was enacted, an estimated eight lives were saved and almost 700 injuries were prevented in California from averted crashes.<sup>6</sup>

How effective passenger restrictions are depends largely on how well the law is followed by young drivers. But even with relatively low adherence, passenger restriction laws can be effective at saving lives. One study looked at the 1995 road user death rates in the United States to estimate how many lives could potentially

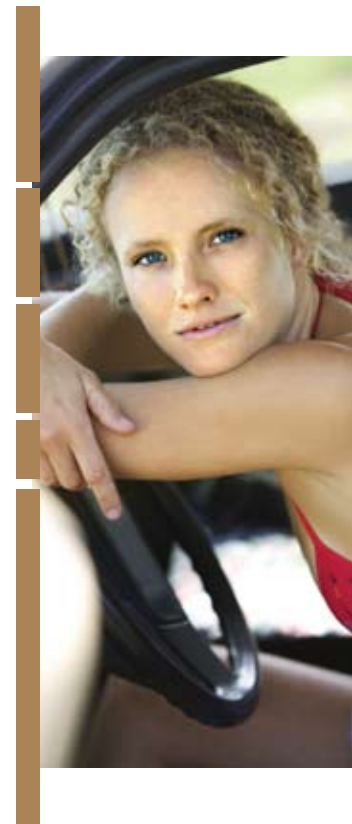
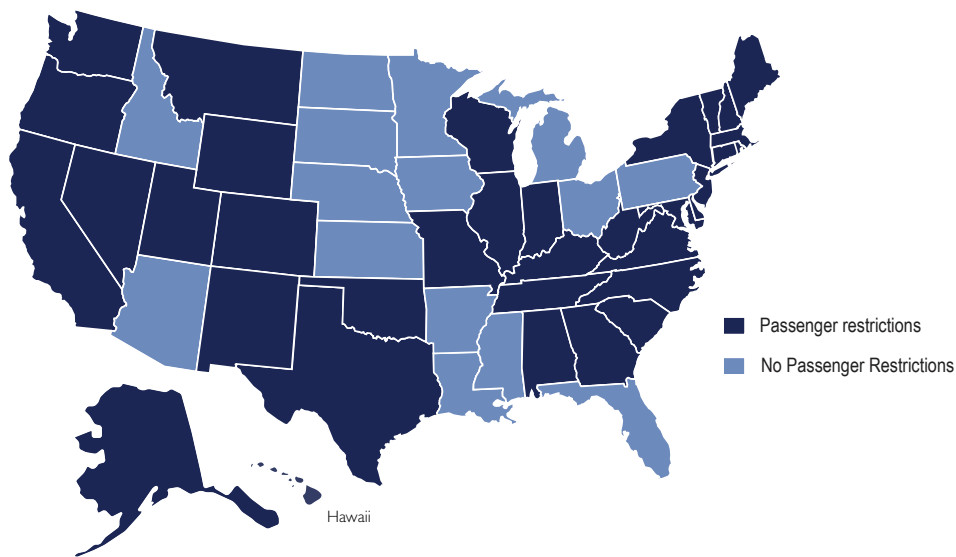


Figure I: States with Passenger Restrictions for Young Drivers, August 2006



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, "U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf)

be saved with such regulations. If only 20 percent of 16- and 17-year-old drivers complied with a nationwide law that forbade passengers younger than 20, there would be 7 percent fewer deaths (83 lives) annually in the nation. If 50 percent of teen drivers complied, road deaths would be cut by up to 22 percent (263 lives). If 70 percent of teen drivers obeyed the law, deaths could be reduced by up to 29 percent (346 lives).<sup>7</sup>

## Parental Influence

Passenger restrictions are less likely to be enforced by parents than other provisions in GDL systems. Although parents are highly likely to tell their children drinking and driving is not allowed (90 percent in one study), they are much less likely to limit the number of teenage passengers (38 percent).<sup>8</sup> Since numerous studies have shown that young drivers are far more likely to be in a crash with their peers in the vehicle, educating parents about the dangers of young passengers is crucial.

## What Legislators Can Do

Steps legislators can take include:

- Considering legislation that would limit the number and age of passengers that new drivers can carry.
- If their state already has passenger restrictions in the law, re-evaluate the age, number of people allowed and the length of time the restriction is in place to ensure it provides maximum protection. A driver with two or more teen passengers is almost eight times more likely to crash than someone who is 30-59 years old with the same number of passengers.
- Educating parents and constituents through speeches, public service announcements and school assemblies about the dangers posed by teen passengers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The effect of teenage passengers on the fatal crash risk of teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.

<sup>2</sup> Gregersen, Peter Nils. "Young drivers overestimation of their own skill—an experiment on the relation between training strategy and skill." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 28 (1996) 243-250.

<sup>3</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The effect of teenage passengers on the fatal crash risk of teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.

<sup>4</sup> Drive for Life, The National Safe Driving Test & Initiative. "Teen Drivers on the Road: It's Expensive and Dangerous, Too." Accessed from <http://www.safedrivingtest.com/teendrivers.html> May 30, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers, Laws as of August 2006." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf) June 7, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Cooper, Douglas; Atkins, Frank; and Gillen, David. "Measuring the impact of passenger restrictions on new teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37 (2005) 19-23.

<sup>7</sup> Chen, L-H; Braver, E.R.; Baker, S.P.; and Li, G. "Potential benefits of restrictions on the transport of teenage passengers by 16 and 17 year old drivers." *Injury Prevention* 7 (2001) 129-134.

<sup>8</sup> McCartt, Anne T.; Shabanova, Veronika I; and Leaf, William A. "Driving experience, crashes and traffic citations of teenage beginning drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 35 (2003) 311-320.



# Graduated Driver Licensing: Parental Enforcement Issues

Parents are the main enforcers of any state’s graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws. They often are the ones who set up driving rules, pay for gas and provide the car for their teenagers. Since many parents appear to be unaware of what the greatest risks are for their new drivers, educating parents is a prime concern for GDL systems.

## Underestimating Risk

Although many studies have demonstrated how dangerous it is for new drivers to drive at night or have teen passengers in the vehicle, parents underestimate the risk. Studies have shown that the most common restrictions imposed by parents were no drinking and driving and no driving without a safety belt, which both have long been the subject of public safety campaigns. While 71 percent of parents imposed a nighttime driving restriction, just 38 percent put a limit on teen passengers—a risk that can increase the chances of being involved in a fatal crash by four to eight times.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Since parents seem to underestimate the risk new drivers face in certain situations, it is not surprising that many are unlikely to enforce nighttime driving and passenger restrictions on a consistent basis. Interviews of 900 North Carolina parents and their teens showed they had good knowledge of what was included in their state’s GDL system, but 27 percent of parents said they allowed their children to violate the 9 p.m. driving restriction. Sixty percent of those parents said they allowed their children to do it “a few times.”<sup>3</sup>

## Parental and Teen Support

Although the same arguments arise in states where new GDL restrictions are introduced—such as “why punish all teens when there are just a few bad drivers” and “it will hurt teens’ ability to work and go to after-school events”—several states have shown that both parents and teens support GDL after it is implemented.

