



Dear Parents:

March 18, 2019

As our youth begin looking forward to spring and summer, it is important to remember that the warm weather months between May and August are the highest risk for young driver crashes and fatalities. Celebratory events such as prom, graduation, summer break, and beach week add even more risks during this critical period. In addition, our youth as passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists also face greater risks as the weather turns warm.

This month, your student's school or youth group is kicking off the statewide *Arrive Alive* campaign to encourage all youth to drive, walk, and bike safely during this period of increased risk. Students will be participating in fun and creative activities designed to influence them to make smart and responsible choices when in and around traffic.

As a parent, you also play a vital role in educating your youth about traffic safety and influencing them to make safe and responsible decisions as drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. We hope you will join with us during *Arrive Alive* by talking with your youth about risky behaviors and the consequences of their actions. By discussing the laws, setting and enforcing rules, and monitoring behavior, you can help your youth make good choices and resist negative peer pressure.

Included with this letter is a flyer with tips to help communicate with your young driver and lead them toward a safer driving experience. Also included is information about the Virginia Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Law and how it is designed to give beginning drivers the opportunity to become more experienced in lower risk conditions. Information is also included on talking with youth about passenger, bike, and pedestrian safety.

You are an important role model and influential person in your teen's life. You can help keep your teen safe this summer by reminding him/her to buckle up, slow down, put down the phone, limit teen passengers, and say no to alcohol and drugs.

Thank you for joining with Youth of Virginia Speak Out About Traffic Safety (YOVASO) and your child's school or youth group to help our students Arrive Alive this spring and summer and throughout the prom, graduation, and summer break season!

For additional resources on young driver and youth traffic safety, please visit the YOVASO website at [www.yovaso.org](http://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.
- ▶ Discuss your teen's responsibilities when driving a car or riding as a passenger.
- ▶ Review the teen driving laws and set consequences for breaking the laws. For laws, visit: <http://www.dmvnow.com/webdoc/pdf/dmv16.pdf>
- ▶ Extend the period of supervised driving to closely monitor skills/behaviors.
- ▶ Give your teen practice driving on unfamiliar roads and driving conditions.
- ▶ Coach your teen on what to do in potentially dangerous driving situations like poor weather conditions, rough roads, heavy traffic, and running off the road.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Ask your teen questions and be ready to listen.

## Establish Trust and an Agreement

Once you've had a conversation with your teen, create your own Parent-Teen Driving Contract detailing rules and consequences and have your teen sign it.

You can also print off a sample contract from our website at the link below:

[www.yovaso.org/parent-information/](http://www.yovaso.org/parent-information/)

## Family Rules: The 5 Keys to Safe Driving

1. No cell phone use or texting while driving
2. No extra passengers
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 Parents 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 GDL laws 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:

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## 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)

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## Cellular Telephone/Wireless Telecommunications Device Restrictions

Virginia's cellular telephone law prohibits the use of 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.

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## 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.

# Parent Talking Guide

## Pedestrian, Bike and Passenger Safety

*When talking to your middle and high school students about traffic safety this spring and summer, remind them to follow these important tips for Arriving Alive.*

### Pedestrian Safety

- Always cross the street at a designated crosswalk or intersection.
- Increase visibility at night by carrying a flashlight and wearing reflective clothing.
- Sidewalks are safest, but if one isn't available, walk on the shoulder facing traffic.
- Walk in pairs and always tell someone where you are going

### Bicycle Safety

- **Wear the Proper Gear** - Helmet, bright clothing, elbow and knee pads
- **Do a Safety Check** - Inspect tires, brakes and chains before each ride
- **Use Bike Paths** - Or stay on lightly traveled streets
- **Follow a Buddy System** - Always tell someone where you are going
- **Never let others pressure you into riding unsafely!**

### Biking Rules of the Road

- Cyclists must obey the same rules as drivers
- Travel in the same direction as traffic
- Signal when turning
- Stop at all stop signs
- Yield to pedestrians and cars

### Be a Safe Passenger

- **Buckle up** - Always wear your seat belt!
- **Avoid Driver Distractions** - Talk quietly and stay seated
- **Speak Up** - Always call a parent to come get you if you feel unsafe riding with any driver!

