

CHAPTER 7

Education and Licensing for Young Drivers

KEY TOPICS

- graduated driver licensing (GDL)
- young driver education

GOALS

- Reduce young driver related motor vehicle deaths and injuries.
- Sustain young driver education statewide.
- Maintain and improve GDL for entry drivers.
- Improve competency and reduce risk factors for entry drivers.
- Reduce the moving traffic violation citations of young drivers (ages 14 to 25).
- Reduce the moving traffic violation involvement of young drivers (ages 14 to 25).
- Use graduated licensing outcomes in reviewing and enhancing other areas of driver licensing.

BACKGROUND

The high crash rate and injury and death rates for young, first-year drivers has been a concern of traffic safety experts for years. This chart demonstrates the high-risk “learning curve” for beginning drivers; new drivers are more likely to be involved in fatal crashes as they learn to drive.

National Driver Fatality Rates by Age*



*Based on 1996 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) data; MVMT = million vehicle miles traveled.

strates the high-risk “learning curve” for beginning drivers; new drivers are more likely to be involved in fatal crashes as they learn to drive.

Young drivers have quick reflexes and good physical coordination skills, but they are short on actual driving experience and have had less time to develop decision making skills geared to driving safely. Young drivers also show a propensity to take greater risks than more experienced drivers.

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NATIONWIDE

National Facts

NHTSA reported the following data for 1999 (*Traffic Safety Facts—Young Drivers*):

- 3,561 drivers 15–20 years old were killed in motor vehicle crashes.
- 362,000 drivers 15–20 years old were injured in motor vehicle crashes.
- 15% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were between 15 and 20 years old.
- The fatality rate for teenage drivers is four times as high as the rate for drivers 25–69 years old.



Alcohol use contributes to risk in the young driver age group.

Twenty-one percent of the young drivers who were killed in 1999 crashes were intoxicated. Many states lowered their minimum legal drinking age early in the 1970s, and alcohol-related young driver crashes soared. All states and the District of Columbia now have 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws. NHTSA estimates that restoring minimum drinking age laws to age 21 has saved 19,121 lives since 1975.

Still, the highest intoxication rates in fatal crashes in 1999 were recorded for young drivers ages 21–24. These young drivers were intoxicated at a rate of 27%, followed by ages 25–34 at 24%, and ages 35–44 at 21%. If present trends continue during the next 10 years, approximately 40,000 persons age 25 and under will die in alcohol-related crashes in the United States, with over 400 of those young person deaths occurring in Iowa.

National Public Opinion

A 1999 Louis Harris Poll conducted for the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety reported that 72% of those polled support more frequent license testing for younger drivers (and 83% support more frequent tests for older drivers).

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Safety Agenda for the Nation

One of the National Safety Council's key items in its *Safety Agenda for the Nation* asserts that they will work for state adoption of GDL programs for young drivers that could prevent more than 10% of the expected fatalities among drivers enrolled in these programs. The *Safety Agenda for the Nation* concentrates on "those injury problems which result in the largest number of unintentional deaths and disabling injuries." The interventions they propose are based on both best practices and scientific research.

IOWA

Iowa Facts

The Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau (Iowa GTSB) reported the following data from the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) or NHTSA (*Young Driver Fact Sheet*):

- 1999 Iowa crash rate statistics show that 16-year-old drivers are 66% more likely to crash than 20-year-old drivers and three times as likely to crash as 35 to 44 year olds.
- During the next five to seven years, the number of 16 year olds in Iowa will be increasing because of larger numbers of children born in the baby-boomer "echo" years.
- 16 to 17 year olds represented a disproportional share of law-enforcement-reported "at-fault" drivers in crashes from 1993 to 1996. Only 3.5% of Iowa's licensed drivers are 16–17 years old, yet 16 to 17 year olds made up
 - o 16% of all drivers who were exceeding the speed limit
 - o 14% of all drivers who failed to have control
 - o 13% of all drivers who were following too close
 - o 13% of all drivers who were distracted or inattentive
 - o 11% of all drivers who failed to yield at stop signs or ran stop signs
- Young drivers in Iowa (ages 16–20) are also at least 50% more likely to be involved as drinking drivers in alcohol-related fatal crashes as compared to the entire driving population.

