



Parents and Teachers Keeping TEEN DRIVERS SAFE

By Violet Marrero, NJM Insurance Group

Pennsylvania is the birthplace of teen driver education. Amos Neyhart, a professor at Penn State University, taught the very first driver's ed course in the State College Area School District in 1934.

Driver education continues to evolve, but one guiding principle remains steady – when school districts partner with parents to teach safe driving, it reduces the chances of a car crash and helps save lives.

Research conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) found that teens' crash risk is as much as 50% lower when their parents set rules, offer support and monitor their driving. The teacher-parent tandem has a powerful impact on teen driver safety.

NJM Insurance Group is committed to educating students and promoting adult partnerships through its [Teen Driver Safety Programs](#). The programs are offered for **FREE** to schools and are now available online.

Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) – Parent and Teacher Roles

Parents play a pivotal role in enforcing safe driving and the Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) laws. The GDL laws, especially the curfew and passenger restrictions, are the most effective tools for reducing teen traffic fatalities. By ensuring their young drivers complete the full 65 hours of

required practice driving, and monitoring their access to the car, parents can help their teens develop safe driving skills for life.

Parents can learn effective ways to increase their involvement during the learning process by participating in [NJM's Share the Keys](#) program.

In an effective parent-teacher partnership, parents model safe driving habits and give their teens plenty of opportunities to practice driving, while teachers offer support and subject matter expertise. During each phase of licensure, teachers have the opportunity to provide guidance to parents:

Pre-permit Phase: Teens mimic their parents' behaviors. Parents are the most powerful influencers of their young driver. By acting as positive role models by obeying the posted speed limits and avoiding distracted driving, they can significantly reduce their teen driver's crash risk.

Permit Phase: Through the SAFE model, families can work practice into their family's daily schedule:

- **Shopping Trips** teach teens how to navigate the challenges of commercial districts, including parallel parking and pedestrian traffic within parking lots.
- **Activities** (after-school and extracurricular) give teens the chance to practice safe habits and learn how to travel alternative routes.

- **Family Outings** provide experience with additional passengers and on new roadways, including toll roads and highways.
- **Errands** give teens more time behind the wheel, when parents can gauge their progress and provide constructive feedback.

It is also important for teens to practice in difficult situations, such as driving at night and in inclement weather, merging and changing lanes, recognizing different speed zones, and maintaining a safe following distance.

Junior License Phase: After a teen driver has received a Junior license, it's important to support the GDL restrictions and reinforce safe driving habits by setting clear, consistent expectations with rules, consequences and rewards. Teenagers who share a vehicle with their parents are less likely to violate the Graduated Licensing Laws and be involved in a crash, compared with teens who have primary access.

Through every stage of licensing, teachers reinforce the rules of the road. They can provide expert insight into driving hazards and provide guidance on how to handle them.

Teen Driver Safety Campaigns

School-wide driver safety campaigns can spread the message to all students. NJM's Teen Driver Safety Programs are traditionally taught in-person (at no cost to the school) and are now also available online. The award-winning programs, which include Share the Keys, "[What Do You Consider Lethal?](#)" and the Just Drive campaign, have reached more than 150,000 parents and students in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

These are some risks schools can prioritize in their campaigns:

- Distracted driving is increasing year over year. Draw students' attention to the three types of distraction: cognitive, manual and visual. Explain that, while phones are one major cause of distraction, vehicle technology, passengers and stress can also draw drivers' attention away from the road. Schools can also support awareness by participating in NJM's Just Drive PSA competition. To learn more, visit justdrive.njm.com.
- Speeding has been an issue in many areas as cars have returned to the roads. A recent study by the Governor Highway Safety Association reported from 2015-19, the proportion of fatal crashes caused by speeding was higher for teenage drivers (43%) than other age groups (30%). During that same period, Pennsylvania ranked

third in states with the highest number of speed-related teen deaths with 234.

- School zones present drivers with challenges uncommon to other areas of town. For example, the speed limit may change on a road when school is in session. Pedestrian traffic may be higher or more unpredictable when many children and teenagers are present. Additionally, there are several laws relating to safe driving around school buses.

Effective driver education starts in the home and is reinforced through constant parental involvement. Schools that partner with parents can improve teen driver outcomes and reinforce safe habits from the classroom to the road.

About Violet Marrero

Violet Marrero is the Consumer Safety Director at NJM Insurance Group, where she manages NJM's Teen Driver Safety Programs. The award-winning programs, which include Share the Keys, "What Do You Consider Lethal?" and the Just Drive campaign, have reached more than 150,000 parents and students in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In 2016, the National Safety Council honored the program with its Teen Driver Safety Leadership Award. This coveted honor recognizes organizations that work to improve teen driver safety and save lives through dedicated community outreach and innovative educational programming.