



August 20, 2018

Dear Parents:

Car crashes remain the number one killer of teens, taking about 3,000 young lives each year. In 2017, in Virginia, 56 teens were killed in motor vehicle crashes. Even “good kids” can fall victim to unsafe driving behaviors that can lead to serious injury and death. As a parent you play a vital role in reducing the number of young lives that are taken each year in car crashes. Your teens need your guidance and involvement during the early driving years.

Included with this letter is a flyer with tips to help communicate with your teen, and lead them towards a safer driving experience. Also included is an information sheet about the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system. This three-stage licensing program is designed to implement full licensure in stages under controlled conditions. GDL gives beginning drivers the opportunity to become more experienced in lower risk conditions.

You also have a great opportunity today to discuss with your teen the importance of buckling up as their school is participating in Youth of Virginia Speak Out (YOVASO)’s 2018 *Save Your Tailgate, Buckle Up & Slow Down* campaign. This campaign is designed to influence all youth and teens to form a life-long buckle up habit by reminding them that seat belts are the most effective tool in preventing injuries and death in motor vehicle crashes.

This past July the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles released an article stating that the number of people ages 15 to 20 who died not wearing seat belts during motor vehicle crashes doubled from January 1 through June 30, 2018, compared to the same time period last year. At the time of the article, 18 unrestrained fatalities had been recorded so far this year, compared to nine from January to June 2017 and 10 in 2016.

Help us reinforce this important message by always wearing your seat belt. The campaign will also address the importance of driving the speed limit as over half of all teen fatal crashes in Virginia area caused by exceeding the speed limit. Please do your part to also obey posted speed limits and encourage your teen to do the same! You are an influential person in your teen’s life and what you say and do makes an impact.

For additional resources on young driver and youth traffic safety, please visit the YOVASO website at www.yovaso.org.

Best Wishes,

The YOVASO Staff

What You Should Do Before Handing Over the Keys

Talk to Your Teen

- ★ Lead by example. Your teens will mimic your driving behaviors.
- ★ Talk with your teen about safe and unsafe driving behaviors.
- ★ Discuss the importance of obeying teen driving laws. For laws, visit: <http://www.dmvnow.com/webdoc/pdf/dmv16.pdf>
- ★ Extend the period of supervised driving even after he/she receives a license.
- ★ Have your teen practice driving on a variety of roads and in different driving conditions to gain more experience.
- ★ Enforce the teen passenger restrictions and the teen curfew law.
- ★ Reduce nighttime driving for the first few months your teen has a license.
- ★ Be sure your teen is well rested before hitting the road.
- ★ Discuss what to do in potentially dangerous driving situations such as poor weather conditions, rough roads, heavy traffic and running off the road.
- ★ Ask your teen questions and be ready to listen.

Establish Trust and an Agreement

- ★ Talk to your teen about your expectations
- ★ Discuss safety issues and the rules you are setting
- ★ Explain the rules and consequences for breaking each rule
- ★ Create your own parent-teen driving contract or print off the template from our website at the link below:
www.yovaso.org/parent-information/

Enforce these “5 to Drive” Rules to Help Keep Your Teen Safe:

- 1.** No cell phone use or texting while driving
- 2.** No extra passengers (only 1 during first year of licensure)
- 3.** No speeding
- 4.** No alcohol and/or drugs
- 5.** No driving or riding without a seat belt

*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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YOVASO
YOUTH OF VIRGINIA SPEAK
OUT ABOUT TRAFFIC SAFETY

What You Need to Know About Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL)

The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) is a three-stage licensing systems that includes a learner or supervised practice driving phase, an intermediate stage that allows for unsupervised driving but includes restrictions that address risk, and a full licensure stage where all provisions are lifted.

Virginia's driving restrictions are not meant to penalize teen drivers, but to help them stay safe while they gain valuable driving experience. **Studies have found that the following restrictions work to reduce the number of car crashes among young drivers:**

Curfew Restrictions

If you are under age 18, Virginia law prohibits you from driving midnight to 4 A.M. except when driving:

- to or from a place of business where you are employed;
 - to or from an activity that is supervised by an adult and is sponsored by a school or by a civic, religious, or public organization;
 - with a licensed spouse age 18 or older, parent or other adult acting in loco parentis who is occupying the front passenger seat,
 - in case of an emergency, including responding to emergency calls as a volunteer firefighter or rescue squad personnel.
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Restrictions on the Number of Passengers

If you are under age 18, you may carry **only one passenger** under age 21, unless accompanied by a licensed parent, or other adult acting in place of a parent, in the front passenger seat. However, after you have held your license for one year, you may carry up to three passengers under age 21 in the following situations:

- Travel to and from a school-sponsored activity;
- A licensed driver 21 or older is in the front passenger seat; or
- In case of an emergency.

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

➤ **Violations of either the curfew or passenger restrictions can result in the suspension of your driver's license.**

Cellular Telephone/Wireless Telecommunications Device Restrictions

Virginia's cellular telephone law prohibits all cell phones while driving, regardless of whether such device is or is not hand-held.

You can **only** use a cell phone or any other telecommunications device for a driver emergency and the vehicle must be lawfully parked or stopped.

Seat Belt Use

Virginia's seat belt law requires anyone younger than 18 years of age who is occupying the front and/or rear seats of a vehicle to use safety belts. A driver transporting anyone younger than 18 must ensure that those passengers are properly restrained regardless of where they are seated.