

Development of Resources to Guide Parents in Helping Teens Learn to Drive

Graduated driver licensing (GDL), a pioneering system developed at HSRC and first implemented in the U.S. in 1997, has reduced crashes among 16-year-olds by up to 50 percent. Nonetheless, teenage drivers continue to be overrepresented in motor vehicle crashes and fatalities.

An important feature missing from current efforts to improve young driver safety is the lack of adequate support for parents of novice teen drivers. Although parents are expected to play a key role in helping their teen learn to drive, they receive almost no sound guidance for what to do or how to do it. Parents are involved in many different aspects of the licensing process. They influence the timing of licensure, supervise their teens' early driving experience, influence choice of vehicles, are the primary "enforcers" of their teens' license restrictions, and may further limit driving conditions or extend limits beyond what the state requires.

The objective of this project is to develop, implement and test a comprehensive system to support parents of new drivers called Time to Drive. This system will provide critical guidance to parents at various points in the licensing process when this guidance is most needed.

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Time to Drive includes:

- An in-person parent coaching session that encourages parents to provide their teens with a substantial amount of supervised driving practice in a wide variety of settings;
- A method for driver education instructors to meet with parents to discuss the progress and proficiency of their teen driver, and to remind them of their role and responsibility in helping their teen become a safe driver;
- A smartphone app that encourages diversified practice during supervised driving and allows parents to easily keep track of the amount and variety of practice teens have gained;
- A competency assessment guide that helps parents gauge a teen's readiness to drive independently, and to determine the types of settings/environments in which the teen still needs practice;
- Tools for parents about how to enforce GDL restrictions and how to choose a safe vehicle for a new teen driver;
- A network of trained professionals who provide individualized support to parents of new drivers.

The primary outcome of this project will be a comprehensive program to assist parents of beginning drivers in North Carolina, along with a series of formative evaluation findings. This will be the first such program in the nation, which could serve as a model for other states (just as North Carolina's GDL system has).