

REDUCING THE RISKS



THE PARENT ROLE IN TEEN DRIVING



Made easier with the Checkpoints Program



Welcome to the World of Teen Driving!

Teenagers want to drive, and parents want to reduce their “chauffeur” duties. However, teen driving is *dangerous*. Motor vehicle crashes are the nation’s leading cause of death and injury for teenagers. *The risk is greatest in the first months after licensure.*

Rhode Island’s Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law aims to decrease teen driving risk by introducing teenagers to driving in phases. But the law is general, and each family’s situation is unique. Parents can further reduce the risks of teen driving by fulfilling the “Parent Role in Teen Driving.”



What is the parent role in teen driving?

- 1.** Know Rhode Island’s GDL law
- 2.** Know what to do in the instruction permit and provisional license phases
- 3.** Know how to increase your teen driver’s safety

Why Is the parent role so important?

Fulfilling the parent role in teen driving is very important because teenagers whose parents are involved in their early driving experience are safer drivers; they:

- ✓ Engage in fewer risky driving behaviors
- ✓ Are less likely to violate traffic laws
- ✓ Are less likely to crash

The Checkpoints Program can and will help your family manage the risks associated with your teen driver.

1. Know Rhode Island's GDL Law

Rhode Island's Graduated Driver Licensing program is designed to increase the safety of teen drivers. The Instruction Permit and Provisional License allow teen drivers time to gain valuable driving experience before they receive an unrestricted Full Operator's License. This table summarizes Rhode Island GDL laws for teens under age 18.

LEVEL	1 Limited Instruction Permit	2 Limited Provisional License	3 Full Operator's License
AGE	At least 16	At least 16 1/2	At least 17 1/2
REQUIREMENTS	Driver's Education Certificate Social Security Card Birth Certificate or Passport Parent present or notarized consent form \$10 application fee	Permit 6 months 50 hours of practice driving (10 at night) No moving, alcohol, or safety belt tickets for past 6 months Parent present or notarized license application \$10 fee	Provisional license 12 months or turn 18 No moving, alcohol, or safety belt tickets for past 6 months
FORMS, TESTS, & EXAMS	Parent consent form* Permit application Written exam Vision test	License application* Practice driving certificate On-road driving test	None
CONDITIONS	MUST Use safety belt Be supervised by a licensed adult Hold permit 6 months Obtain 50 hours of practice driving (10 at night)	MUST Not drive between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. unless supervised Have no more than 1 unrelated passenger under 21 Hold provisional license for 12 months or to age 18	Same as for all drivers with a Full Operator's License

* **Parent consent:** Teenage driving is a privilege to be given by families, not a right. Consent of a parent or guardian is required for a minor to obtain a permit, provisional license, or full license. That consent can be revoked at any time.

2. Know what to do in the Instruction and Provisional License Phases

GDL introduces teens to driving in phases, but becoming a safe and proficient driver still takes years of experience. You will help increase your teen's safety by being an actively involved parent at each level of your teen's driving.

Instruction Permit Period

Driver education provides instruction on traffic laws and the basic rules of driver behavior. But, this is just the beginning. Teens need A *lot* of practice. Rhode Island requires you to provide your teen with at least 50 hours of practice (at least 10 at night) during the Instruction Permit phase. So, during the permit period, you should:

- Provide as much practice as possible. Practice with teen and parent only in the vehicle. Do not trust the safety of your whole family to the least experienced driver!
- Begin with basic vehicle management skills such as turning, parking, and backing up. Gradually introduce driving on quiet roads, in traffic, on highways, and at night or in bad weather. Keep sessions short, an hour or less.
- Remember that making mistakes is part of learning, so make sure the practice driving conditions are well within your teen's abilities.

Provisional License Period

Although you have been providing your teen with practice, your teen must still learn how to drive independently – to drive sensibly and to recognize and respond to hazards – and do it time after time. This happens with the Provisional License, when your teen gains experience and trial-and-error lessons. ***This is the most dangerous time for every novice driver!*** During the Provisional License period, you should:

- Treat this period as your teen's next stage in training. With a new Provisional License, your teen has only the **MINIMUM** qualifications to drive independently. Continue to supervise and monitor your teen's driving.
- Limit your teen's early independent driving to the least dangerous driving conditions. It takes months before many driving tasks become automatic. Concentration and attention are critical during those months. Any distractions or unfamiliar conditions can have serious consequences.
- Remember that new drivers improve most rapidly in the first few months of independent driving, but they continue to improve over the next year or two of independent driving.

