**2023 National Teen Driver Safety Week**

## FACT SHEET/TALKING POINTS – PARENT/GUARDIAN TARGET AUDIENCE

National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 15-21, 2023! The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is teaming up with **[Local Organization]** to help empower parents and guardians to discuss the importance of driving safety with their young drivers. Whether teens are driving a car, truck, or SUV, and whether they’ve just earned their license or have had it for a few years, the rules of the road stay the same. Some of the greatest dangers for teen drivers are alcohol and other drug use, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers in the vehicle. Review the following information to help teens stay safe behind the wheel.

**Be Empowered to Set Driving Rules!**

* As a parent or guardian, your first priority is to protect your teen. Use this motivation to help keep your teen safe as they start navigating their new role as a driver.
* Remind your teen that driving is a privilege, not a right. As the parent, you’re in control. If your teen is following the rules of the road, the privilege to drive is there. If they aren’t following the rules of the road, they shouldn’t be freely given the keys to the car. Remember, their inexperience puts themselves and others at risk.
* Have a conversation with your teen driver about driving laws and safe driving habits. Your desire to keep them safe never gets old, so make sure the lines of communication are always open. Believe it or not, your teen is listening, and they depend on you to guide them and be there for them.
* Become familiar with your state’s nighttime driving restrictions, passenger restrictions, and graduated driver licensing (GDL) [restrictions](https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/teen%20and%20novice%20drivers). Surveys show that teens with parents or guardians who set and enforce firm rules for driving typically report engaging in fewer risky driving behaviors and being involved in fewer crashes. By knowing and enforcing the laws with your teen, you promote safer driving for all road users.
* The responsibility for safe road behavior is shared: Be a good role model for your teen driver by demonstrating your own safe driving habits.
* Talk to your teen about cell phone use while in the car. Encourage them to put away their phones while driving, designate a texter or navigator, or pull over before answering phone calls, texting, or engaging with any social media apps. Remind your teen that it’s not acceptable to record themselves or post on social media while driving.

**Know the Facts About Teen Driver Fatalities**

* Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) in the United States.
* In 2021, there were 2,608 people killed in crashes involving a teen passenger vehicle driver (15-18 years old), of which 861 deaths were the teen driver.
* Parents and guardians: You can be the biggest influence on your teen’s choices when they are behind the wheel. Take the time to have a conversation about some of the biggest driving risks for teens:  
  + **Impaired Driving:** All teens are too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol. However, nationally, in 2021, 19% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes had alcohol in their system. But alcohol isn’t the only substance that can keep your teen from driving safely: Like other drugs, marijuana affects a driver’s ability to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task, and marijuana slows reaction time, affecting a driver’s ability to drive safely. Remind your teen that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including illicit or prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medication — could be deadly. It is critical that teen drivers understand that driving impaired can have repercussions, that strict penalties may apply, that they may lose their license if they are caught driving impaired, and that they will face additional consequences for breaking rules they agreed to follow when they started driving.
  + **Seat Belts:** Wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest ways for everyone to be safe in a vehicle. Unfortunately, too many teens aren’t buckling up. In 2021, 51% of the teen passenger vehicle drivers who died in crashes were unbuckled. Even more troubling, when the teen driver involved in the fatal crash was unbuckled, nine out of 10 of the passengers who died were also unbuckled.
  + **Distracted Driving:** Distractions while driving can be deadly. In 2021, among teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes, 7% reported that they were distracted at the time of the crash.

* + **Speeding:** In 2021, almost one-third (32%) of all teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash, and males were more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than females.
  + **Passengers:** The fallout from teen drivers transporting passengers can be tragic. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up dramatically in direct relation to the number of passengers in a vehicle. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers.

**Remember the Rules of the Road**

1. **Don’t Drive Impaired.**

Set a good example by not driving after drinking or consuming marijuana or other impairing substances. Remind your teen that drinking before the age of 21 is illegal, and alcohol and/or marijuana and driving never mix, no matter your age. Also, remind them that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including illicit, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs — could have deadly consequences.

1. **Buckle Up — Every Trip. Every Time.**

Lead by example. If you wear your seat belt every time you’re in the car, your teen is more likely to do the same. Remind your teen that it’s important to buckle up on every trip, every time, no matter what (both in the front and back seats), even while in taxis or ride-sharing services.

1. **Keep Your Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel, and Mind on the Driving Task.**

Remind your teen about the dangers of texting, dialing, or using mobile apps while driving. Require your young driver to put their phones away and to turn on the “Do Not Disturb” or similar phone features when on the road. Distracted driving isn’t limited to phone use; other passengers, vehicle audio and climate controls, and eating or drinking while driving are all sources of dangerous distractions when full time and attention should be given to driving. Know your state’s law regarding mobile phone and texting while driving restrictions; 49 states ban texting while driving for novice drivers. Parents and guardians, take note: These laws aren’t just for teen drivers. See [*Distracted Driving Law Chart*](https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/DistractedDrivingLawChart-April21Edit3.pdf)*.* If your teen disobeys, enforce the penalties set with your teen before they started driving.

1. **Obey All Posted Speed Limits.**

Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens who lack the experience to react to changing circumstances around their cars. Obey the speed limit and require your teen to do the same. Remember: They are watching you.

1. **Limit Passengers.**

With each passenger in the vehicle, your teen’s risk of a fatal crash increases. Review your [state’s GDL law](https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/teen%20and%20novice%20drivers) before your teen takes to the road — your state may restrict the number of passengers in the vehicle during the first months of driving on a provisional license. GDL laws may further dictate who can ride in a car being driven by a teen after the permit period has ended.

**Engage in Safe Driving Conversations Year-Round**

It is never too early, or too often, to discuss safe driving habits with your teen. You may choose to start the conversation during National Teen Driver Safety Week, but don’t be afraid to continue the conversation every day throughout the year. Even if it seems like they’re tuning you out, keep reinforcing these rules. Your teen is listening — your constant reminders about these powerful messages will get through. NHTSA has a few other ideas to keep you and your teen engaged in this healthy dialogue:

* Get creative! Having a conversation is just one way to discuss safe driving. You can also write your teen a letter, send email or text reminders, leave sticky note reminders in the car, or use social media to share your messages.
* Get it in writing. Create a parent/guardian-teen driving contract that outlines the rules and consequences for your teen driver. Hang the signed contract in a visible place as a constant reminder about the rules of the road.
* If you and your teen are going somewhere together, let your teen drive. This is a great time for you to evaluate their driving progress and to discuss safe driving habits. Make sure your teen is following the rules you’ve set.
* Finally, be empowered. Driving — for everyone, teen and adult alike — is a privilege, not a right. If your teen is having a difficult time following the rules, it may be time to take away the keys and review the basics. Safe teen drivers can mean the difference between life and death — for themselves, their passengers, and all other road users.

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety Week and to learn more safe driving tips for your teens, please visit [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving).

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