In 1996, Florida enacted a GDL law with nighttime driving restrictions—the first of its kind in the United States. Two years later, teens held their permits longer, waited longer to get their full licenses and had more driving experience once they did. The number of teens who





strongly opposed various components of the GDL law also dropped dramatically, particularly among 16-year-olds. In 1996, 22 percent of 16-year-olds strongly opposed the six-month learner's permit; that dropped to 7 percent just two years later. This shows that while there may be some staunch opposition when introduced, GDL regulations are quickly accepted by the public, especially among those whom they most affect—16-year-olds.

When parents are educated about the contents of and reasons for GDL systems, it helps them focus on the most dangerous driving conditions for their teenagers and may even lead to parents creating stricter driving limits than the state requires.<sup>4</sup> GDL systems also can be an ally for parents who wish to limit their teen's driving, but feel pressured by other parents to let teens ride with their new driver.

## Parental Contracts

Ongoing evaluations of the Checkpoints Program, which is under development by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, have shown it to be effective in increasing the limits parents place on their children during the first year of driving. The program features a written contract, signed by parents and the teenager, which places limits on driving at night, with teens in the car, on high-speed roads and during bad weather. A video about the dangers of driving and periodic newsletters also are sent to parents. Since the program is still under development, it is not yet available to the public. Several other organizations have produced a similar written contract. See the Additional Resources section for further information.

Two studies have shown that parents who use the Checkpoints Program tend to place greater restrictions on their teen drivers during the first three months of licensure than those who did not participate, an effect which continued throughout the first year. But while parents tended to place restrictions on where the teen was going and when they would be back, they placed the fewest limits on teen passengers, high-speed roads and driving at night.<sup>5, 6</sup> So while a program such as Checkpoints is good at introducing parents to the risks new drivers face, more education needs to be focused on those areas of greatest risk— such as passenger restrictions and nighttime driving.

## What Legislators Can Do

Parents play a vital role in the success of a graduated driver licensing system. Parents are the primary enforcers of restrictions on teenage driving, yet it seems many still do not clearly understand what poses the greatest risks. This critical missing link, essential to reducing the number of teens who die each year on America's roadways, can be filled with the help of legislators by:

- Considering funding to implement a Checkpoints-style parental monitoring program in their own state to help parents understand the risks. Such programs help parents design their own driving restrictions that are clear and have consequences for violations, which make them more likely to be followed.
- Considering funding for law enforcement agencies to do more promotional work in their communities about GDL laws and highly-publicized check points, which also help raise community awareness.
- Considering a resolution that urges doctors to talk to parents and teens about what poses the greatest risk for new drivers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> McCartt, Anne T.; Shabanova, Veronika I; and Leaf, William A. "Driving experience, crashes and traffic citations of teenage beginning drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 35 (2003) 311-320.

<sup>2</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The effect of teenage passengers on the fatal crash risk of teenage drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.

<sup>3</sup> Goodwin, Arthur H.; and Foss, Robert D. "Graduated driver licensing restrictions: awareness, compliance, and enforcement in North Carolina." *Journal of Safety Research* 35 (2004) 367-374.

<sup>4</sup> Hartos, Jessica L.; Simons-Morton, Bruce G.; Beck, Kenneth H.; and Leaf, William A. "Parent-imposed limits on high-risk adolescent driving: are they stricter with graduated driver licensing?" *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37 (2005) 557-562.

<sup>5</sup> Simons-Morton, Bruce G.; Hartos, Jessica L.; Leaf, William A.; and Preusser, David F. "Persistence of Effects of the Checkpoints Program on Parental Restrictions of Teen Driving Privileges." *American Journal of Public Health* 95 (2005) 447-452.

<sup>6</sup> Simons-Morton, B.G.; Hartos, J.L.; and Leaf, W.A. "Promoting parental management of teen driving." *Injury Prevention* 8 (2002) 24-31.



## Alcohol Restrictions:

Although the legal drinking age in all states is 21, alcohol still plays a role in the life of many American youth and is a factor in many crashes caused by young drivers. In 2003:

- Almost 45 percent of high school students reported drinking alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days;
- More than 28 percent of high school students reported binge drinking (taking five or more drinks of alcohol in a couple of hours) during the past 30 days; and
- Alcohol was the leading risk factor in the largest cause of death for youth, motor vehicle crashes.<sup>1</sup>

When adolescents do drink and drive, they are much more likely than adults to be involved in a motor vehicle crash. Even at low blood alcohol levels, the risk is more pronounced, which is most likely due to their inexperience with both alcohol and driving.<sup>2</sup>

### Zero Tolerance Laws

In 1995, Congress passed the National Highway Systems Designation Act of 1995. In it, states that did not adopt a zero tolerance law—making it illegal for people under the age of 21 to drive with a blood alcohol content (BAC) level  $\geq 0.02$ —would lose part of their funding for highway construction. Zero tolerance laws are based on the idea that since it is illegal for anyone younger than 21 to use alcohol, it should be illegal for them to drive with any alcohol in their system. Zero tolerance laws vary from a BAC of 0.00 to 0.02, while adults can be charged with driving under the influence with a BAC  $\geq 0.08$ . Although the allowable limits vary, each state now has its own zero tolerance law—some of which have been written into the laws governing graduated driver licensing.

While alcohol use among youth in general appears to be common, its use among young drivers has decreased during the past two decades. The results of a national roadside breath test survey show a decline in people under age 21 who have a BAC of  $\geq 0.05$ , from 10.9 percent of people tested in 1973 to just 2.8 percent in 1996.<sup>3</sup> But the risk of having an alcohol-related fatal crash increases dramatically when a teenage driver has young passengers.<sup>4</sup>

Not only do zero tolerance policies save lives, they also save money.



Due to the decline in alcohol-related crashes, for every dollar spent on intervention policies an estimated \$1.25 is saved in medical spending and \$7 in other costs, such as lost productivity and quality of life.<sup>5</sup>

## What Legislators Can Do

All states have zero tolerance laws. There are several things legislators can do to increase their law's effectiveness. Legislators can:

- Consider providing funding for law enforcement training sessions on their states' zero tolerance laws, since research has shown the laws are more likely to be enforced if officers know it and its limitations well;<sup>6</sup>
- Continue educational campaigns to make sure the public is aware of their state's zero tolerance laws. Some states put a section describing the law into the driver's handbook or hand out leaflets to each person applying for a learner's permit;<sup>7</sup>
- Support sobriety checkpoints or other well-publicized events that raise awareness of their states' zero tolerance laws; and
- Support legislation that keeps young drivers with alcohol infractions in the GDL system longer if their state doesn't already do so.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "General Alcohol Information." Accessed from [http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/factsheets/general\\_information.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/factsheets/general_information.htm) May 31, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Mayhew, D.R.; Donelson, A.C.; Beirness, D.J.; and Simpson, H.M. "Youth, alcohol, and relative risk of crash involvement." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 18 (1986) 273-87.

<sup>3</sup> Voas, Robert B.; Wells, JoAnn; Lestina, Diane; Williams, Allan; and Greene, Michael. "Drinking and Driving in the United States: The 1996 National Roadside Survey." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 267-275.

<sup>4</sup> Preusser, David F.; Ferguson, Susan A.; and Williams, Allan F. "The Effect of Teenage Passengers on the Fatal Crash Risk of Teenage Drivers." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 217-222.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, Ted R.; Lestina, Diane C.; and Spicer, Rebecca S.; "Highway Crash Costs in the United States by Driver Age, Blood Alcohol Level, Victim Age, and Restraint Use." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30 (1998) 137-150.