3. Know how to increase your teen driver's safety

MYTHS VS. FACTS

Parent involvement in teen driving during the first year increases safety. Below are some common myths about teen driver safety and the facts which dispute them.

MYTHS	FACTS
My teen is responsible and would not drive dangerously, so s/he is not at risk.	All teen drivers are at high risk, particularly during the early months and years of licensure because they <i>lack driving experience and judgment</i> that only come with time.
My teen had plenty of practice and knows how to turn, park, and manage traffic, so s/he is not at risk.	Managing the vehicle is only the beginning. All teen drivers should get substantial independent driving experience in low-risk conditions to become safe and proficient drivers.
By having a car, my teen will learn to take responsibility.	Teens with their own vehicles drive more and thus are at greater risk.
It would be safer if my teen had a friend in the car, in case something happens.	Even "responsible" friends in the car can be distracting. Crash risks are nearly doubled with one teen passenger – and go up with every extra passenger.
Driving siblings around will help the family and also give my teen more driving experience.	Be very careful about trusting the safety of your family to the least experienced driver! Teens should not be responsible for driving any family members for at least six months after licensure.
Other parents do not set limits on their teens' driving.	Nearly all parents DO set limits, and teens expect limits. The stronger the limits, the better the safety outcome.
The GDL laws in Rhode Island are sufficient to protect teen drivers.	GDL requirements are just a minimum. To increase teen safety, parents need to establish strict driving limits for the first year of driving.

Parents Can Help Increase the Safety of Teen Drivers

Driving is dangerous for everyone, but it is more dangerous for teen drivers, especially in their first months of independent driving. Teen drivers crash more than any other age group. Teens are usually at fault in



crashes due to a combination of driver characteristics and high-risk driving conditions. Make your teen's driving privileges depend on following the recommendations below.

DRIVER CHARACTERISTICS

DRIVING INEXPERIENCE: Regardless of driver age, inexperience is the single most important risk factor for crashes. Teens show the greatest improvement within the first year and several thousand miles of independent driving. They also continue to improve for several years.

Recommendation: *Limit driving under high risk conditions until your teen has a great deal of independent driving experience.*

RISKY DRIVING BEHAVIORS: Teenagers commit more risky driving behaviors than any other age group. These include speeding, running lights and stop signs, tailgating, weaving through traffic, and not allowing safe space for merging or changing lanes. Teens with strict parental limits engage in less risky driving behavior.



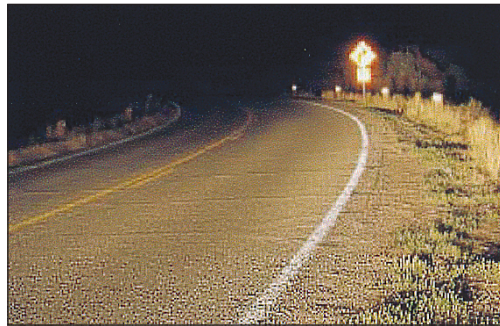
Recommendation: *Frequently emphasize the requirement that your teen follow all traffic laws and set strict limits on high-risk driving conditions.*

HIGH-RISK DRIVING CONDITIONS

PASSENGERS: For teen drivers, the risk of a crash increases with each additional teen passenger. Even responsible and trustworthy teen passengers are distracting. With a Provisional License your teen is allowed to drive with NO MORE than one teen friend. However, crash risks are nearly doubled with one teen passenger—and go up with every extra passenger. The less driving experience your teen has, the greater the risk.

Recommendation: Limit your teen to NO teen passengers for the first six months of independent driving.

NIGHTTIME DRIVING: The most severe teen crashes occur at night. Night driving is more difficult and dangerous, because of limited visibility, drinking drivers on the road, and higher speeds. With a Provisional License teens cannot drive from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m.