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Iowa's Graduated Driving License Program

Just as you have to trust your life to the honesty, skill, and judgment of strangers, so must they, when they drive, put their lives in your hands on advance faith alone. Think of this when you drive. Each car you meet and safely pass represents one more human being who has staked his life on your respect for the law and on your skill and judgment.

Henry Gregor Felsen, *To My Son, the Teenage Driver*
Included in Iowa DOT materials given to each person applying for GDL

On January 1, 1999, Iowa graduated driver licensing legislation went into effect. The GDL program is intended to reduce crash rates for 16-year-old, first-year drivers by using increased parental involvement and the restricted intermediate license to ease new drivers into unrestricted driving.

A key element in GDL's success is *responsibility*. Parents or a designated adult must document that the student driver receives supervised day and night driving experience, both during the instruction permit and intermediate license periods. New drivers are responsible for driving safely to "earn" the privilege of their *intermediate license* being upgraded to *full license* status by driving accident-free and conviction-free for 12 consecutive months.

Young drivers who hold a school license are allowed to drive to and from school and school activities without the supervision of a parent or another licensed driver. Young drivers of the same age who hold an instruction permit must be accompanied by a parent, an approved driver education instructor, or a licensed driver approved by the parent whenever they drive. The value of this supervision can be seen in the comparison of crash and moving traffic conviction data for these two groups of drivers (as reported in a Iowa DOT Motor Vehicles Division, Office of Driver Services, report):

- School license holders were at over five times greater risk of having a traffic crash than a holder of an instruction permit of the same age.
- School license holders were at over three times greater risk of having a moving traffic conviction than a holder of an instruction permit of the same age.

It is estimated that it will take three years to fully populate and evaluate the GDL program. However, based on the first year of data (1999), the Iowa DOT Office of Driver Services has observed a 10% decrease in the crash rate for 16 year olds and a 20% decrease in their moving violation conviction rates. In the second year of data (2000), 16 year olds received 27% fewer

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moving violations than in 1999. Also during 2000, traffic crashes for 16-year-old intermediate license holders decreased about 10% from 1999. These early indicators are very encouraging and have impressed upon transportation officials the need to continue support and enhancement of this highway safety strategy.

Iowa Public Opinion

Peace Officers

Iowa peace officers commenting on the 1999 Iowa Safety Management System (Iowa SMS) *Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan* expressed their support for the GDL strategies. In mid-1999, they had already seen GDL's growing impact on young drivers and increasing public acceptance of the process.

Get a Grip Youth Leadership Conference

Teens participating in a focus group at the Get a Grip Youth Leadership Conference (summer 2001) were asked to respond to questions about Iowa's GDL law and other young driver issues.

- 50% said that they would not have had adequate preparation to drive if driver education was not mandatory.
- 80% said that the GDL law has been beneficial.
- 86% said they would vote for GDL.
- 63% reported that they have been under peer pressure to engage in high-risk behaviors such as speeding, drinking and driving, or not using a seat belt. Older teens reported increased peer pressure to engage in high-risk behaviors.

Teens chose these as important topics for public service announcements:

- Drinking and driving (59%)
- Wearing seat belts (20%)
- Speeding or driving too fast (10%)
- Staying alert (6%)
- Driving in bad weather (3%)

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Iowa SMS Public Opinion Survey

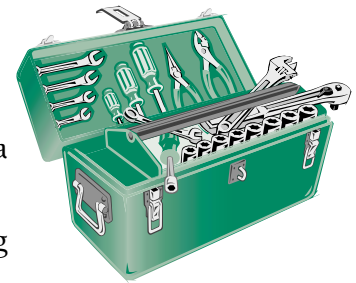
The 1999 Iowa SMS *Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan* included a number of potential strategies for dealing with safety issues related to young drivers. The Iowa SMS public opinion survey asked over 1,000 Iowans whether they would support these strategies.