<sup>6</sup> Lacey, John K.; Jones, Ralph K.; and Wiliszowski, Connie H. "Zero Tolerance Laws for Youth: Four States' Experience." U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Accessed from [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/zero/zerolaws/zerotolerance\\_index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/zero/zerolaws/zerotolerance_index.html) June 1, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



# Safety Belt Restrictions:

In 2004, about 34,000 people survived car or truck crashes that claimed the life of at least one other person in the vehicle. Although their ages ranged from young children to senior citizens, one factor united many of them—almost 70 percent of them used safety belts.<sup>1</sup>

In 2004, those killed in accidents and not wearing safety belts were more likely to be:

- Males (61 percent);
- Driving on rural roadways (58 percent);
- In pickup trucks (69 percent) or sports utility vehicles (62 percent); and
- In single-vehicle crashes (69 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Teenagers killed in a motor vehicle crash in 2004 were more likely not to be wearing a safety belt. Of the more than 5,000 people aged 16-20 who lost their lives, 62 percent of them were not wearing proper restraints.<sup>3</sup>

Studies have shown primary enforcement increases the chance that motorists will buckle up by 10 percent.<sup>4</sup> Changing a state's safety belt laws from secondary to primary enforcement could save hundreds of lives each year.

## Primary vs. Secondary Laws

New Hampshire is the only state that does not require the use of safety belts. In 24 states (see Figure 1) safety belt laws are a secondary offense, which means that law enforcement officials cannot pull a driver over just because he or she is not wearing a belt. Drivers and passengers can be ticketed for not using restraints only if they are pulled over for another offense.<sup>5</sup>

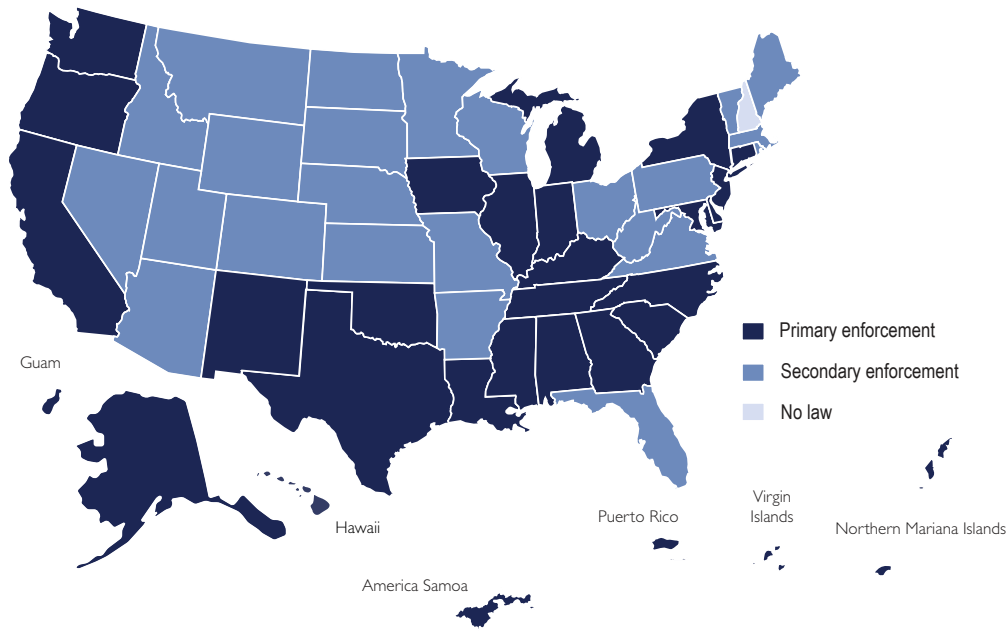
As of July 2006, 25 states and the District of Columbia had primary safety belt laws, which give officers the authority to pull over and ticket motorists solely because they are not wearing a belt. Primary enforcement also is the law in the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands.<sup>6</sup>

## Are Primary Enforcement Laws Effective?

Motorists are more likely to wear safety belts in states with primary enforcement. One study showed that in states with primary enforcement, motorists are 9 percent more likely to buckle up than in states with secondary laws. Higher fines for motorists who break the law also increases the likelihood they will use a safety belt. For example, if a state with secondary enforcement and a \$10 fine for violations changes to primary enforcement and a \$50 fine, it could see a 15 percent increase in safety belt use.<sup>7</sup>

Motorists in states with primary enforcement also are less likely to die in motor vehicle crashes. One study of 10 states that changed from secondary to primary laws found the death rates decreased by an estimated 7 percent. It was estimated that if all 28 states with secondary enforcement changed their laws, almost 700 lives could be saved annually.<sup>8</sup>

Figure I. Enforcement of Adult Safety Belt Laws in the United States, July 2006



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Safety Belt Use Laws as of July 2006." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/restrain3.html](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/restrain3.html) Aug. 8, 2006.

### What Legislators Can Do

Safety belts save lives, but they only can be effective if people are following the law. To that end, there are several things legislators can do, including:

- Introducing legislation to change their states' safety belt laws to primary enforcement;
- Re-examining the fine for violating the law, since research has shown that higher fines mean a greater adherence to the law;
- Support funding for law enforcement agencies to perform well-publicized safety belt checks and educational campaigns; and
- Continue educating constituents through Web sites or speaking engagements about the dangers of driving without proper restraint.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Fatality Analysis Reporting System, National Center for Statistics & Analysis. "Passenger Car, Light Truck, or Large Truck Occupant Survivors of Fatal Crashes, by Age and Restraint Use." Accessed from <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/finalreport.cfm?title=People&stateid=0&year=2004&title2=Restraints> June 8, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Statistics & Analysis. "Restraint Use Patterns Among Fatally Involved Passenger Vehicle Occupants." Accessed from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2006/810595.pdf> June 8, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. "Strengthening Safety Belt Use Laws." Accessed from <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DO/NHTSA/Rulemaking/Articles/Associated%20Files/13%20Strength%20Safety%20Belt%20Use.pdf> July 26, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Safety Belt Use Laws as of July 2006." Accessed from [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/restrain3.html](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/restrain3.html) Aug. 8, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Houston, David J.; and Richardson Jr., Lilliard E. "Getting Americans to buckle up: The efficacy of state seat belt laws." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37 (2005) 1114-1120.

<sup>8</sup> Farmer, Charles M.; and Williams, Allan F. "Effect on fatality risk of changing from secondary to primary seat belt enforcement." *Journal of Safety Research* 36 (2005) 189-194.







# Talking Points:

## Graduated Driver Licensing

### What Is a Graduated Driver License?

Graduated driver licenses (GDL) gradually introduce new drivers to the complex task of driving. The ideal GDL system consists of three stages:

- A supervised learner's period that lasts at least six months;
- An intermediate period that allows unsupervised driving in less risky situations. Driving can be restricted at night unless accompanied by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old. Passenger restrictions also can be added to this phase, which limit the number and age of passengers; and then
- Full licensure.

Although most states have some components of a GDL, no state has them all.

### Why Should Legislators Be Concerned?

- Motor vehicle crashes were the number one cause of death for young people 15-19 during 2003.
- Crashes due to teen drivers cost the country an estimated \$40 billion annually.
- If a 16-year-old driver has two or more teen passengers, they are almost eight times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than someone aged 30-59 with the same number of passengers.
- During 2004, 40 percent of all motor vehicle crash deaths among teenagers occurred between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Everyone is at risk. Between 1995 and 2004, almost 31,000 people died in crashes involving 15- to 17-year-old drivers. Of all those deaths, 64 percent were passengers, occupants of other vehicles and pedestrians.

