

PARENTS HOLD THE KEYS

The number one reason for teen crashes is driver inexperience – not drinking and driving, speeding, or filling a car with friends, although those choices can also be deadly. While parents can set rules and enforce laws that prohibit risky behavior, parents must also realize that they are the ones who must give their teenager the time to practice driving skills and become a mature, safe and courteous driver.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

“All young drivers start out with very little knowledge or understanding of the complexities of driving a motor vehicle. Technical ability, good judgment and experience all are needed to properly make the many continuous decisions, small and large, that add up to safe driving.”

A recent study by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm noted the following:

“Laws and policies that address distractions by limiting the number of peer passengers and prohibiting cell phone use among novice drivers will help reduce crash rates, but will only address part of the problem. Many crashes will still occur due to the inability of teen drivers to detect and respond to a hazard in time.”

The study noted that parents should focus on helping their teens learn to scan the roadway for hazards during driving practice sessions. Parental reinforcement of basic driving skills and good decision making will lead to safe driving habits that will last a lifetime.

Each year, many high school students are killed and thousands more are injured on Virginia's roadways. Hospitalization and rehabilitation costs, lost time from school, and other costs associated with long-term injuries create substantial emotional, physical and financial problems for students, their families and communities.

Parents and families – not the school – are in the best position to encourage responsible behavior and have a sustained effect on minimizing risks faced by inexperienced drivers.



PARENTS: BE A GOOD EXAMPLE!

- Always wear your safety belt
- Correct your own unsafe driving habits
- Know Virginia traffic laws
- Obey speed limits
- Don't talk on your cell phone
- Don't use other electronic devices
- Don't multitask while driving
- Don't eat or drink behind the wheel
- Set your GPS before beginning your trip

What You Need to Know!

Juvenile Licensing Process

Learner's Permit Requirements

- 15 years and six months old
- pass the two-part knowledge exam

Driver's License Requirements

- 16 years and three months old
- have learner's permit for at least nine months
- if under 18, 45 hours of behind-the-wheel experience, certified by a parent or guardian
- if under 19, complete a state-approved driver education program
- pass the road test

A completion certificate is issued after the road test is passed. The certificate and learner's permit act as a temporary driver's license for 180 days. If under 18, permanent licenses are issued by judges to teens and their parents or guardians during juvenile licensing ceremonies held in court.

For the complete law on learner's permit and driver's license requirements, see Virginia Code 46.2-334

Teen Driving Restrictions

Conviction of the curfew or passenger restriction laws can result in driver's license suspension.

Curfew – Drivers under 18 are prohibited from driving midnight to 4 a.m. except when driving to work; to a school, civic or religious activity; when with a licensed parent; or there's an emergency.

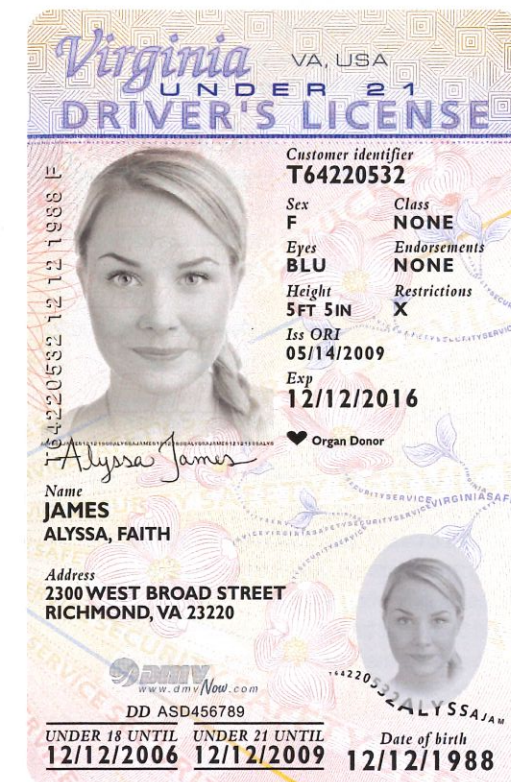
Passengers – Drivers under 18 may carry only one passenger under 21 unless with a licensed parent. After holding a license for one year, drivers may carry up to three passengers under 21 only if

- they are driving to a school-sponsored activity
- or a licensed driver 21 or older is in the front seat
- or there's an emergency

Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members. Learner's permit holders may not carry more than one passenger under 18.

Mobile Devices – Drivers under 18 may not use a mobile device, such as a cell phone, while driving unless there's an emergency, and the vehicle must be lawfully parked or stopped.

For the complete teen driver restrictions law, see Virginia Code 46.2-334.01





FOUR REASONS FOR TEEN CRASHES

1. Driver inexperience

- Practice with your teen driver.
- Have your teen learn to drive in all situations: on the highway, at night, and in different weather conditions.

2. Driver distractions

- Tell your teen to turn off cell phones while driving. In emergency situations, pull to the side of the road.
- Enforce no texting while driving – IT'S THE LAW.
- Remind them to give their full attention to the road and don't let distractions get in the way of safe driving.

3. Excessive speed

- Always tell them to drive the posted speed limit and to plan their time so they aren't speeding to get somewhere.
- Tell them the consequences of driving too fast for hazardous road conditions.
- And tell them to always maintain proper following distance and never tailgate.

4. Use of alcohol and illegal drugs

- Drinking and drugs are illegal and should never be used, especially when driving.
- Remind them that taking some prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines can cause drowsiness that can negatively effect their driving and reaction time.

SAFETY BELT USE

56% of young people involved in fatal car crashes were not buckled up.

- Use of seat belts is the law. Remind your teen and all passengers to buckle up every time they get in a car.

TIPS FOR COACHING YOUR TEEN DRIVER

- Follow the Virginia Department of Education's required 45-Hour Teen/Parent Driving Guide
- Establish a contract allowing your teen to earn the privilege to drive
- Mark your calendar for practice times and remain consistent
- Stay calm, rational, upbeat and engaged
- Reinforce new driving techniques
- Ensure that your teen makes safety and instrument adjustments before driving
- Offer coaching comments that are positive and not judgmental
- Don't use practice time to discipline your teen driver about other matters
- Make sure your teen has his/her learner's permit, vehicle registration card and insurance information

ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Scientists now know that the decision-making portion of the teenager's brain is not mature and the impulse control portion of the brain does not physically mature until about age 25.

As a result, teenagers often fail to realize that fast driving, texting while driving, drinking, drag racing and having too many passengers are dangerous activities. Teenagers need active parental supervision, especially where driving is concerned.

In addition, teens often don't recognize themselves as inexperienced drivers. A study by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia found that 60% of teens believe inexperience heavily influences safety, but only 15% consider their peers to be inexperienced. "This contradiction is quite dangerous, considering this sample of teens is almost exclusively comprised of inexperienced, novice drivers," the study stated. Further, many teens believe that getting a license automatically makes them experienced.

RESOURCES

Partners for Safe Teen Driving is an educationally focused community health initiative designed to educate parents about what they can do to better prepare their teenagers for driving. Partners include:

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
Virginia Department of Education
Virginia State Police

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Applying for a Learner's
www.dmv.virginia.gov/drivers/#applying_learners.asp




45-Hour Parent/Teen Driving Guide
www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/driver_education/parent_teen_driving_guide.pdf

Parent/Teen Driving Agreements
www.safeteendriving.org/parents/agreement.php

GET THE FACTS!

**PARTNERS FOR SAFE
TEEN DRIVING**
A COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE

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PARENT GUIDE

**What You
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