

Connecticut Parent Overview Guide



WELCOMING
YOUR
New Driver



ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

Yesterday, you were putting them on the school bus. Today, you are handing over the car keys. Before you do, DMV and AAA can recommend some stress-reducing practices that will help safeguard your teen and give you more peace of mind.



Graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws already place some protective restrictions on new young drivers. As a parent, you also need to create guidelines that will help your young driver gain experience with minimal risk. The information in this brochure will help you set expectations with your teen.

Though your teen may not have spent much time behind the wheel yet, they have already gained a lot of vicarious experience ... good and bad. They have observed your driving habits. They've seen fast and furious car chases on the big and small screen. They may play computer-based racing games that reward quick hand-to-eye coordination and aggression at the expense of good judgment.

Though your teen may not have spent much time behind the wheel yet, they have already gained a lot of vicarious experience ... good and bad.

As a parent, it's up to you to help your teen arrive at a realistic understanding of his or her obligations and the need to build

skills, judgment, and experience.

It's easy to overlook, but teens also need your guidance in living up to the responsibilities and obligations that go along with operating a vehicle — such as choosing a safe vehicle, insuring and



maintaining it, and obeying all laws related to licensing and inspection.

Shaping your teen's driving habits also is a great opportunity to reinforce traits that will serve them throughout life, including accountability, personal responsibility, respect for people and property, consideration of others, the ability to budget, and an appreciation for actions and consequences.

This brochure is a good starting point in your discussion as your teen enters the driving years.

DMV and AAA hope you will find it helpful as you orient the new driver in your family.

YOUR HELP DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

A recent study by the National Institutes of Health suggests that parental involvement and restrictions significantly reduce risky driving behavior during a driver's first 12–18 months behind the wheel.

WELCOMING YOUR NEW DRIVER

D *Driving entails risks and responsibilities for the new driver, but the consequences of your teen's decisions can extend to your entire family.*

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American teenagers. Per miles driven, the crash rate for teens 16 to 19 is four times higher than for adults. This crash risk is even higher during the first year a teenager is eligible to drive.

Often, teens become the family chauffeur. That means younger siblings are also at this higher risk of injury as passengers in "teen" crashes. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reports that nearly two of every three people killed in teen-driver crashes are people other than the teen driver.

As the parent of a new driver, you take on new legal and financial liability. If your teen is involved in a crash, you may bear the cost of damages, medical expenses, legal counsel, repair costs, fines, and increased insurance premiums. Further, if your teen injures or kills a pedestrian or another motorist, the emotional and legal consequences will be overwhelming for everyone concerned.

Driver education is a good start, but it is not enough. Supplement formal driving classes/in-car sessions by sharing your experience and knowledge.



Just a handful of good habits can make a life-or-death difference.

Your personal example and encouragement can help your teen learn to consistently:

- successfully perceive events in the driving scene;
- make good decisions based on driver perceptions;
- take safe and effective action to prevent potential conflicts and collisions;
- drive the speed limit;
- maintain safe following distance;
- wear safety belts.

It is imperative that you make it clear to your teen that it is never acceptable to drive when impaired by alcohol, other drugs, anger, or fatigue.

What's the strongest way to deliver that message?

LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

You cannot control all of the conditions your new driver will face, but you can set standards and expectations that will limit the risks.

PARENTS AS CO-PILOTS

D *Driving is licensed by the state, but for a teen, it is a privilege granted by parents. It is completely appropriate to insist on some say regarding how and when a new driver gets behind the wheel, even if he or she is not driving the family car.*

Parental responsibility does not end when the teen has a permit in hand. Recent studies find that teens demonstrate the safest driving behavior when parents remain involved in driver education even after teens are licensed drivers.

Your obligation goes beyond helping your child secure a permit and then a license. You must help your teen become a safe driver. It's a continuing effort, but well worth it.

How can you help?

- Invest in driver training from a reputable organization.
- Commit to a practice schedule. Accompany your teen on practice drives in increasingly challenging locations and conditions. The risk of a crash drops significantly among teens that have been supervised for 50 hours of practice driving before they drive solo.
- Keep your cool during practice sessions. Provide feedback in a respectful tone. Look for opportunities for positive reinforcement.
- Introduce privileges gradually. Allow independent driving only after much practice and for limited amounts of time in low-traffic situations. Allow longer sessions on busier roads, night driving, driving in inclement weather, and with passengers only after a driver demonstrates safe operation for several months, in accordance with the GDL restrictions in Connecticut.



