



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Keep Your Teen Safe

This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help to care for and to raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip.

A wonderful and scary thing happened last week. My grandson William celebrated his sixteenth birthday. The scary part is that he will now be joining the ranks of teen drivers.

I have been talking to him about safety and responsibility, and encouraging him to understand that teens are the greatest risk takers of any age group. Frightening stories are told by Ohio parents and teachers, of responsible kids who normally drive carefully and wear their seat belts but have forgotten these safe practices when in the company of other teens. Heartbroken families lose kids who die or are critically injured because they forgot to be safe.

Learning to drive has changed since I was a teenager. There are more vehicles traveling more miles at greater speeds. The number of miles driven by the average family has increased exponentially. The challenges facing young drivers include those I faced and many new issues. Interstate highways, crowded roads, complicated intersections and 8 to 10 lane roadways simply were not a part of my early driving experience. But William must learn to navigate all of these.

My dad patiently taught me to drive on quiet residential streets. I remember bouncing off the curb on the right and then the curb on the left. The first time I was allowed to drive my friends in the family car on a rainy Friday night, I had a terrible scare when I almost turned left into oncoming traffic on a divided highway. I quickly reacted and steered into the correct lane, but I never forgot that night. I realized how I had endangered myself and my friends.

Teens have the highest crash risk of any age group, about four times higher than for older drivers.

In Ohio, 1173 lives were lost in crashes involving young novice drivers from 1995-2004.

Two of three people killed in crashes involving teen drivers are people other than the driver, according to AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. Crashes increase as the number of passengers in a teen's vehicle rise.

The good news: Changes to the Ohio Graduated Driver Licensing Law will save lives. The new provisions *extend the night-time driving* limitation to midnight - 6 AM for 16 year olds;

add a passenger limit – no more than one non-family member for 16 year olds; and

require children between 4 and 15 years of age to be restrained in either approved restraint systems or safety belts.

Dr. Sue Ferguson of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says, "Parents are the key to the success of Graduated Driver Licensing." Go to <http://www.publicsafety.ohio.gov/odps.asp> to learn more. See a Parent-Teen contract, answers to questions about the new Ohio law, some suggestions for driving practice and much more at <http://www.ohioteedriver.org/faq/index.htm>. We parents, teachers and grandparents are the key to keeping our teen drivers safe and secure!

We invite you to share this USEP-OHIO publication with other parents, students and professionals at home or work. You have permission to copy Tips as written, send on as email, or print for a newsletter or handout. Email usepohio@usepohio.com or call 1-800-262-4KIDS to add email addresses to our list, to give us feedback about how the information works for you, or for other topics, publications and programs.

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