

Next Steps:

## Research, Evaluation, & Implementation



# Graduated Driver Licensing



The International Symposium on Novice Teen Driving: GDL and Beyond – Research Foundations for Policy and Practice was held in Tucson, Arizona on February 5-7, 2007. The Symposium provided a detailed overview of graduated driver licensing (GDL) and other novice teen driver issues.

This fact sheet presents next steps recommended for action in the areas of GDL research, evaluation, and implementation. These actions are adapted from the work of James Hedlund, Highway Safety North, who prepared a summary of the information presented at the Symposium and in background papers.

## Next Step Action Items

### Implement effective GDL systems in all states.

#### **Agree on coordinated GDL education and advocacy.**

Many organizations have actively supported GDL in the past decade, but their efforts too frequently have been isolated and uncoordinated. Coordinated education and advocacy can be:

- More efficient if organizations share information and resources.
- More effective if all organizations present the same message.

#### **Define and agree on the core elements of a good GDL system.**

- Recent research presented at the Symposium provides solid evidence that a good GDL system should include an extended learner's permit holding period and intermediate license nighttime and passenger restrictions. Research has not yet evaluated the effectiveness of other components for which there is substantial support, such as supervised driving requirements and cell phone restrictions.
- Organizations supporting GDL should agree on the core components of a good GDL system and determine which states lack these core components. These organizations may even be able to agree on other components of an optimal GDL system.
- For example, a core component may be a nighttime restriction while an optimal component may be a nighttime restriction beginning by 10:00 pm, as used in the current Insurance Institute for Highway Safety rating system. Restrictions on handheld electronic communication and entertainment devices should be considered either as part of a GDL system or for all young drivers.

#### **Provide effective GDL support materials.**

Materials are needed to inform legislators, policymakers, the media, and the public about GDL: describe the overall concept clearly; identify key components; provide research and evaluation evidence; and address common objections. The materials will be most effective if they present a consistent message. Some materials are already available from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (2007), American Academy of Pediatrics (2006), the Council of State Governments (2006), the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (2007), and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2004), among others.

### Improve GDL system operations.

GDL programs may operate more effectively if they meet three goals.

- All teens and parents should understand all GDL system requirements and the consequences of violating these requirements.
- Law enforcement officers should understand and enforce all GDL requirements.
- Departments of Motor Vehicles should educate teens and parents about GDL, actively monitor GDL licensees, and take appropriate action for violations.

This fact sheet reflects current information presented at the International Symposium on Novice Teen Driving: GDL and Beyond – Research Foundations for Policy and Practice held in Tucson, Arizona on February 5-7, 2007. For more information, go to [www.nsc.org/gdl/](http://www.nsc.org/gdl/).

## Research, Evaluation, & Implementation

### ❑ Evaluate the effectiveness of individual GDL components and GDL implementation practices.

Several different organizations currently fund and manage young driver research. Close coordination among these organizations can allow research funds to be allocated more effectively and can allow new projects to build on recent and ongoing work. Continued research is needed in three areas.

- Evaluate components whose effectiveness has not yet been demonstrated, such as cell phone restrictions, supervised driving requirements, and contingent advancement.
- Evaluate the optimal structure for the core components, such as the starting time for nighttime driving restrictions and the length of the learner's permit holding period.
- Evaluate the effect of active GDL enforcement by law enforcement officers and DMVs.

### ❑ Continue research, demonstration, and evaluation activities to improve GDL.

Coordination among participating organizations would be useful. Researchers should communicate their findings regularly and clearly to the traffic safety community so that up-to-date research results can be incorporated into teen driver safety programs.

- Help parents instruct, guide, and manage their novice teen's driving and integrate parents into GDL programs.
- Improve driver education and integrate driver education into GDL programs.

### ❑ Continue fundamental research on teens and teen drivers.

Coordination is all the more important since research in these areas can be very expensive. Research needs include:

- Accurate data on teen driver licensure and miles of travel.
- Research on using new technology to instruct or monitor novice drivers.
- Basic research on teen driving, driving errors, and crash causes.
- Basic research on adolescent development and on the implications of this research for novice teen drivers.

#### In summary:

- Implement the GDL components that are known to be effective in all states.
- Continue to further refine knowledge of these components through evaluation and investigate the effectiveness of other components.
- Investigate, through fundamental research, how teens drive, how they become involved in crashes, and how their crash rates can be reduced.
- Disseminate new research findings to inform policy makers, practitioners, teens and their families.

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### References

James Hedlund summarizes information presented and discussed at the Symposium. This summary contains a complete listing of secondary references. See: Hedlund, James. (2007). Novice teen driving: GDL and beyond. *Journal of Safety Research*, 38(2), 259-266.

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