TEEN DRIVING

Parental Guidance STRONGLY ADVISED

DRAFT

Learning to drive is a major milestone in a teen's life, bringing increased freedom and independence. However, teens who drive also face an increased risk of getting seriously injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash. Here are some ways parents can help keep teen drivers and their passengers safe.

Why are Teens at Risk?

Teens are more likely to be involved in a crash than other drivers. Teen drivers:

- are more likely to underestimate or not recognize hazardous or dangerous situations due to driver inexperience.
- tend to drive more frequently under higher risk conditions, such as at night and/or without seatbelts.
- are more likely to take risks when driving.

Studies have found that the decision-making area of the brain is still developing during the teen years.

DRAFT

Causes of Teen Crashes

The leading causes of fatal crashes involving teen drivers include speeding, driving too fast for road conditions, inexperience, distractions - especially other teens in the car - and driving while drowsy or impaired.

Is your Teen Ready to Drive?

Every teen is unique. Not all teens are ready to drive when they reach 16 years old. Consider whether or not your teen is ready to handle the responsibilities of driving.

A 16-YEAR-OLD DRIVER IS 20 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH THAN ANY OTHER LICENSED DRIVER.

Your Teen is Learning to Drive

Driving with a learner's permit allows your teen to learn basic driving skills and get experience driving with an adult before facing the risks and challenges of driving unsupervised. To help your teen become a safe driver you should;

- Know the Rules of the Road and State Traffic Laws Before your teen starts driving, brush up on the rules of the road by reading the New York State Department of Motor Vehicle's Driver's Manual at www.nydmv.state.ny.us/dmanual. Pay special attention to New York State laws that apply to teen drivers.
- Choose Who Will Teach your Teen to Drive In most cases the best way for teens to learn to drive is through a driver education class or from a private driving instructor. It will be easier for you to help your teen improve skills after he/she has received traffic safety education from a driving safety professional. If you choose to teach your teen to drive, be prepared and schedule planned practice sessions. Consider having another adult teach your teen to drive if you find the experience upsetting.
- Be a Good Role Model Teens learn a lot by example, so remember to follow traffic laws, always buckle up and never drink and drive. Keep in mind that if you roll through stop signs, speed, or talk on a cell phone when driving, your teen may do the same.

DRAFT

Preparing for the Road Test

It is important to be involved in helping your teen to learn to drive. Plan a series of practice sessions in a variety of situations. Give your teen time to work up to challenges like driving in heavy traffic, on the highway and at night. Before allowing your teen to take the road test for a driver's license, consider the following questions:

- Has your teen had enough driving experience? Safety experts recommend at least 50 hours of adult supervised driving over a period of at least six months.
- Has your teen completed a driver education course or New York State Department of Motor Vehicles approved pre-licensing course? Completing one of these courses is required to take the road test.
- Has your teen had experience driving at night, on expressways and in rain, fog and snowy weather conditions?
- Has your teen demonstrated basic driving skills and knowledge of traffic safety laws?

- Do you feel confident that your teen can handle most driving situations?
- Does your teen easily detect driving hazards and react to them quickly and safely?
- Does your teen give driving his/her full attention and always scan for hazards?

If you answered no to any of these questions, consider spending more time supervising your teen's driving before he/she takes a road test.

Driving Solo –Is Your Teen Ready?

Teens are often anxious to drive alone after getting their driver's license. However, keep in mind that teens are safest when driving with an adult and are most at risk for a crash during the first six months of unsupervised driving.

Allow your teen to drive independently when he/she has had adequate driving experience and you are comfortable with your teen's driving skills. To determine if your teen is ready to drive solo, consider the following questions:

DRAFT

- Does your teen know how to avoid taking risks, especially if pressured by his/her friends?
- Is your teen ready for the responsibility of driving alone? Is he/she rebellious, a risk taker and/or defiant of authority?
- Will your teen always buckle up and make sure all passengers do so as well?
- Has your teen learned to be patient with other drivers?
- Will he/she drive responsibly if feeling upset, frustrated or angry?
- Is your teen aware of the leading causes of crashes involving teens and how to avoid them?
- Will your teen follow your driving rules and conditions?
- Do you feel safe when riding with your teen?

Be aware that some teens may drive differently when you are not in the car. Continue to supervise your teen's driving after receiving a license.

TEENS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DRIVE SAFELY IF PARENTS RESTRICT THEIR DRIVING AND KEEP TRACK OF THEIR WHEREABOUTS.

Managing Your Teen's Driving

Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

One of the most important things parents can do to reduce teen driving risk is to limit driving under high-risk conditions. A written parent/teen driving agreement can help you and your teen set driving rules. The driving agreement should include:

- Driving restrictions, such as placing limits on nighttime driving and the number of teen passengers allowed to ride with your teen. Safety experts recommend no teen passengers or driving after 9 p.m. for newly licensed teens. After six months of driving, parents may choose to relax the restrictions by allowing one teen passenger and extend driving to 10 or 11p.m.
- Driving rules, which should always be followed by all drivers, such as always using a safety belt, obeying traffic safety laws and not using a cell phone while driving. Other rules may address use and maintenance of the car or maintaining good grades in school.
- Driving conditions, which involve having your teen let you know where he/she is going, who they are with, and when he/she will return from each driving trip. Your teen should know what to do or how to contact you if their plans change.
- Consequences for breaking the driving agreement. These might include taking away driving privileges for a certain amount of time. **It is important to follow through with consequences when the agreement is broken to ensure its success.**

DRAFT

More driving privileges can be added as your teen gains driving experience and proves to be a responsible driver. National safety agencies, the American Academy of Pediatrics and many automobile and insurance companies have driving agreements posted on their websites.

New York State Graduated Driver Licensing Law

The law provides beginning drivers with certain driving restrictions and limited driving privileges that extend to full privileges as drivers mature and develop their skills. Driving restrictions include limits on the number of teen passengers allowed to ride with your teen and limits on night driving. Make sure that your teen follows these special rules which apply to 16- and 17-year-old drivers, considered "junior drivers". For more information about the law, go to www.nysdmv.com/broch/c41.htm.

Other Important Tips

- Wait to buy your teen a car. For the first year or so after your teen receives a license, let them share the family car. Keep safety in mind when buying a vehicle for your teen. Purchase a newer model mid-sized to large car that offers good crash protection.
- Stay away from cars with high performance engines which may encourage reckless driving. Steer clear of sport utility vehicles (SUVs) as they are more likely to roll over in a crash than cars.
- Consider your teen's maturity, driving skills and risk-taking tendencies before allowing younger brothers and sisters to ride with him/her. However, keep in mind that younger children are safest when riding with a driver over age 25.
- Parents can withdraw their teen's driver's license by completing a Withdrawal of Consent form available at www.nysdmv.com through your local Department of Motor Vehicle's office.

Teen Driving Resources

DRAFT

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles
www.nysdmv.com

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.pediatrics.aappublications.org

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles
www.nysdmv.com/dmanual

New York State Department of Health
www.health.state.ny.us

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
www.chop.edu/youngdrivers

National Safety Council
www.nsc.org

Funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
with a grant from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee

DRAFT

State of New York
Department of Health