

**Minutes from the  
Governor's Task Force on Teen Safe Driving**

**Public and Parental Awareness Subcommittee**

**Wednesday, January 23, 2008**

**2:30 p.m.**

**Connecticut Hospital Association, 110 Barnes Road, Wallingford, CT**

**Prepared by Lynn Townshend, CT Department of Public Health**

**Present from the Teen Driving Task Force:** Susan Naide, Rose Marie Cipriano (sub-committee co-chair), Yvette Bello (sub-committee co-chair), Robert Willsey, Stephanie Demchik-Pascual (phone), Sherry Chapman, Joseph Cristalli.

**Also present:** Ernie Bertothy (DMV), Bill Seymour (DMV), Lynn Townshend (DPH), State Representative Mary Mushinsky, Liz Strillacci (media), Bob Besch (public), Heather Cronos (public), Elizabeth Kozinski (public)

**AGENDA ITEM ONE: Provide for parents/guardians to be notified of moving violations by drivers under age 18.**

Sherry Chapman reports that parents of teens are currently not contacted when their teens are charged with moving violations. Currently, the court transfers to DMV any violation and that is added to driving history without a notification to parents.

Susan Naide pointed out that there could be problems mandating such reporting to parents whose children are in that age group, as the justice system is bifurcated with regard to 16 and 17 year old, though there are precedents in other areas of the justice systems where a minor must appear before the court with their parents, such as a traffic infraction. The juvenile justice system will be revamped in 2010 so that that 16-18 age group may be treated a bit differently.

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The sub-committee supports parental notification and will bring this proposal to the full task force.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: Require all teenage applicants for learner's permit to file with DMV signed "Parent-Teen Driving Contract" - using Connecticut Teen Partnership contract as model.**

Stephanie Demchik-Pascual reported that this tool is used by the Allstate Foundation as "a conversation piece" for parents & teens on what all parties will do to keep teens safe on the road. It is designed to be an adjunct to household rules and an enhancement to parental authority.

**Teen Driving Task Force  
Public & Parental Awareness Subcommittee minutes  
Meeting of January 23, 2008  
Page 2**

There were questions raised about how this kind of contract could be enforced, with its non-binding legal nature being emphasized.

Sherry Chapman noted that she liked the contract's informative nature, educating at the same time that it offers the opportunity for parent & teen to come to agreement on these issues. It was noted that the contract as distributed would need to be modified based upon any changes in current law.

There was comment that the word "contract" might be a "turn off" word for teens, with Joe Cristalli suggesting the word "agreement" instead.

Yvette Bello asked whether such an agreement could be tied to an incentive, such as a break on insurance rates, with discounts continuing if the teen is infraction free for a certain period of time (i. e. one year after receiving license).

Susan Naide noted that while the suggestions in this contract are valid, there needs to be consideration of ways to break through to kids, and incorporate safe driving messages into education such as in physics. Sherry Chapman commented that IMPACT attempts to accomplish the above by getting at kids' heads through their hearts by using real world experiences.

Robert Willsey cautioned the group regarding the potential impact of making this a legal requirement ends up making this simply paperwork. It is not clear whether this would need to be on file with DMV, but as a conversation starter, it is good. As for the insurance aspect, there is the good student discount, driver training discount, but none for signing such a contract.

Rose Marie Cipriano asked the group whether or not this recommendation was supported as a stand-alone measure, and consensus was no. However, there were suggestions for consideration of incorporating the contract into education program or for insurance companies to provide incentives for the contract's use.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: Allow parents/guardians to initiate/obtain license suspensions or revocations for drivers under age 18.**

Joe Cristoli asked whether or not parents would use such a legal privilege, given that is it possible that their insurance rates could go up as a result.

Sherry Chapman, speaking in favor of the time, stated that she likes the idea that parents can say to kids that they are frightened by the child's actions, and will could have the legal authority to pull the license. Stephanie Demchik-Pascual, also favoring this item,

**Teen Driving Task Force  
Public & Parental Awareness Subcommittee minutes  
Meeting of January 23, 2008  
Page 3**

asserted that parents may have a better handle on their kids and whether or not they break the law, yet was concerned whether or not parents would actually do it.

Susan Naide, speaking in opposition to this agenda item, stated that she had many questions about the practicality of this, including what consequence if the kid is caught driving? What will police do when kid is already suspended? She also noted that DMV is already overloaded and may not be able to handle yet another program.

Rose Marie Cipriano raised concerns that this proposal could create more familial conflict, as this might be an opportunity for a parent to capriciously go to an established site to suspend license. Suspension opportunity could be violated in so many ways (i. e. by divorced parents against one another).

Joe Cristoli suggested that the strongest parental power is taking the keys and holding on to them, and that DMV cannot be responsible for doing that. The parents know and can take control.

No decision was made regarding this proposed idea, but Rose Marie Cipriano asked that the sub-committee look at proposals one and three to see if there was any way to merge them, and to look at all seven proposals for overlap between them.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comment was taken throughout the meeting.**

State Representative Mary Mushinski (Wallingford) stated that she would work with fellow local state reps. Mary Fritz (Wallingford/Cheshire), Al Adinolfi (Cheshire), and Vincent Candelora (North Branford) would like teen-driving laws tightened, particularly in light of a recent fatal accident in Wallingford. She noted that she liked the idea of having parents attend education sessions as the teen is also learning. She inquired as to whether or not police can take a teen's license on the spot for certain serious infractions. She also said the task force should consider whether or not to have a mandatory suspension or removal of license at very first incident, which may trigger parental involvement. She also noted that not all teen fatal accidents involve drinking, and that excessive speed is also a serious factor.

Wallingford resident Bob Besch stated that he has personal experiences with what was being discussed, stating that parents are not aware kids are driving around at night with other teens in the vehicle. He proposed giving parents the same ticket as their teens receive, raising insurance rates for both. He was in favor of a parental overview education class of about 2 hours.

Wallingford resident Heather Cronos – who is also a driving instructor in Cheshire –

**Teen Driving Task Force  
Public & Parental Awareness Subcommittee minutes  
Meeting of January 23, 2008  
Page 4**

commented that once on their own, no matter how well you train them, teen drivers succumb to what is going on around them. She proposed mandating driver's education training for all teen. She also believes that the current state standard of 20 hours on-the-road experience is too low.

Meriden resident Elizabeth Kozinski, a retired teacher, stated that better education is required.