Teen-Parent Driver Agreement

Teen-Parent Driving Agreements are a proven way to raise awareness of the dangers of teen driving and reduce a teen driver's crash risk. Motor vehicle crashes remain the #1 killer of teens. This Agreement from the Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Teen Safe Driving spells out safety risks and what happens if the teen driver violates his/her obligations. Complete and sign this Agreement when your teen obtains a learner's permit, and review it again when your teen obtains a license.

Safety Risks (check-off after discussing)

- Driving is especially dangerous for teens because the human brain does not fully develop its ability to assess risk and danger or control impulse until we reach our mid-20s. Teen driver training cannot overcome this condition.
- Passing a training course and obtaining a driver's license means that a teen is only a beginner; **it does not mean that a teen is a safe driver.**
- Failure to follow state driving laws can cause injury, death, damage to property, and can result in criminal and civil penalties.
- Speeding, reckless driving, alcohol or drug use, not using seat belts, illegal or distracting electronic devices, illegal passengers, and/or driving while fatigued risk the life of the driver, passengers, other drivers, and pedestrians.

Supervising Adult's Obligations (to be initialed)

I am a role model, and I will teach safe driving habits and be a safe, responsible driver at all times. I will obey all traffic laws, always wear my seat belt, never drink and drive, and not use illegal or distracting electronic devices.

I will, at any time and for any reason, give my teen a ride to avoid a dangerous driving or other situation. I agree that a call from my teen to provide a ride will not count as a violation of this Agreement.

Teen Driver Obligations

- Supervising Adult:** My driving will be supervised by one or more adults who will decide, day by day, whether it is safe for me to drive.
- Driving Plan:** I will get permission from the supervising adult every time I drive, and we will agree on my route, destination, time of return, and passengers. Joyriding, (driving with no destination or reason) is not allowed.

- Seatbelts:** I will wear my seatbelt and I will make sure that every passenger in my car, of any age, wears one.
- Electronic Devices:** Driving while texting, or talking on a cell phone (even hands-free) is illegal. I will not use any illegal or distracting electronic device while my vehicle is in motion.
- Curfews:** I understand that in Connecticut I may not drive between 11pm and 5am, except for school, a job, a medical or religious reason, or a Safe Rides program, and I will not do so.
- Passengers:** For my first six months with a license, I may carry one adult who is supervising my driving. In the next six months I may add immediate family, but I may not transport friends until I have had my license for one year.
- Alcohol or Drug Use, Fatigue:** I will NEVER drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or when I have not had sufficient rest. I will call my supervising adult for a ride if I find myself in need of avoiding a dangerous driving situation.
- Speeding:** I will obey speed limits, stop signs, traffic signals, and the rules of the road. I will drive at a reasonable speed and adjust my speed based on road conditions (i.e., weather, turns, hills, visibility, and unfamiliar roads).
- Suspension of Driving:** IF I VIOLATE ANY OF THESE OBLIGATIONS, MY DRIVING PRIVILEGES WILL BE SUSPENDED FOR ___ DAYS. Violations may be reported by law enforcement, neighbors, school personnel, or friends. This suspension will be in addition to state law requirements. If I drive while my privileges are suspended, they will be suspended indefinitely.
- Finances:** During this Agreement, costs of insurance, gas, and maintenance will be divided:
- Time Period:** This Agreement will remain in effect until 12 months at a minimum, or until the age of 18, whichever is later.

Commitment to Safety:

By signing below, we commit ourselves to the safe driving requirements and understandings stated in this Agreement.

Teen Driver _____ Date _____

Supervising Adult _____ Date _____

- Plan ahead for challenges you are likely to face. A parent-teen driving contract is a good line of defense against compromising on safety on special occasions such as proms, holidays, or school trips.
- Take a refresher course yourself so that any coaching you deliver will reinforce, not contradict, instruction from your teen's driving instructor. A refresher course sends a powerful message that skills should be assessed and improved throughout a driving career.
- Attend a parents' night class at your child's driver training facility.
- Work through your community association to have a meeting for parents and talk about the limits you've placed on your teen's driving.
- Talk to adult leaders of groups your teen is involved in — sports teams, school band, church youth group, after school clubs, etc. — about setting up a meeting for parents.
- Ask community groups and businesses that employ a large number of teens to facilitate conversation about teen driving.
- Review your state's laws about the graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws. For more information visit ct.gov/teendriving.

