

Governor's Task Force on Teen Safe Driving

Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: March 14, 2008

Time: 10 a.m.

Place: Traveler's Claim University, Windsor, Auditorium B

Task force members present: Commissioner J. Robert Galvin (Co-Chairman), Commissioner Robert M. Ward (Co-Chairman), Stephanie Demchik-Pascual, Charles Hollis, Stephen Simalchik, Robert L. Willsey, Maria Cruz, Mario Damiata, Dianne Harnad, Brendan T. Campbell, M.D., Sherry Chapman, Rose Marie Cipriano, Susan Naide, Gillian Mosier, Billy Ciotto, Jim MacPherson, Lt. Col. Peter Terenzi, Farmington PD Chief James Rio, Raymond Gaulin

Task force members absent: Joseph Cristalli, Dr. Jack Thaw, Timothy S. Hollister, Albert S. Dabrowski, Yvette Bello

Others present: David Preusser, Dr. Kirsten Bechtel (Yale New Haven Hospital), Faith VosWinkle (Office of the Child Advocate), Jeanne Milstein (Office of the Child Advocate)

On the phone: Jim Wright (NHTSA), Patti Ellison-Potter (NHTSA) and Karen Morton (AAMVA)

Proceedings:

1) Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Co-Chair Ward.

2) DMV Teen Driving Summit

Commissioner Ward told Task Force members that DMV is looking at a variety of things regarding teen driving from tests to driver education. For example, he said the agency would be reviewing the written exam procedure, road testing, curriculum, GPS monitoring of road testing, audio recording between inspector and driver, internal training for DMV inspectors conducting tests, oversight of driving school industry. He made clear these are not short-term projects. DMV held its first internal meeting of senior managers this week.

3) Discussion on trends in CT licensing of 16 and 17-year-old drivers at the Learner's Permit and Provisional License stages

David Preusser made a presentation to the Task Force. His presentation was based on DMV statistics that showed the trends of when teens earn their learner's permit and driver's license. Dr. Preusser said 25 percent of 16-year-olds obtain their learner's permit at 16 years and 0 months. In addition, by the end of the 16th year of age, 65 percent have obtained a learner's permit. The number of people who received a learner's permit in a given year

peaked in 2003, but declined by 2007. For driver's licenses, the earliest a teen can obtain a driver's license is 16 years and 4 months. Approximately 5 percent of teens earn their license at the age of 16 years/4 months, then jumps to 20 percent by 16 years/6 months, and 40 percent by the end of the 16th year. In 1998, 44 percent of 16 year-olds had a license by the end of their 16th year, but dropped to 40 percent in 2007. Over time, that percentage has dropped. He speculated that the passenger restrictions that became law in January 2004 and those restrictions contributed to the decline in those licensed. He also stated that the percentage of teens with learners' permits tends to be higher in the suburban areas, and lower in the cities.

4) Discussion with National Highway Transportation Safety Administration on efforts at the national level with regard to Graduated Driver's Licensing laws and programs.

Mario Damiata led a discussion on what is being done at the national level regarding GDL laws and other programs relating to teen driving. The discussion was setup to allow task force members to learn of some other best practices and other programs happening across the country. Jim Wright (NHTSA), Patti Ellison-Potter (NHTSA) and Karen Morton (American Association Motor Vehicle Administrators) joined the Task Force via telephone.

Mr. Wright gave an overview of current projects happening. There was a GDL symposium in Tucson, AZ, last year, and that helped get a national group to agree on minimum components that all states could agree on. NHTSA just finished a webpage on young drivers focused on seat belt use, under age drinking and GDL. The Center for Disease Control is interested in developing a process to strengthening GDL laws. In addition, NHTSA is working with the American Association Motor Vehicle Administrators to see what states are doing a good job making GDL laws work.

Ms. Morton said AAMVA is looking at all GDL information that jurisdictions have implemented, such as outreach/awareness programs (items that don't require legislation), and what the most effective elements have been. Their goal is to identify two or three things that can be easily replicated for other states to adopt, and then develop a grant program for six states to pilot the best practices, then report back to NHTSA on the effectiveness of the programs. AAMVA is hoping to award the grants by August.

Ms. Ellison-Potter discussed research and evaluation, more specifically the "Teen Driver Project" that NHTSA has been working on. Among the project, NHTSA evaluated Oregon's GDL program. Oregon allows drivers to take a supervised driver education course, or take on 50 extra supervised driving with mom or dad. Among those two groups, the drivers who took the course had lower crash rates and lower convictions in moving violations. In addition, a passenger restriction evaluation (California, Massachusetts and Virginia) showed that states with restrictions reported lower crash rates in those three states compared to control states. In another assessment, Texas offered a parent-taught driver education program had a negative influence compared to traditional programs. These, and other completed programs, are further explained on the NHTSA web site. There are also current projects underway, which include an analysis on literature on best practices, the effects supervised driving for GDL, and licensing and testing methods for different states, and national standards for driver education.