### How Well Do GDL Laws Work?

Studies have consistently shown a reduction in the number of crashes involving teen drivers after a GDL system is enacted. Other laws that may affect teen drivers—such as making safety belt violations primary offenses and strengthening zero-tolerance laws—also have reduced the number of crashes.

- After North Carolina adopted a three-phase licensing system, which included nighttime restrictions, the number of 16 year olds involved in motor vehicle crashes dropped 23 percent. The number of fatal collisions was cut in half.
- During the first three years after California enacted legislation restricting those





younger than 18 from driving passengers younger than 20, an estimated eight lives were saved and almost 700 injuries prevented in averted crashes.

- After North Carolina restricted nighttime driving, crashes involving 16-year-old drivers dropped 43 percent during the restricted nighttime hours.

## What Can Legislators Do?

Legislators can play a variety of roles to improve GDL laws in a state. They can strengthen existing laws, propose new ones, provide funding for training and education programs and use their position to educate others about the dangers facing teen drivers.

GDL laws should be simple and easy to understand. When restrictions become too complicated or cumbersome, they are less likely to be enforced. GDL laws also should focus on rewards for good behavior rather than on penalties for bad behavior. Many states require young drivers to stay crash- and conviction-free before moving on to the next phase. Ways legislators can improve their state's GDL system include:

### 1. Education:

- Consider funding for law enforcement agencies to do more promotional work in their communities about GDL and to conduct highly-publicized checkpoints, which helps raise community awareness.
- Consider introducing a resolution that urges doctors to talk to parents and teens about what poses the greatest risk for new drivers.

### 2. Passenger restrictions:

- Consider proposing legislation that would limit the number and age of passengers that new drivers can carry if your state doesn't already do so.
- If your state already has passenger restrictions, re-evaluate the age and number of people allowed to ensure it provides maximum protection. A driver with two or more teen passengers is almost eight times more likely to die in a crash than someone who is 30-59 years old with two passengers.

### 3. Nighttime driving restrictions:

- If your state doesn't have nighttime driving restrictions, consider passing legislation to do so.
- If your state has nighttime restrictions, re-evaluate what the regulations require. Examine when nighttime crashes are happening and the age of drivers involved to see if starting times need to be adjusted. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety recommends optimal starting times at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m.

Ways legislators can improve other laws that impact teen driving include:

### 1. Alcohol restrictions

- Consider providing funding for law enforcement agencies to hold training sessions on your state's zero tolerance (alcohol limit) laws, since research has shown that the laws are more likely to be enforced if officers know it and its limitations well.
- Support legislation that keeps young drivers with alcohol infractions in the GDL system longer if your state doesn't already do so.

### 2. Safety belt laws

- Introduce legislation to change your state's safety belt law to primary enforcement if it is secondary.
- Re-examine the fine for violating your state's safety belt law, since research has shown that higher fines mean a greater adherence to the law.
- Consider introducing legislation to require that occupants in every seating position be properly restrained in either child passenger restraints or safety belts.



## Resource List:

These resources were selected to provide state legislators more information about motor vehicle crash rates, graduated driver licensing and other regulations that can address issues concerning the safety of teenage drivers.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/spotlite/teendrivers.htm>

### **AAA (formerly known as the American Automobile Association)**

<http://www.aaapublicaffairs.com/Main/Default.asp?CategoryID=14>

### **AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety/Johns Hopkins University**

<http://www.aaafoundation.org>

- **Nationwide Review of Graduated Driver Licensing:**

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/NationwideReviewofGDL.pdf>

### **Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety**

<http://www.saferoads.org>

### **American Academy of Pediatrics, Increasing Teen Driver Safety**

[http://www.aap.org/pubed/ZZZI399VR7C.htm?&sub\\_cat=1](http://www.aap.org/pubed/ZZZI399VR7C.htm?&sub_cat=1)

### **Governors Highway Safety Association**

<http://www.ghsa.org>

### **Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS)**

<http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/teenagers.html>

- **IIHS' list of licensing laws for each state:**

[http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/grad\\_license.html](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/grad_license.html)

## National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.gov>

- **GDL Legislative Fact Sheet:**

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Rulemaking/Articles/Associated%20Files/01%20Grad%20Driv%20Lic.pdf>

- **New Driver Issues:**

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.cd18639c9dadbabbbf30811060008a0c/>

## National Safety Council, Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety

<http://www.nsc.org/issues/teendriving/guide.htm>

- **Teen Driving Agreement:**

[www.nsc.org/issues/teendriving/agreement.pdf](http://www.nsc.org/issues/teendriving/agreement.pdf)

## ParentingTeenDrivers.com,

- **Example of a parent/teen driving contract**

<http://www.parentingteendrivers.com/contract.html>





# Graduated Driver Licensing:

## State-by-State Licensing Systems for Young Drivers as of May 2007

Graduated licensing is a system designed to delay full licensure while allowing beginners to obtain their initial experience under lower-risk conditions. There are three stages: a minimum supervised learner's period, an intermediate license (once the driving test is passed) that limits unsupervised driving in high-risk situations, and a full-privilege drivers license available after completion of the first two stages. Beginners must remain in each of the first two stages for set minimum time periods. Although only five states lack an intermediate stage (Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Minnesota and North Dakota), state licensing systems vary significantly.

In an optimal system, the minimum age for a learner's permit is 16 and the learning stage lasts at least six months, during which parents must certify at least 30-50 hours of supervised driving. The intermediate stage lasts until at least age 18 and includes both a night driving restriction starting at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m., and a strict passenger restriction allowing no teenage passengers or no more than one teenage passenger.

Since the 1990s, most states have improved their licensing systems by enacting some or all of the elements of graduated licensing. The systems differ not only with regard to the number and strength of the elements of graduated licensing they have adopted, but also in enforcement. Some states prohibit police from stopping young drivers solely for violating night driving or passenger restrictions (secondary enforcement).

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has evaluated state licensing systems using criteria designed to estimate their strength and likely effectiveness in reducing injuries. In particular, the length of the learner's holding period, the duration and strength of restrictions in the intermediate license phase are credited. No state has an optimal licensing system.

In the following table, IIHS rated each state's laws from good to poor using a point system. Points were assigned for the key components of graduated licensing. **Good** systems scored six or more points; **fair** systems score four or five; **marginal** systems two or three; and **poor** ones scored less than two points. Regardless of point totals, no state was rated above marginal if intermediate license holders could be younger than 16 or if it allowed unrestricted driving before 16 years, 6 months. The schedule below was used to assign points. The following table lists state licensing requisites, and IIHS ratings of their GDL Systems appear in the first column.

To stay informed about the latest state laws for young drivers, visit: [http://www.iihs.org/laws/state\\_laws/pdf/us\\_licensing\\_systems.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/pdf/us_licensing_systems.pdf).



