



YOUNG DRIVERS

GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL) PROGRAMS

Issue

Teen and young adult novice drivers are more likely to be involved in fatal crashes because they lack driving experience and tend to take greater risks.

Impact

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading killer of teens in the U.S. In crashes involving young drivers, fatalities totaled 4,856 in 2022, an increase of 22.4% over 2019.

Solutions

Laws, Technology
and Roadway Safety
Infrastructure

GDL programs introduce teens to the driving experience gradually by phasing in full driving privileges over time and in lower risk settings

Safety Technologies and Improved Safety Standards Can Protect Vehicle Occupants and Other Road Users

- IIHS has found that if all vehicles in crashes with teen drivers were equipped with front crash prevention (forward collision warning (FCW) and/or AEB), LDW / lane keeping assist (LKA) and blind spot monitoring, 32% of crashes involving a teen driver, 27% of injured teen drivers and 36% of teen driver deaths could be prevented.

Road Safety Infrastructure Improvements and the Safe System Approach



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The Facts

- In crashes involving young drivers, fatalities totaled 5,339 in 2022. While this is a 4.9% decrease from 2021, the number of people killed in crashes involving a young driver is still up 21.6% from before the recent pandemic (2019).
- The estimated economic cost of police-reported crashes involving young drivers 15-20 years old was \$40.8 billion in 2002. Updated for inflation alone, in 2024, the economic costs would be \$71.05 billion.
- The fatal crash rate per mile driven is nearly three times as high for 16- to 19-year-olds as it is for ages 20 and over. Risk is highest at ages 16-17.
- Nearly 65% of teenage motor vehicle crash deaths in 2022 occurred between the hours of 3 p.m. and 3 a.m. The hours of 9 p.m. to midnight accounted for 20% of fatalities alone, the period of 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. accounted for 16% and the period of midnight to 3 a.m. accounted for 15%.
- In states which have adopted GDL programs, studies have found overall crash reductions among teen drivers of about 10 to 30%.
- Compared to GDL programs without any of the seven GDL components evaluated by NHTSA, fatal crash involvement rates were 16 to 21% lower in GDL programs that included age requirements plus a three-or-more-month waiting period before the intermediate stage, a nighttime driving restriction and either supervised driving of at least 30 hours or a passenger restriction.



- Delaying the minimum age for obtaining a learner's permit was associated with lower fatal crash rates for 15- to 17-year-olds combined; a one-year delay (e.g., from age 15 to 16) reduced the fatal crash rate by 13%.
- A minimum holding period of five to six months reduces fatal crash rates by 9%; however, extending the holding period to between nine months and a year results in a 21% reduction.
- A survey conducted by IIHS shows parents favor GDL laws which are as strict as or even stricter than currently exist in any state. More than half think the minimum licensing age should be 17 or older.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of teens approve of a single comprehensive law which incorporates the key elements of GDL programs.

OLDER TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT NOVICE DRIVERS

Studies have shown that GDL programs have contributed to a decline in teen driver crashes. However, older teen and young adult novice drivers need, but are missing out on, the safety benefits of GDL programs. Aging out of GDL is a problem because drivers who begin the licensing process at age 18, 19 or 20 still have a high crash risk due to inexperience and brain development. Research by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety shows that, "only 54% of respondents reported they obtained a license before they turned 18." A separate study showed that while GDL programs likely have contributed to a significant decline in teen driver crashes over the decade of 2005 to 2014, the improvements are not as strong for 18- to 20-year-olds who have aged out of GDL.

GDL programs that extend beyond the mid-teen years cover a broader population of novice drivers and may experience additional safety benefits. A 2022 study from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Center for Injury Research and Prevention found that, "drivers who were licensed at age 18, making them exempt from comprehensive licensing requirements, had the highest crash rates in the first year of licensure of all those licensed under the age of 25."

[Click here to learn more](#)



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Advocacy

Traffic Safety Advocates Unite to Upgrade New Jersey's GDL



[Student drivers in N.J. will need to log more practice hours under new law](#)

1/8/24

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

New Jersey had a glaring and dangerous gap in its GDL law, as one of only three states that did not mandate practice hours for teen drivers. This lack of training left young drivers unprepared and put everyone on the road at greater risk. Recognizing the dire need for change, more than 25 organizations led by AAA—including Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and over a dozen of our Board members, including major property/casualty insurers—joined forces to form the Partners for Practice Hours coalition.



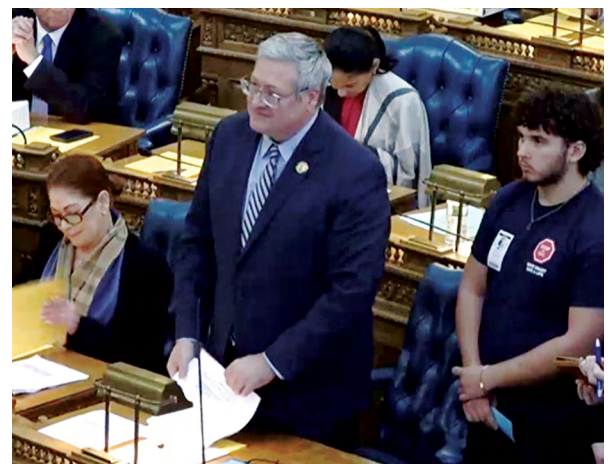
The coalition has continually pushed for a law requiring supervised practice hours for teen drivers. Despite many legislative setbacks, perseverance finally paid off in 2023 with the passage of Senate Bill 2789/Assembly Bill 3793. This crucial new law mandates 50 hours of supervised driving practice, including 10 hours at night, before teens can obtain a probationary license. With this victory, New Jersey has taken a significant step forward in making roadways safer for everyone.

LOOKING TO 2025

In January 2024, Governor Phil Murphy (D) signed the long-awaited practice hours bill into law, and it takes effect in February 2025. As that date approaches, the Partners for Practice Hours is working to ensure that the public understands how to meet the new requirements as well as appreciates the safety benefits, stressing how these hours help build confidence, experience and decision-making skills in young drivers. Advocates is proud to work with safety coalitions in New Jersey and other states to accomplish meaningful change that saves lives. Considering every state has gaps in their GDL laws, more efforts and progress are needed.



Advocates' president Cathy Chase joins Steve Aduabato, host of Think Tank on New Jersey PBS stations to discuss the new GDL law on 9/28/24



Former New Jersey Assemblyman Daniel Benson (D) speaks before passage of the GDL law on 12/21/24