5) Presentation from the Office of the Child Advocate

Jeanne Milstein (Office of the Child Advocate), Dr. Kirsten Bechtel (Yale New Haven Hospital), Faith VosWinkle (Office of the Child Advocate) gave a joint presentation with an

overview of all unexpected and unexplained deaths of children under 18 in Connecticut through the work of the Child Fatality Review Panel. The Panel reviews about 20 fatalities a month, and Ms. Milstein pledged her support on behalf of the Panel to the Task Force. Ms. Milstein noted that about 68 percent of all traffic fatalities in Connecticut result from teen drivers, 3 to 1 more likely that the driver is male, and in every multiple-fatality the male was the driver. The group distributed a handout that dissected the 141 motor vehicle-related child (under 18 years of age) fatalities between January 2, 2002 and March 11, 2008.

6) Overview of research and analysis Connecticut Children's Medical Center is doing on teen driving and also an overview of a proposed project on driving simulators and high school students

Dr. Brendan Campbell gave a presentation on teen fatal crash data from 1997-2006. In summary, research shows that 16-year-olds have the highest rate for crashes, male drivers represent the overwhelming majority of drivers involved in fatal crashes, about 40 percent of fatal car crashes occurred between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m., less than a quarter (22.3%) of the participants were drinking drivers, 48 percent used a known restraint system, crash rates decreased significantly for female drivers from ages 16 to 19, percentage of fatal crashes involving one or more passengers were 71.5% in 16 year, 57.5% in 17 year and 46.8% in 18 year and 44.5% in 19 year. Dr. Campbell also spoke a driving simulator project involving high school students. The project uses simulators to identify "high risk" teens.

7) Update on Progress of Graduated Driver Licensing bill

Co-Chair Ward gave an update on the GDL-related bill in the state legislature. He said the bill has been reported out of the Transportation Committee, and will most likely be referred to the Judiciary Committee. The Governor has asked the legislature to fast-track the bill. The bill models itself after many of the recommendations made by the Task Force.

8) Discussion and vote on whether to endorse a proposed Graduated Driver Licensing provision to seize a teen's driver's license for certain violations for up to 48 hours for various violations under the GDL laws

Co-Chair Ward explained this provision to Task Force members. This driver's license seizure is currently in the bill before the legislature. The Task Force unanimously agreed to endorse the proposal. Dr. Pressuer, Mr. Willsey, Mr. Ciotto and Ms. Cipriano spoke in favor of the proposal. Chief Rio and Lt. Col. Terenzi said there is already a process in place for law enforcement to handle that type of situations. Mr. Ciotto said the Task Force should still be working to devise ways to reach out to teens before they turn 16 and their parents.

9) Updates from subcommittees

The following updates were provided by chair-people of the Task Force's subcommittee.

Training and Education:

Mr. MacPherson reported for the subcommittee. He said the subcommittee is close to completing its work, which is focusing on driver's education and training, enforcement and public education, violator retraining, parental outreach and education. Also, he recognized that DMV is also moving in a direction of improving this area. The next meeting for the subcommittee was scheduled for this Monday.

Public and Parental Awareness:

Ms. Cipriano reported for the subcommittee. The subcommittee was reviewing three recommendations – requiring moving violations of those under 18 to be reported to parents/guardians; develop a standardized/uniform/state of the art driver’s education program to be approved by DMV; and to work with state agencies to raise awareness for technology to track teen drivers. Also, encourage high schools to work with local police on programs in high school parking lots; create a chief advisor position to handle all issues relating to teen driving; revise the parental manual provided by DMV; use internet/task force web site to get information out; and for DMV change the nomenclature for the GDL to “Provisional Junior Operators.”

Laws and Policies:

Dr. Campbell reported. The subcommittee chose to stick with the short-term recommendations already reported out regarding the issue of additional passengers in the car during driver training. The subcommittee will follow up with all recommendations during the next full task force meeting.

Public/Multicultural Health:

Ms. Harnad reported. The subcommittee is considering the following recommendations – to create an on-going coalition to follow-up on the long term recommendations of the Task Force; create an on-going inter-agency workgroup to monitor and evaluate data relating to teen driving; create a social marketing campaign that would include using teen focus groups and state and national data; and implementing teen driving safety information into wellness programs. Chief Rio added that all subcommittees should be mindful to reach out to everyone in the state.

10) Meeting Schedule for Task Force

The next full task force meeting is scheduled on April 4 in Hartford at 10:30 a.m. After that, another meeting will be scheduled for mid-May. Ms. Cipriano noted that Weston High School will be having a teen driving assembly with a panel that will include members of the Task Force.

11) Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.