However, many serious teen driver crashes occur between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. particularly during the first six months of driving.

Recommendation: Set an early driving curfew for your teen: 8 p.m. for the first month, 9 p.m. for the next five months, and 11 p.m. for the rest of the first year.



ADVERSE WEATHER: Rain, ice, snow, fog—they make driving more dangerous for all drivers. However, teen drivers do not have enough experience in these conditions to be able to react safely.

Recommendation: Limit your teen's driving in adverse weather: allow driving only in good weather for the first month and moderate weather for the next five months.

HIGH SPEEDS AND HIGH-SPEED ROADS: As speeds increase, so do teen crash risk, crash forces, and crash severity.

Recommendation: Limit your teen's driving to local roads for the first month, and to no high-speed roads for the next five months.



SAFETY BELT NON-USE: Safety belts reduce the risk of serious injury in a crash by 45%, and teens have lower safety belt use than any other age group.

Recommendation: Require safety belt use for your teen driver and all passengers, at all times.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE: Any amount of alcohol or drugs produces impairment in teens. Teens are inexperienced with driving and with alcohol and drugs. This is a deadly combination, not to mention illegal.

Recommendation: Prohibit your teen from DRIVING OR RIDING with anyone who has been using alcohol or other substances.



DRIVING A LESS-THAN-SAFE VEHICLE: Your teen has the greatest chance of a crash of anyone in the family, so have your teen drive the safest vehicle available. Small, older cars are not as safe in crashes. Pickups and SUVs are prone to roll over. High-performance or “fun” cars may encourage youth to drive beyond their experience level.

Recommendation: Have your teen drive a mid- to full-size sedan or station wagon with a small engine and airbags. Use a family vehicle. Parents should not let their teens get their “own” vehicles until they gain a lot more independent driving experience.



The Checkpoints Program is here to HELP!

There is a lot involved in managing teen driving, but using the Checkpoints Program can help! The Checkpoints Parent-Teen Driving Agreement is included as the middle page in this booklet. You can take it out, fill it out with your teen, and post it where it will remind everybody of the rules and privileges for teen driving.

The best time to start the Checkpoints Driving Agreement is shortly before your teen gets a Provisional License.

The CHECKPOINTS DRIVING AGREEMENT will work best if it is part of an open dialogue between you and your teen about driving.

Checkpoints will help your family to:

■ Set clear driving rules and privileges

Rhode Island law sets broad guidelines for teen driving, but families need to determine their own rules and privileges for their teen drivers. Together with your teen, set strict driving privileges (recommendations are provided) for three distinct time periods: (1) the first month with the Provisional License, which is the highest risk period; (2) the next five months, when risks are almost as high; and (3) the next six months, when risks continue to decline but are still elevated. Make sure that both state and family rules are *very clear from the beginning*.

■ Frequently discuss safe driving and require a full report

When you and your teen drive together, point out risky driving situations and potential solutions. When your teen drives independently, require the following information before leaving: where your teen is going, why, with whom, and when coming home.

■ Increase driving privileges when earned

Use the CHECKPOINTS DRIVING AGREEMENT schedule to review your teen's progress. As your teen gains more driving experience and shows safe and responsible driving, gradually increase driving privileges.

■ Impose consequences for unsafe driving

Novice teens can make mistakes, take risks, get tickets, and have crashes. Reduce or take away driving privileges for unsafe or irresponsible driving. Fair but certain consequences will lead to improved behavior.

Make consequences relate to losing driving privileges

For a day, weekend, week, month, or longer, depending on the violation.

Make consequences known

Set consequences for common rules violations before they occur so that your teen knows

what to expect. For example, as a family, decide what the consequences should be for each of the following:



EXAMPLE VIOLATIONS	CONSEQUENCES
<i>Teen used alcohol or other drugs and drove.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ months/years <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Teen got a ticket for speeding.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Teen didn't wear or make all passengers wear safety belts.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Teen carried passengers without permission.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Teen came home 45 minutes past curfew without permission.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Other: _____</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<i>Other: _____</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lose driving privileges for ____ weeks/months <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____