### How Points are Assigned by the IIHS

- Learner's entry age: 1 point for learner's entry age of 16
- Learner's holding period: 2 points for  $\geq 6$  mo.; 1 point for 3–5 mo.; none for  $< 3$  mo.
- Practice driving certification: 1 point for  $\geq 30$  hr.; none for less than 30 hr.
- Night driving restriction: 2 points for 9 or 10 p.m. 1 point for after 10 p.m.
- Passenger restriction: 2 points for  $\leq 1$  underage passenger; 1 for 2 passengers; none for 3; where supervising driver may be  $< 21$ , point values were determined including the supervising driver as a passenger.
- Driver education: Where completion of driver education changed a requirement, point values were determined for the driver education track.
- Duration of restrictions: 1 point if difference between minimum unrestricted license age and minimum intermediate license age is 12 or more months; night driving and passenger restrictions were valued independently

# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage		Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted		
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger*	Until age 18	17
Alabama / F	15 <sup>1</sup>	6 mo.	30 hr. <sup>1</sup> (none with driver education)	16	Midnight–6 a.m.	No more than 3 passengers (parents and guardians excepted)	17 <sup>1</sup>	17 <sup>1</sup>
Alaska / G	14	6 mo.	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night or in inclement weather (eff. 1/1/05)	16	1 a.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 1/1/05)	First 6 mo.: No passengers (eff. 1/1/05)	16, 6 mo. (eff. 1/1/05)	16, 6 mo. (eff. 1/1/05)
Arizona / F	15, 6 mo. <sup>2</sup> (eff. 6/30/08)	6 mo. (eff. 6/30/08)	30 hr., 10 of which must be at night <sup>2</sup> (eff. 6/30/08) (none with driver education)	16	Midnight–5 a.m. (eff. 6/30/08) <b>S</b>	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 18 (eff. 6/30/08) <b>S</b>	16, 6 mo. (eff. 6/30/08)	16, 6 mo. (eff. 6/30/08)
Arkansas / M	14	6 mo. <sup>3</sup>	None	There is no passenger or night driving restriction. The minimum license age is 16. <sup>3</sup>				
California / G	15, 6 mo. <sup>4</sup>	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	11 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 1/1/06) <b>S</b>	First 12 mo.: No passengers younger than 20 (limited exception for immediate family) (eff. 1/1/06) <b>S</b>	17	17 (eff. 1/1/06)
Colorado / G	15 <sup>5</sup>	12 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	Midnight–5 a.m. <b>S</b>	First 6 mo.: No passengers Second 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger (eff. 7/1/05) <b>S</b>	17	17
Connecticut / G	16 <sup>6</sup>	6 mo. (4 mo. with driver education) <sup>6</sup>	up to 20 hr. <sup>6</sup> (eff. 10/1/05)	16, 4 mo. <sup>6</sup>	Midnight–5 a.m. (eff. 10/1/05)	First 3 mo.: No passengers <sup>6</sup> other than a parent if there is a supervising driver present Second 3 mo.: No passengers (family members excepted) (eff. 10/1/05)	18 (eff. 10/1/05)	16, 10 mo. <sup>6</sup> (eff. 10/1/05)
Delaware / G	16 (eff. 8/31/06)	6 mo. <sup>7</sup>	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 8/31/06)	16, 6 mo. <sup>7</sup> (eff. 8/31/06)	10 p.m.–6 a.m. <sup>7</sup>	No more than 1 passenger <sup>7</sup> (eff. 8/31/06)	17 (eff. 8/31/06)	17 (eff. 8/31/06)

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

*continued*

# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage		Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted		
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger *	Until age 18	17
District of Columbia / <b>G</b>	16	6 mo. <sup>8</sup>	40 hr., in learner's stage; 10 hr. at night in intermediate stage	16, 6 mo.	September–June: 11 p.m.–6 a.m. Su–Th, 12:01 a.m.–6 a.m. Sa–Su; July–August: 12:01 a.m.–6 a.m. <sup>8</sup>	First 6 mo.: No passengers; Thereafter, no more than 2 passengers	18 <sup>8</sup>	18
Florida <sup>9</sup> / <b>F</b>	15	12 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	11 p.m.–6 a.m. (age 16), 1 a.m.–5 a.m. (age 17)	None	18	—
Georgia / <b>G</b>	15	12 mo.	40 hr., 6 of which must be at night (eff. 7/1/2006) <sup>10</sup>	16 <sup>10</sup>	Midnight–6 a.m. <b>S</b>	First 6 mo.: No passengers Second 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 21 (eff. 7/1/2006) Thereafter, no more than 3 passengers <sup>10</sup>	18	18
Hawaii <sup>11</sup> / <b>G</b>	15, 6 mo.	6 mo. (eff. 1/9/06)	None	16	11 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 1/9/06)	No more than 1 passenger younger than 18 (household members excepted) (eff. 1/9/06)	17 (eff. 1/9/06)	17 (eff. 1/9/06)
Idaho / <b>M</b>	14, 6 mo.	6 mo. (eff. 5/29/07)	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	15 <sup>12</sup>	Sunset to sunrise	First 6 mo.: Licensees 16 and younger can have no more than 1 passenger younger than 17 (eff. 5/29/07)	16 <sup>12</sup>	15, 6 mo. (eff. 5/29/07)
Illinois / <b>G</b>	15 <sup>13</sup>	3 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16 <sup>13</sup>	Starts 11 p.m. Su–Th, midnight Fri–Sat, ends 6 a.m.	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 20	17 <sup>13</sup>	16, 6 mo.
Indiana / <b>F</b>	15 <sup>14</sup>	2 mo.	None	16, 1 mo. <sup>14</sup>	11 p.m.–5 a.m. Su–F 1 a.m.–5 a.m. Sa–Su,	Cell phones: A driver may not operate a cell phone in the learner and intermediate stages	18	16, 4 mo.
Iowa / <b>F</b>	14	6 mo.	20 hr., 2 of which must be at night	16 <sup>15</sup>	12:30 a.m.–5 a.m.	None	17 <sup>15</sup>	—
Kansas <sup>16</sup> / <b>M</b>	14	6 mo.	25 hr., in learner phase; 25 hr. before age 16; 10 of the 50 hr. must be at night	There is no intermediate stage. The minimum license age is 16.			—	—
Kentucky <sup>17</sup> / <b>G</b>	16	6 mo.	60 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 10/1/06)	16, 6 mo.	Midnight–6 a.m. (eff. 10/1/06)	No more than 1 passenger younger than 20 unless supervised by a driving instructor (eff. 10/1/06)	17 (eff. 10/1/06)	17 (eff. 10/1/06)