- 63% said that the goal to “enhance graduated licensing for young drivers” should receive high emphasis over the next five years.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Legislation, Policy, and Enforcement

- Continue to review and improve Iowa’s GDL system in areas where data and studies show there is need.
- Change the driver education provision to a two-tiered system by adding hours of instruction to the provisional phase.
- Create a dedicated-funding mechanism to consistently fund the cost of driver education instruction hours or behind-the-wheel time.
- Increase parental involvement hours from 30 to 50 hours.
- Reduce the number of passengers allowed in a GDL driver’s vehicle. (Consider appropriate exemptions for immediate family members.)
- Move the nighttime curfew from 12:00 midnight to 11:00 p.m. (Consider impacts on school policies and local ordinances.)
- Place speed and/or road-type limitations on novice drivers.
- Require use of seat belts for everyone in a GDL driver’s vehicle.
- Provide log forms with GDL licensing for parents to use during the GDL period (Council Bluffs, Iowa, model).
- Administer additional road tests at all licensing levels as new drivers progress.
- Enforce existing curfews strictly to ensure continued and consistent compliance.
- Analyze crash data relating age of driver and time-of-day crash incidence.
- Investigate rural/urban and other special characteristics of localized crash data for targeted enforcement (and education).
- Restrict cell phone use during GDL for young drivers (see the NSC *Multitasking Statement*).
- Review use of school licensing for 14.5–16 year olds and consider limiting or ending this practice.



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Education and Public Awareness

- Update the Iowa DOT's young driver videotape resources (see Successes and Strategies Implemented section in this chapter).
- Create a joint Iowa Departments of Transportation and Education web site for driver education instructors, students, and partners. Post all available GDL tools, materials, and appropriate statistical reports. (See Successes and Strategies Implemented section in this chapter.)
- Assess existing driver education programs and develop a model for driver education programs (see Successes and Strategies Implemented section in this chapter).
- Continue driver education programs and review the content and subjects required as system elements, laws, and behaviors change.
Examples:
 - o Include “life skill” and risk management approaches.
 - o Include distracted/drowsy driving.
 - o Include school bus passing and related brochures, videos, and other media.
 - o Include onboard devices, technology in vehicles, and future intelligent transportation systems (ITS) concepts and realities.
 - o Include rights and responsibilities of other vehicle types, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
 - o Monitor and evaluate new computer-assisted training and testing for driver education.
 - o Monitor and evaluate driver simulation developments for driver education.
 - o Use available resources on special topics such as the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's *Getting Safely Past the Orange Barrels* video and *ZED (Zero Error Driving)* CD-ROM on how to scan the environment and hone critical risk management skills.
- Review driver improvement course success and potential enhancements.
- Explore ways to address driver education teacher shortages through rekindling interest of potential new instructors in colleges, universities, and other entry teacher programs. Consider tuition reimbursement or other incentives to draw more instructors.
- Review the condition and effectiveness of driver education and its funding sources in Iowa schools, and (since most Iowa high school students take this course) consider appropriate statewide funding levels for maintaining a quality system of instruction, curriculum, and other resources.

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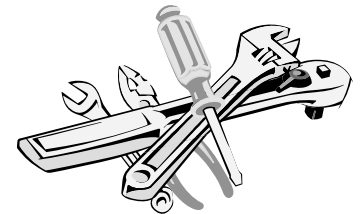
- Consider possible alternatives for staffing and funding driver education through state vouchers or other models—whether inside or outside public schools.
- Develop and implement a transportation safety curriculum for K-12 focused on multimodal and risk-focused prevention (Oregon model) (see Successes and Strategies Implemented section in this chapter).
- Continue to enhance parental and community awareness of GDL. (A mother responding to the Iowa SMS strategies published in 1999 called to protest GDL because she believed her children would have to graduate from high school before they could receive a driver's license.)
- Investigate rural/urban and other special characteristics of localized crash data for targeted education (and enforcement).
- Collaborate with substance-abuse prevention agencies in reducing underage drinking to reduce young driver crashes, injuries, and deaths (see Chapter 6, Reducing Impaired Driving).
- Support effective locally initiated special events for safe behavior related to proms, homecoming, college sports, and other youth and young adult events (see Chapter 6, Reducing Impaired Driving).
- Promote public service announcements and other efforts to stress that most young driver crashes result from driver error and put focus on the critical risk areas.
- Promote and support the Grim Reaper Program or other dramatic high school visitation programs (e.g., Every 15 Minutes) (Hudson, Iowa, and Kissimmee, Florida, models).
- Support impaired young driver strategies discussed in Chapter 6, Reducing Impaired Driving.

