



The New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition, an initiative developed by the National Safety Council and funded through the generosity of The Allstate Foundation, is comprised of more than forty individuals and organizations dedicated to reducing teen (ages 16-20) crashes on the state's roadways and saving lives. While New Jersey is held up as a model for its work in teen driver safety, last year 34 teens and teen passengers (teens driven by their peers) died in motor vehicle crashes. This represents a 44% decline over 2009 and a 51% drop since 2006. But with zero as the Coalition's ultimate goal, more work remains to be done to ensure the safety of New Jersey's most vulnerable drivers.

Building upon the work begun by the state's Teen Driver Study Commission in 2007, which included the issuance of a comprehensive report outlining 47 recommendations addressing policy, education/training, law enforcement, schools/community, the insurance industry, and technology, great strides have been made in New Jersey. From a stronger GDL law and a ban on plea bargaining point carrying motor vehicle violations, to a comprehensive K-12 traffic safety curriculum and interactive web-based resources, much has been accomplished. But more remains to be done including the passage of legislation that would require teens to attend an orientation with a parent or guardian as a prerequisite for obtaining a permit. This bill would also lengthen New Jersey's permit from a minimum holding period of six to twelve months and mandate a minimum number of practice hours (50) during the permit phase (a policy in place in 43 other states) to help teens practice and build skill under supervision.

While the NSC New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition supports these policy changes, its focus is not on passing this bill (which is being addressed by another group), but on leveraging the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL). First implemented in Michigan and Florida in the mid-1990s and enacted in New Jersey in 2001, GDL is a three-stage system (permit, probationary and basic or full-licensure) that provides novice drivers the opportunity to build skill, while minimizing those things that cause them the greatest risk (i.e., driving at night, with other passengers, unbelted, and distracted). Graduated driver licensing is supported by parents, teens and law enforcement officials, but more work is needed to ensure that these three key groups fully understand and leverage New Jersey's system. The goal, strategies and tactics outlined in this plan provide a blueprint for ensuring that this happens.

Mission

To establish a culture of safe teen driving in New Jersey based on the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing.

Vision

End crashes, injuries and deaths caused by teen drivers on New Jersey's roads.

Purpose

To engage, educate and mobilize communities to work collectively to develop and improve safe teen driving programs, practices and activities based on the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing.

Goal

By 2012, increase awareness, education and enforcement of the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities on New Jersey's roadways involving teen drivers and their passengers.

Any individual and/or organization is welcome to become a member of the Coalition. To learn more, contact Pam Fischer, Coalition Leader, at 908-684-1036 or pfischer550@comcast.net.