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

*continued*

# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

4 Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage			Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted	
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger*	Until age 18	17
Louisiana / F	15 <sup>18</sup>	6 mo.	None	16 <sup>18</sup>	11 p.m.–5 a.m. <sup>18</sup>	None	17 <sup>18</sup>	—
Maine / G	15 <sup>19</sup>	6 mo. <sup>19</sup>	35 hr., 5 of which <sup>19</sup> must be at night	16 <sup>19</sup>	Midnight–5 a.m.	First 180 days: No passengers	16, 6 mo. <sup>19</sup>	16, 6 mo. <sup>19</sup>
Maryland / G	15, 9 mo.	6 mo. (eff. 10/1/05)	60 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 10/1/05)	16, 3 mo. (eff. 10/1/05)	Midnight–5 a.m. <sup>20</sup>	First 5 mo.: No passengers younger than 18 (eff. 10/1/05)	17, 9 mo. (eff. 10/1/05)	16, 8 mo. (eff. 10/1/05)
Massachusetts / G	16	6 mo.	40 hr. (eff. 9/1/07) <sup>21</sup>	16, 6 mo.	12:30 a.m.–5 a.m. <sup>21</sup> (eff. 3/1/07)	First 6 mo.: No passengers younger than 18	18	17
Michigan / F	14, 9 mo. <sup>22</sup>	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16 <sup>22</sup>	Midnight–5 a.m.	None	17 <sup>22</sup>	—
Minnesota / M	15 <sup>23</sup>	6 mo. <sup>23</sup>	30 hr., 10 of which must be at night	—	—	A provisional license may be granted at 16. There are no passenger or nighttime restrictions.	—	—
Mississippi / M	15	6 mo. <sup>24</sup>	None	15, 6 mo. <sup>24</sup>	10 p.m.–6 a.m. <sup>24</sup>	None	16	—
Missouri / G	15	6 mo.	20 hr. (until 1/1/07) 40 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 1/1/07)	16	1 a.m.–5 a.m.	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 19 Thereafter: No more than 3 passengers younger than 19 (eff. 8/28/06)	17, 11 mo. (eff. 8/28/06) 18 until 8/28/06	17, 11 mo. (eff. 8/28/06)
Montana / M	14, 6 mo.	6 mo. (eff. 7/1/06)	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 7/1/06)	15 <sup>25</sup>	11 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 7/1/06)	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 18 Second 6 mo.: No more than 3 passengers younger than 18 (eff. 7/1/06)	16 (eff. 7/1/06)	16 (eff. 7/1/06)

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage		Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted		
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger*	Until age 18	17
Nebraska / <b>G</b>	15 <sup>56</sup>	6 mo. (eff. 1/1/08)	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night (night requirement eff. 1/1/08) (none with driver education)	16	Midnight–6 a.m. <b>S</b>	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 19 (eff. 1/1/08) <b>S</b>	17	16, 6 mo. (eff. 1/1/08)
Nevada / <b>G</b>	15, 6 mo.	6 mo. <sup>27</sup> (eff. 10/1/05)	50 hr., eff. 10/1/05, 10 of the 50 hrs. must be at night	16 (eff. 10/1/05)	10 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 10/1/05) <b>S</b>	First 3 mo.: No passengers younger than 18 (eff. 10/1/05) <b>S</b>	18 (eff. 10/1/05)	16, 3 mo. (eff. 10/1/05)
New Hampshire / <b>F</b>	15, 6 mo. <sup>28</sup>	None	20 hr.	16	1 a.m.–5 a.m.	First 6 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 25	17, 1 mo.	16, 6 mo.
New Jersey / <b>G</b>	16 <sup>29</sup>	6 mo. <sup>29</sup>	None	17 <sup>29</sup>	Midnight–5 a.m.	No more than 1 passenger (household members excepted)	18	18
New Mexico / <b>M</b>	15	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	15, 6 mo.	Midnight–5 a.m.	No more than 1 passenger younger than 21	16, 6 mo. <sup>30</sup>	16, 6 mo. <sup>30</sup>
New York / <b>G</b>	16 <sup>31</sup>	up to 6 mo. <sup>31</sup>	20 hr.	16, 6 mo. <sup>31</sup>	9 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 2 passengers younger than 21 <sup>31</sup>	17 (18 without driver education) <sup>31</sup>	17 (18 without driver education) <sup>31</sup>
North Carolina / <b>G</b>	15	12 mo.	None	16	9 p.m.–5 a.m. <sup>32</sup>	No more than 1 passenger younger than 21 (family members exempted); if a family member younger than 21 is already a passenger then no other passengers younger than 21 who are not family members	16, 6 mo.	16, 6 mo.
North Dakota / <b>M</b>	14	6 mo.	None	16	There is no intermediate stage. The minimum license age is 16.	Cell phones: Drivers younger than 18 may not operate a cell phone.	—	—
Ohio / <b>G</b>	15, 6 mo.	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16 <sup>33</sup>	Midnight–6 a.m. (age 16) (eff. 4/6/07), <sup>33</sup> 1 a.m.–5 a.m. (age 17). <b>S</b>	No more than 1 passenger (eff. 4/6/07)	18 <sup>33</sup>	17 (eff. 4/6/07)

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

*continued*



# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

6 Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage			Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted	
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger*	Until age 18	17
Oklahoma / G	15; 6 mo. <sup>34</sup>	6 mo.	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 11/1/05)	16	11 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 11/1/05)	No more than 1 passenger (household members excepted) (eff. 11/1/05)	16, 6 mo. (17 without driver education) (eff. 11/1/05)	16, 6 mo. (17 without driver education) (eff. 11/1/05)
Oregon / G	15	6 mo.	50 hr. <sup>35</sup> (100 hr. without driver education)	16	Midnight–5 a.m.	First 6 mo.: No passengers younger than 20 Second 6 mo.: No more than 3 passengers younger than 20	17	17
Pennsylvania / G	16	6 mo.	50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	11 p.m.–5 a.m.	None	17 (18 without driver education)	—
Rhode Island / G	16 <sup>35</sup>	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16, 6 mo.	1 a.m.–5 a.m.	First 12 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 21 Cell phones: Drivers younger than 18 may not operate a cell phone.	17, 6 mo.	17, 6 mo.
South Carolina / M	15	6 mo.	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night	15, 6 mo.	6 p.m.–6 a.m. EST, <sup>36</sup> 8 p.m.–6 a.m. EDT	No more than 2 passengers younger than 21 (exceptions: family members and driving students to and from school)	16, 6 mo.	16, 6 mo.
South Dakota <sup>37</sup> / M	14	6 mo. (3 mo. with driver education)	None	14, 6 mo. (14, 3 mo. with driver education)	10 p.m.–6 a.m.	None	16	—
Tennessee / G	15	6 mo. <sup>38</sup>	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night Cell phones: A driver may not operate a cell phone in the learner and intermediate stages (eff. 7/1/05)	16	11 p.m.–6 a.m. <sup>38</sup>	No more than 1 passenger	17	17
Texas / F	15 <sup>39</sup>	6 mo.	None	16	Midnight–5 a.m. <b>S</b>	No more than 1 passenger younger than 21 <b>S</b>	16, 6 mo.	16, 6 mo.
Utah / G	15 <sup>40</sup> (eff. 8/01/06)	6 mo. (eff. 8/01/06)	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night <sup>40</sup>	16 <sup>40</sup>	Midnight–5 a.m.	First 6 mo.: No passengers <b>S</b>	17	16, 6 mo
Vermont <sup>41</sup> / F	15	1 yr.	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	None	First 3 mo.: No passengers without exception Second 3 mo.: No passengers (family members excepted)	—	16, 6 mo.