CONNECTICUT TEEN DRIVING LAW HIGHLIGHTS

For Learner's Permit Holders

Required Tests

1. Pass a 25-question knowledge test.
2. Pass a road skills test.

Training Requirements

At least 40 hours of behind-the-wheel training. Complete an eight-hour safe driving course,

including two-hour class with parents or legal guardian.

Passenger Restrictions

For the entire time a driver holds a learner's permit, he or she may not have any passengers except for either:

- A licensed driving instructor giving instruction and others accompanying that instructor.
- One person who is providing instruction and is at least 20 years old, has held a driver's license for four or more consecutive years and whose license has not been suspended during the four years prior to training. Parents or legal guardian may accompany the instructor.

For Newly Licensed 16- and 17- Year Old Drivers

Curfew

11 p.m. to 5 a.m. — (see exceptions below).

Passenger Restrictions

During the first six months no passengers in the vehicle except for:

- A licensed driving instructor;
- or**
- parents or legal guardian, at least one of whom holds a valid driver's license; or someone at least 20 years old, has held a driver's license four or more consecutive years and whose license has not been suspended during the four years preceding the time of being transported. Parents or legal guardian may accompany the instructor.

During the second six months (months seven through twelve) the only additional passengers allowed in the vehicle are members of the driver's immediate family.



(Please Note: These passenger and curfew restrictions do not apply to volunteer firefighters, volunteer ambulance and medical service staff carrying out their duties or as an assigned Safe Ride program driver.)

For All Learner's Permit and 16- and 17-year-old licensed drivers

They may NOT:

- Transport more passengers than the number of seatbelts in the vehicle. Seat belts are required for everyone.
- Use a cell phone (even if it is hands-free) or other mobile electronic devices.
- Transport any passenger on a motorcycle for six months after the issuance of a motorcycle endorsement.

Drivers 16-and17-years old and each of their passengers are required to wear a seat belt. If either the driver or the passenger fails to wear the seat belt, each could be cited for a seat belt violation and fined \$75.

48-Hour License Suspension for Certain Violations

16- or 17-year-olds who commit certain moving violations can have their drivers' licenses seized immediately by a police officer and suspended for 48 hours. In addition, the police officer is authorized to remove the vehicle from the scene.



Drinking and Driving Administrative Per Se Penalties

The administrative license suspension for a 16- or 17-year-old who drives under the influence of alcohol will be at least one year if he or she had an elevated blood alcohol content equal to or over .02. If the 16- or 17-year-old refuses to submit to the test, the suspension will be 18 months. This law applies to both public roads and private property.

DRIVING IS ONLY PART OF BEING A DRIVER

Teens need to understand that driving connects them to the community in new ways. As drivers, they will take on new legal and financial responsibilities. As the operators of a vehicle, they also must maintain that vehicle to ensure safe operation.

Involve your teen in the entire range of activities related to his or her new status, including:

- obtaining and renewing the vehicle title, registration, and license plates;
- performing routine maintenance, periodic checks, and responding to safety recalls;
- shopping for insurance, finding discounts, securing coverage;
- researching requirements related to vehicle inspections and parking fees.

Your family should discuss all expectations related to operating a vehicle. That includes financial decisions, such as who will pay for:

- gasoline?
- insurance premiums?
- car repairs?
- parking decals?



CHOOSING THE SAFEST CAR FOR A NEW DRIVER

Bombarded with advertising, it's tempting to choose a vehicle based on image over safety. Whether you're buying or helping your teen buy a vehicle or if they are buying one on their own, insist on a safe choice. It's important that everyone is involved when making decisions about the vehicle.

When buying a vehicle, the insurance industry suggests you choose a late-model car. While an older car may seem bigger, heavier and therefore safer, a newer sedan probably features improved crumple zones, three-point seatbelts, and front and side airbags.

