

# Environmental Prevention of Underage Drinking

## Graduated Driver Licensing Laws

### What are graduated driver licensing laws?

Graduated driver licensing laws are designed to gradually introduce new drivers to different driving circumstances. Usually, they allow beginners to gain experience driving as they move from a highly supervised permit to a supervised license with restrictions and then to a full-privileged driver's license.

The best graduated driver licensing system includes:

- A learner's permit stage, beginning at age 16 and lasting at least 6 months;
- An intermediate license phase (after the applicant passes the driver's test) that:
  - Bans unsupervised night driving during the first 6 to 12 months of licensure; and
  - Bans unsupervised driving with more than one passenger anytime; and
- A full-license phase for drivers 18 years old, obtainable only after the applicant completes the first two stages without a motor vehicle crash or conviction.

### How do graduated driver licensing laws reduce underage drinking and its consequences?

Graduated driver licensing laws help prevent conditions under which young people may be at increased risk of alcohol-related traffic injuries or death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 24 percent of high school students rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. Eight percent of high school students reported driving after drinking alcohol.

### How can my community take this action?

Take the following steps to initiate or strengthen graduated driver licensing laws:

- **Assess your state's current law.** If your state has few licensing restrictions, mobilize your community to get more graduated driver licensing restrictions passed. Your effort could target a county, but would most likely be at the state level. If the state has a comprehensive graduated driver licensing law, assess the degree to which it is being enforced.

- **Engage the media.** The primary component for implementing graduated driver licensing laws is media awareness and advocacy. Implement public awareness activities in the community, and highlight the relationship between unrestricted youth driving and increased motor vehicle crashes and fatalities. The public should be aware that when more comprehensive graduated licensing laws are in place, both parents and law enforcement can better manage the risks of youth driving.
- **Raise public awareness.** Inform your community about widespread support for graduated licensing. A 2010 national survey of 1,226 parents of teens, 15–18 years old, showed that these parents favor licensing policies as strong as or stronger than those currently existing in states.
- **Measure and report successful outcomes.** Some measures of the effectiveness of graduated driver licensing laws are:
  - Rates of youth motor vehicle crashes and injuries among those ages 16 and 17;
  - Rates of youth motor vehicle fatalities among those ages 16 and 17;
  - Rates of compliance and/or noncompliance with the graduated driver licensing laws; and
  - Rates of arrests of 16- to 17-year-olds for driving under the influence.

## Resources Supporting Action

CDC. (2013). Injury Prevention and Control: Motor Vehicle Safety—Teen Drivers. From [http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen\\_Drivers/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html) (accessed December 15, 2013).

CDC. (2011). *The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit*. From [http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit\\_BM.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf) (accessed December 15, 2013).

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2008). *Traffic Safety Facts: Graduated Driver Licensing System*.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Focus on Prevention*. From <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA10-4120/SMA10-4120.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2013).

## About Environmental Prevention

Environmental prevention focuses on changing the environment in ways that make alcohol less available and appealing to young people. Some goals of environmental prevention are to change social norms or attitudes relating to the use of alcohol, to restrict youth access to alcohol, and to strengthen enforcement of laws and regulations governing its use. Environmental prevention of underage drinking also includes:

- Alcohol compliance checks;
- Controls on alcohol outlet location and density;
- Increased taxes on sales of alcohol;
- Responsible beverage service;
- Restricted sales of alcohol at public events;
- Restrictions on low-price, high-volume drink specials;
- Sobriety and traffic safety checkpoints; and
- Social host liability laws.

Visit <https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings> for more information.

Materials to support national Town Hall Meetings on the prevention of underage drinking are provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.