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

*continued*

# U.S. Licensing Systems for Young Drivers

Laws as of May 2007

Jurisdiction/ Evaluation	Learner Stage			Intermediate Stage Restrictions on Driving while Unsupervised			Minimum Age at Which Restrictions May Be Lifted	
	Minimum Entry Age	Mandatory Holding Period	Minimum Amount of Supervised Driving	Minimum Age	Unsupervised Driving Prohibited	Restriction on Passengers (family members excepted unless otherwise noted)	Nighttime Restriction	Passenger Restriction
<i>Optimal provisions</i>	16	6 mo.	30–50 hr.	16, 6 mo.	9/10 p.m.–5 a.m.	No more than 1 teenage passenger *	Until age 18	17
Virginia / G	15, 6 mo.	9 mo.	40 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16, 3 mo.	Midnight–4 a.m. <sup>42</sup> <b>S</b>	First 12 mo.: No more than 1 passenger younger than 18; thereafter, no more than 3 passengers younger than 18 <sup>42</sup> <b>S</b> Cell phones: A driver may not operate a cell phone in the intermediate stage (eff. 7/1/07)	18	18
Washington / G	15 <sup>43</sup>	6 mo.	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	1 a.m.–5 a.m. <b>S</b>	First 6 mo.: No passengers younger than 20 Second 6 mo.: No more than 3 passengers younger than 20 <b>S</b>	17 <sup>43</sup>	17 <sup>43</sup>
Cell phones: A provision prohibiting all drivers, regardless of age, from using hand-held cell phones (eff. 07/01/08) and from sending text messages (eff. 01/01/08) while driving has been enacted <b>S</b>								
West Virginia / F	15	6 mo.	30 hr. (none with driver education) Cell phones: A driver may not operate a cell phone in the learner and intermediate stages (eff. 6/9/06)	16	11 p.m.–5 a.m. <sup>44</sup>	No more than 3 passengers younger than 19 <sup>44</sup>	17	17
Wisconsin / G	15, 6 mo. <sup>45</sup>	6 mo.	30 hr., 10 of which must be at night	16	Midnight–5 a.m.	No more than 1 passenger	16, 9 mo. <sup>45</sup>	16, 9 mo. <sup>45</sup>
Wyoming / F	15	10 days	50 hr., 10 of which must be at night (eff. 9/16/05)	16	11 p.m.–5 a.m. (eff. 9/16/05)	No more than 1 passenger younger than 18 (eff. 9/16/05)	16, 6 mo. <sup>46</sup>	16, 6 mo. <sup>46</sup>

**Key: G=good, F=fair, M=marginal, P=poor; S=secondary enforcement**

\* Passenger restrictions vary with regard to their durations, the ages of passengers to whom they apply, and the availability of exceptions. Most states have exceptions for passengers who are related to the driver or are members of the driver's household, and there are exceptions when a supervising driver is in the vehicle.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The supervising driver in Alabama must be a parent, guardian, or driving instructor. At age 16, permit holders may drive while supervised by any licensed driver. Certification waived for applicants who have completed driver education. Restrictions end after holding the intermediate license for at least 6 months and reaching age 17.

<sup>2</sup> A driver education instructor in Arizona can authorize a student enrolled in driver education who is age 15 to drive only while supervised by the authorizing instructor. Certification waived for applicants who have completed driver education.

<sup>3</sup> In Arkansas, people age 14 can drive with an instruction permit after passing a written test; after 30 days and after passing a road test, they are eligible for a restricted license. Unsupervised driving is not permitted by holders of either the instruction permit or restricted license. The combined holding period for the permit and restricted license is 6 months. An intermediate phase for licensees younger than 18 prohibits drivers from transporting passengers who are unrestrained. Applicants for an intermediate license must be 16 and must be crash/ violation free for 6 months.

<sup>4</sup> Students enrolled in driver education in California may drive while supervised by an instructor. License applicants who do not take driver education must wait until age 18 for a license. They are not required to go through an intermediate license stage.

<sup>5</sup> In Colorado, the minimum permit age varies. Fifteen-year-olds who are enrolled in driver education may apply for an instruction permit. Their supervising driver must be a parent, stepparent, grandparent, guardian, or driving instructor. A person age 15, 6 months, may apply for an instruction permit which allows driving while supervised by a parent, stepparent, grandparent, or guardian. Although driver education is not required at this age, applicants for this permit must have completed a 4-hour driver awareness program. At 16, young drivers may apply for a permit that allows driving while supervised by a licensed driver age 21 or older.

<sup>6</sup> Either driver education or home training is required for license applicants younger than 18 in Connecticut. Time spent practice driving with a professional instructor counts toward the 20 hour certification requirement.

<sup>7</sup> In Delaware, a driver education student does not need a permit to drive with a driver education instructor. After completing the on-road requirements of driver education, a driver education student who is at least age 15 years, 10 months may apply for a Driver Education Learner's Permit, which allows the student to drive while supervised by an experienced driver. Upon completion of driver education, and if the student passes both the road and written tests, the student receives a Level 1 permit that for the first 6 months allows driving only while supervised. There also is a passenger restriction during the first 6 months of the Level 1 permit. No more than 1 passengers (family members excepted) are permitted in addition to the supervising driver. The Level 1 permit for the second 6 months is the equivalent of an intermediate license. During that period, holders may drive unsupervised between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. and may only carry 1 passenger. Applicants for a driver's license who are younger than 18 must have held a Driver Education Learner's Permit and/or a Level 1 permit for at least 12 months. Driver education is required for all license applicants younger than 18.

<sup>8</sup> The learner's stage in the District of Columbia is mandatory for all license applicants, regardless of age. A nighttime restriction (9 p.m.–6 a.m.) applies in the learner stage. License applicants younger than 21 must go through the intermediate stage until they have completed it or until age 21.

<sup>9</sup> In Florida, learner's permit holders may not for the first 3 months drive after sunset and thereafter may not drive after 10 p.m.

<sup>10</sup> In Georgia, license applicants younger than 17 must have completed driver education. The 7/1/2006 amendments changed the requirements for an intermediate license and the passenger restriction. Until 7/1/2006, at age 16, a permit holder who had held the permit 12 months could apply for an intermediate license after driving at least 40 hours, 6 of which had to be at night (20 hours, 6 at night if the permit holder had completed driver education). Until 7/1/2006, no passengers are permitted for the first 6 months and thereafter no more than 3 passengers are permitted.

<sup>11</sup> License applicants younger than 18 must have completed driver education in Hawaii.

<sup>12</sup> In Idaho, license applicants younger than 17 must have completed driver education. There are three classes of learner's permits: a training instruction permit for persons 14, 6 months taking driver education; a supervised instruction permit for practice driving with a nonprofessional supervisor; and an instruction permit for persons younger than 17 who have completed driver education and supervised driving or for persons 17 and older without either driver education or supervised driving.

<sup>13</sup> Enrollment in driver education is required for permit applicants age 15 in Illinois; without driver education, a permit applicant must be age 17, 9 months. License applicants 18 and older are not required to have driver education or to go through an intermediate license stage.

<sup>14</sup> Driver education determines the minimum age for permits and the intermediate license in Indiana. People enrolled in or who have completed driver education must be age 15 to have a permit; otherwise, they must be age 16. The minimum age for an intermediate license is 16, 1 month with driver education; age 16, 6 months, without.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to the certification in the learner stage, Iowa requires a certification of 10 hours of supervised driving, 2 of which must be at night during the intermediate stage. Driver education is required for an intermediate license and for an unrestricted license if applicant is younger than 18. Restrictions end after holding an intermediate license for at least 1 year and reaching age 17.

<sup>16</sup> In Kansas, restricted license holders may not drive unless supervised other than to and from school or work via the most direct route and may not carry minor passengers other than siblings. To get a restricted license,

applicants must have driven at least 25 of the 50 hours required for a full license and must have held an instruction permit for 6 months.

<sup>17</sup> The Kentucky law prohibits learner's permit holders from driving between midnight and 6 a.m. or from carrying more than 1 passenger younger than 20 unless supervised by a driving instructor. License holders younger than 18 must complete a driver education course or a state-sponsored traffic school.

<sup>18</sup> Driver education is required in Louisiana for a permit and an intermediate license if the applicant is younger than 17. People 17 and older must have completed an educational program that does not require a behind-the-wheel component.