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Here are some shopping pointers that can narrow your choices:

- Think big. Small cars are cute and may save on gas, but they can be harder to see on the road and may offer less crash protection.
- Driver education is even more critical if your teen will be operating a large, heavy sport utility vehicle. Special skills are required to safely operate sport utility vehicles, pick-up trucks, or vans. A high center of gravity makes these vehicles less stable and more likely to roll over.
- Sports cars may attract admiring glances — but they can raise your insurance premiums.
- Check the reliability and cost of ownership data on any vehicle you consider.
- Check crash test data for any vehicle you consider.
- Check the history on a used car.
- If you select a used car, schedule an inspection by the nearest licensed repair facility or licensed mechanic.
- Look for a vehicle with a warranty or purchase an extended warranty.



A LITTLE HOMEWORK CAN STEER YOU TO THE RIGHT DRIVER TRAINING

Even parents who have the time and temperament to teach their teens to drive should consider the added benefits of training by an expert. Driver training is important. You may be an exceptional driver but not the best teacher — either because your competence is so ingrained it has become unconscious, or because you are more likely to overreact to your own children.

Professional instructors have been trained to provide comprehensive training that addresses the mistakes new drivers are most likely to make. Even parents who are exceptional drivers should consider professional training by an expert.

Driver training is only the beginning. Your teen will still lack the experience — and perhaps the maturity — needed to be a safe driver immediately. Like anything else, your teen needs practice to become an informed, safe driver.

The extent of driver education offered through high schools is highly variable. Budget cuts and liability issues have limited the amount of hands-on experience a student receives. In some areas, no on-the-road experience is provided.

Training at a commercial driver training school may be a worthwhile investment. The key is finding a school that meets your needs.



Please visit ct.gov/teendriving

Here are some pointers that will help your family identify the best training program in your area:

- Visit each facility and observe the instructors and check out the vehicles and training materials.
- Ensure the facility is fully licensed and meets all state instructional standards.
- Ask for a list of references so you can get a customer's point of view.
- Consult your local Better Business Bureau to find out if there are complaints about the facility.
- Check on polices for refunds, make-up sessions, and contracts.
- Avoid "quickie" courses. Look for a balance of classroom and in-car instruction that meet state requirements.
- Parents or those at home working with a teen driver should spend at least 50 additional hours of behind-the-wheel before the teen applies for a license.

ORGAN DONATION

Do you know that one donor can change more than 50 lives? Become an organ and tissue donor today. Visit DonateLifeNewEngland.org. "I'll save you. Will you save me?"

CONNECTICUT'S TWO-HOUR JOINT PARENT-TEEN TRAINING SESSION

On August 1, 2008, state law required parents and teens together to attend a special two-hour class given by commercial driving schools. It is required of all parents, even if the 16 - or 17-year old driver obtains home training rather than attend a driving school. The purpose is to help parents and teens learn some of the key aspects important to the safe driving of a 16 - or 17-year old. The class, which is offered through the state's driving schools, should include a discussion and provide tools for parents/guardians to develop their own skills and behaviors to better prepare them to model appropriate skills while instructing and driving with their teenagers.

Specific Areas Covered include: 1) Driver's Education Overview, 2) Graduated Licensing Laws; 3) Necessary Driving Skills and Behaviors; 4) Cognitive development of adolescents, including brain development, judgment and decision making, risk taking, and self control; and 5) Hazard Awareness.

Objectives

By the end of the class, parents should be able to:

- Explain the graduated licensing law and the parent/guardian's role in supporting the law.
- List the driving skills their child must master to pass a road test.
- Identify the driver's education tasks and their relevance to developing good driving skills.
- Provide examples of driving behaviors to avoid because they may negatively influence a new driver.

- Understand and exhibit safe driving skills as a role model as they coach their teen to become a safe and skilled driver.

Please see ct.gov/teendriving/parentprogram for more information about this requirement.

NAVIGATING THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Most teens are very Internet savvy — make them responsible for fact-finding. Below are some helpful resources to get you started.

For Information on These Topics ▶▶▶	Check These Web Resources
Auto Insurance Information	Insurance Information Institute www.iii.org
Ranking of Most Frequently Stolen Vehicles	National Insurance Crime Bureau www.nicb.org
Crash Test Results. Rollover Rates	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) www.nhtsa.gov
Department of Motor Vehicle CT information	ct.gov/dmv
State-by-State Provisions For Teen Drivers	AAA TeenDriving.AAA.com
Driving Safety Research	AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety AAAfoundation.org



aaa.com



ct.gov/dmv