Design and Technology

- See list in the Education and Public Awareness section in this chapter, beginning with “Continue driver education programs”

SUCCESSES AND STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

- On January 1, 1999, Iowa graduated driver licensing legislation went into effect. The GDL program uses increased parental involvement and the restricted intermediate license to (1) ease new drivers into unrestricted driving and (2) decrease crash rates for 16-year-old, first-year drivers.
- 1999 crash and moving violation data have been studied for the impact of the Iowa GDL process. Continue to review each year.



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- Development and implementation of an evaluation system for drivers moving from the provisional to the regular (unrestricted) license stage has been completed.
- A driver improvement interview program to work with entry drivers who receive traffic citations to help them change their driving behavior so they can complete their probation and move to an unrestricted license has been established.
- Young drivers often begin their driving experience as bicyclists. In 2000, Iowa SMS piloted a bicycle safety element of a K-12 transportation curriculum for elementary physical education students. (See Chapter 10, Ensuring Safer Bicycle Travel.)
- Iowa SMS approved funding in January 2001 for the Iowa DOT Office of Driver Services to create a young driver video for driver education classes. Filming was completed in October 2001, and distribution will extend to all Area Education Agency programs.
- Iowa SMS approved funding in April 2001 for a statewide survey of local driver education programs to review such elements as tuition costs, curriculum, and other resources used.
- The Iowa Departments of Transportation and Education have started (fall 2001) to plan a resource web site for driver education instructors and students.

NOTE

The potential strategies in this chapter do not represent specific recommendations of the Iowa SMS Coordination Committee or any agency, group, or individual represented in Iowa SMS. The strategies represent a range of alternatives for legislators, department or agency directors, local governments, and citizen groups to consider when they elect to address a specific highway safety concern.

This toolbox is a living document that will continue to provide information, direction, and ideas for highway safety decision-makers. Any strategies selected for implementation by Iowa SMS or any other entity will require further development through identifying potential partners, entities impacted, potential funding, steps for implementation, evaluation, and other pertinent tasks.

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RESOURCES

Information in this chapter is drawn from many individuals and sources. Known sources are listed here. **Contributors:** Scott Falb (primary), Kim Snook (primary), Denny Beckman, Dwight Carlson, Jan Goldsmith, Jack Latterell, Craig Markley, Loren Muench, Bob Thompson, and Daron Van Helden.

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Getting Safely Past the Orange Barrels:

Video.

ZED (Zero Error Driving):

CD-ROM.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

www.saferoads.org

Stuck in Neutral: Recommendations for Shifting the Highway and Auto Safety Agenda into High Gear

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

Strategic Highway Safety Plan (Sept. 1997):

A comprehensive plan to substantially reduce vehicle-related fatalities and injuries on the nation's highways.

safetyplan.tamu.edu/plan/toc.asp

Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Driver Services

Graduated Driver Licensing Q&A Brochure:

www.dot.state.ia.us/mvd/ods

School License Study Report (Feb. 2001)

Iowa DOT 1999 Crash Facts:

www.dot.state.ia.us/dmv/ods/facts99.htm

Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau

Young Driver Fact Sheet (June 1999):

www.state.ia.us/government/dps/gtsb/index.htm#stats

Iowa Safety Management System

www.IowaSMS.org

Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan (Aug. 1999):

www.iowasms.org/pdfs/ishsp.pdf

Iowa Strategic Highway Safety Plan Goals and Strategies: Statewide Survey of Adults (Oct. 2000):

www.iowasms.org/pdfs/publicopinionsurveyexecsumm.pdf

Iowa State University Department of Public Safety

Get a Grip Youth Leadership Conference:

www.public.iastate.edu/~dps_info/homepage.html

National Center for Health Statistics

www.cdc.gov/nchs/

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Traffic Safety Facts—Young Drivers (1999):

www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa/pdf/young99.pdf

Traffic Tech, NHTSA Technology Transfer Series No. 229 (Aug. 2000):

www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/traftech/pub/tt229.html

National Safety Council

Safety Agenda for the Nation (2000):

www.nsc.org/index.htm

Multitasking Statement (Mar. 21, 2001):

www.nsc.org/news/policy/multitasking.htm