<sup>19</sup> In Maine, driver education is required for a permit and a license if the applicant is younger than 18. The learner's permit holding period and the certification of practice driving applies to license applicants younger than 21.

<sup>20</sup> In Maryland, 15 year-olds may drive without a permit if supervised by a driver education instructor. Driver education and the certification of practice driving applies to all initial license applicants. The nighttime driving restriction, however, only applies to intermediate license holders younger than 18.

<sup>21</sup> The requirement for supervised driving is 30 hours for applicants who have successfully completed a driver skills development program in a closed, off-road course licensed by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. Driver education is required of license applicants younger than 18. The night driving restriction in Massachusetts for permit holders younger than 18 is midnight to 5:00 a.m., unless they are accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.

<sup>22</sup> Permit applicants younger than 18 in Michigan must have completed the first segment of driver education; license applicants younger than 18 must have completed the second segment of driver education. Neither driver education nor an intermediate license is required for license applicants 18 and older.

<sup>23</sup> In Minnesota, permit applicants younger than 18 must be enrolled in driver education; license applicants younger than 18 must have completed driver education. The permit holding period applies to license applicants 18 and older unless they have completed driver education. Provisional license holders must be crash free to qualify for a full license.

<sup>24</sup> In Mississippi, license applicants 17 and older are exempt from the 6-month learner's permit holding period and the requirement to get an intermediate license.

<sup>25</sup> Enrollment in or completion of driver education is required for permit applicants younger than 15 in Montana; license applicants younger than 16 must have completed driver education.

<sup>26</sup> In Nebraska, 14 year-olds who live 1.5 miles or more from school and who either live outside or attend school outside a metropolitan area may be issued a learner's permit (called an "LPE permit") and a limited license (called a "school permit"). The LPE permit authorizes supervised driving for the purpose of preparing for the school permit, which allows driving to and from school or anyplace while supervised by a parent or guardian.

<sup>27</sup> Until October 1, 2005, the length of the mandatory holding period depends on the applicant's age. If license applicant is 16 then mandatory holding period in learner stage is 60 days. If license applicant is 17 then mandatory holding period in learner stage is 30 days. As of October 1, 2005, driver education will be required of all licensed applicants younger than 18 unless there is no driver education program offered within a 30-mile radius of the applicant's residence. Until then, Nevada license applicants younger than 18 must have completed driver education if the school the applicant is attending is located in a county with a population less than 50,000 or in

a city or town with a population less than 25,000 and the school does not offer driver education.

<sup>28</sup> New Hampshire does not issue learner's permits. At age 15, 6 months, a person can drive while supervised by a licensed driver 25 or older.

<sup>29</sup> In New Jersey, the permit becomes an intermediate license after 6 months. The graduated licensing law applies to adults, except that the night driving and passenger restrictions are waived for new drivers 21 and older. If the applicant has not completed driver education, the minimum permit age is 17 and the minimum intermediate license age is 17, 6 months. Learner's permit holders may not drive between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. and may not carry more than 1 passenger in addition to the supervising driver.

<sup>30</sup> Permit applicants younger than 18 must be enrolled in driver education in New Mexico; license applicants younger than 18 must have completed driver education.

<sup>31</sup> Currently, New York law does not have a minimum holding period for the learner's permit. The minimum age for an unrestricted driver's license is 18 (17 if the applicant has completed driver education). The exception is New York City where driving is prohibited unless the driver is 18 or older. Effective, September 1, 2003, New York has enacted a passenger restriction that applies to permit holders and license holders younger than 18 (17 if the applicant has completed driver education). The law also created a new class of license, the limited DJ license. Permit holders who pass a road test and certify 20 or more hours of practice driving may be given a limited DJ license which allows unsupervised driving to and from school, school activities, work, medical appointments, and day care for family members. The night driving and passenger restrictions apply to this license. Permit holders may apply for the limited DJ license at any time. There is, however, a six month holding period for the regular DJ license which allows unsupervised driving anywhere but retains the night driving and passenger restrictions. For the purpose of determining if the six month holding period has passed, both the time spent in the learner's permit phase and the time a person spends in the limited DJ phase is counted.

<sup>32</sup> In North Carolina, learner's permit holders may not drive between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. for the first 6 months. Driver education is required for permit and license applicants younger than 18. Cell phone restriction does not apply to phone conversations with physicians, parent, guardian, or spouse.

<sup>33</sup> Ohio changed its night driving restriction from 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. for all drivers younger than 17 to midnight to 6:00 a.m. for drivers younger than 17 and 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. for 17-year-old drivers. The effective date of this change is 4/4/07. Driver education is required of license applicants younger than 18 in Ohio and Oregon. However, it is waived in Oregon for applicants who certify an additional 50 hours of supervised driving.

<sup>34</sup> Fifteen year-olds may drive in Oklahoma, but only while supervised by an instructor.

<sup>35</sup> Driver education is required of permit and license applicants younger than 18 in Rhode Island.

<sup>36</sup> In South Carolina, licensees in the learner stage may not drive between midnight and 6 a.m. unless supervised by a licensed parent or guardian. Fifteen year-olds who are enrolled in driver education do not need a permit to drive with an instructor. License applicants younger than 17 who have not completed driver education may not get a license to drive unsupervised after daylight.

<sup>37</sup> In South Dakota, learner's permit holders may not drive between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless under the supervision of their parent or guardian who is occupying a seat beside them.

<sup>38</sup> Learner's permit holders in Tennessee may not drive from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.





<sup>39</sup> In Texas, the minimum permit age is 15 for applicants who are enrolled in driver education. The minimum license age is 18 for applicants who have not completed driver education.

<sup>40</sup> Permit holders younger than 18 may only drive under the supervision of a driving instructor, a parent or guardian, or a responsible adult who accepted liability for the permit holder's driving by signing the permit application. Regardless of age, permit applicants in Utah must be enrolled in driver education, and license applicants must have completed driver education. Supervised driving in the learner stage may include up to 5 hours in a driving simulator. Passenger restrictions in Utah end when a driver has been licensed for 6 months or when the driver turns 18, whichever occurs first.

<sup>41</sup> Driver education is required for license applicants younger than 18 in Vermont.

<sup>42</sup> In Virginia, driver education is required for license applicants younger than 19 (18 if applicant holds a valid license from another state). Initial license applicants 19 and older must either complete driver education or hold a learner's permit at least 30 days. The night driving restriction and passenger restriction (no more than 1 passenger younger than 18) apply to learner's permit holders.

<sup>43</sup> Permit applicants in Washington must be enrolled in driver education; otherwise the minimum permit age is 15, 6 months. Driver education is required for license applicants younger than 18. Intermediate license holders with a crash or violation history are ineligible for an unrestricted license until age 18.

<sup>44</sup> In West Virginia, learner's permit holders younger than 18 may not drive 11 p.m.–5 a.m. and may not carry more than 2 passengers in addition to the supervising driver.

<sup>45</sup> Enrollment in driver education is required in Wisconsin for permit applicants younger than 18. Driver education is required for license applicants younger than 18. During the learner's stage, licensees may carry 3 passengers if supervised by a driving instructor in a dual-control vehicle or if at least 16, may carry 1 passenger 25 or older who has been licensed at least 2 years.

<sup>46</sup> In Wyoming, all applicants for an unrestricted license who are younger than 17 must have completed driver education and must have held an intermediate license for at least 6 months.