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Research *in* Action

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Teens Driving Friends – A Dangerous Distraction



A pair of studies conducted by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and funded by State Farm® identify factors that may lead teens to drive with multiple peer passengers and, then, how those passengers may affect their driver's behavior just before a serious crash. The studies, which were published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, pave the way for future research to examine how interactions between teen drivers and their peer passengers may specifically be associated with crashes.

According to the first study that surveyed 198 teens, those who view themselves as “thrill-seekers,” perceive their parents as not setting rules or monitoring their whereabouts, and have a weak perception of driving risks are more likely to drive multiple friends around, a known crash risk.

The second study, which analyzed a nationally-representative sample of 677 teen drivers involved in serious crashes, found both males and females behind the wheel with passengers were more likely to be distracted just before a crash as compared to teens who crashed while driving alone. Among the teens who said they were distracted by something inside the vehicle before they crashed, 71 percent of males and 47 percent of females said they were distracted by the actions or movements of their passengers.

The research also revealed that male teens with friends in the car were almost six times more likely to perform an illegal maneuver, such as running a red light, and twice more likely to act aggressively, such as tailgating, speeding, or weaving, in the moments before their crash than those driving alone. Female teen drivers, however, rarely drove aggressively prior to crashing regardless of whether peer passengers were in the vehicle.

“Together, these two studies reinforce the need for parents to stay involved in their teens' driving beyond the learner permit phase,” says Allison E. Curry, PhD, MPH, lead author of one of the studies and the director of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at CHOP. “Peer passengers can be a dangerous distraction for teen drivers. Parents should talk to their teens about how friends can intentionally and unintentionally distract their driver and how their teens can reduce that risk, such as setting limits on the number of friends in the car. These limits would be easier for parents to enforce if they are backed up by their state's Graduate Driver Licensing law.”

[Learn what parents can do to keep their teens safe.](#)

[Read the first study abstract.](#)

[Read the second study abstract.](#)



CHOP Relaunches Child Passenger Safety Website



Car Seat Safety for Kids (www.chop.edu/carseat) kicked off in early January as a one-stop resource for parents, CPS technicians, and educators. As an expanded redesign of CHOP's previous *Keeping Kids Safe During Crashes* site, *Car Seat Safety for Kids* brings together CHOP's research expertise and community-based outreach experience to provide the latest in child passenger safety. The site's new "Car Seat Safety By Age" videos reflect the most current recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Car Seat Safety for Kids also features new sections for expectant parents, parents of premature infants or children with special medical conditions, and detailed information on locating car seat checks nationally and in the greater Philadelphia area. The site also offers an extensive library of CHOP's free, downloadable fact sheets, images, illustrations, and reports.

A joint effort of the [Center for Injury Research and Prevention](#) and the [Kohl's Injury Prevention Program](#) at CHOP, *Car Seat Safety for Kids* was made possible with the generous support of Global Automakers and Kohl's.

Please visit and share [Car Seat Safety for Kids](#) often to help keep kids safe in cars. A good place to begin is to view the Car Seat Safety By Age videos, available [here](#).

Want to link to this site? Find out how [here](#).



More Teens Take Driver Ed in States That Require It



A new CHOP study released this week in *Pediatrics* reveals disparities in formal driver education (DE) participation. Although the researchers found that 79 percent of public high school students with driver licenses reported participating in formal DE, several subgroups of teens had substantially lower levels of DE before licensure. These disparities were mitigated in states where DE is mandated by state law.

In states where DE is not mandated, more than one-third of all students and 71 percent of Hispanic teens received no formal DE, and more than half had no formal behind-the-wheel training. Students who lived in the Midwest, were black, and had lower academic achievements also reported much lower participation levels in states where DE was not required. According to the study funded by State Farm®, three out of four students participated in DE where their state mandated it, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, academic performance, and urbanicity.

“We hope these findings spark a dialogue among policymakers and policy stakeholders to make improvements to state driver education and training programs and, then, to ensure optimal access for all teens,” says Allison E. Curry, PhD, MPH, lead author of the study and the director of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at CHOP. “Our study shows that teens are more likely to receive formal behind-the-wheel training if their state requires it. Regardless of what states require, parents should ensure that learners receive at least 50 hours of behind-the-wheel practice in varied environments and conditions before going for the on-the-road test.”

Study authors recommend that policymakers consider using the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's *Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards*, which were recently developed by a panel of experts in traffic safety, as a starting point or framework for their state's novice teen driver education and training program.

[Learn how to support driver education mandates in your state.](#)
[Read the abstract.](#)



Parents Integral to Learning to Drive Process



New research conducted by the Center's Young Driver Research team and published in the *Journal of Safety Research* underscores the integral role parents play in the learning-to-drive process. The researchers surveyed 945 parents of recently licensed teens from across the country and found that teens were more likely to have received at least 50 hours of adult-supervised driving practice when two parents were involved in their teen's driving education and if they lived in a state where Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law mandated this level of practice driving.

The research, which was funded by State Farm®, also found that 61 percent of parents practiced 50 or more hours with their drivers. "Although the majority of parents surveyed found making time for practice driving challenging, they still chose to do it," says Lela Jacobsohn, PhD, lead author of the study and a member of the Young Driver Research team at CHOP. "A growing body of research shows that teens need to receive at least 50 hours of supervised driving practice under a wide variety of conditions, as well as careful monitoring after obtaining full licensure. Therefore, parents play a critical role in ensuring their teens become and remain safe drivers."

This study provides further support for a state's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws to include requirements for 50 or more adult-supervised driving hours before teens can drive on their own.

[Learn how to advocate for stronger GDL laws in your state.](#)

[Read more about parents supervising their teens' driving.](#)

[Read the study abstract.](#)

Recent Center Publications

Curry AE, García-España JF, Winston FK, Durbin DR. [Variation in Teen Driver Education by State Requirements and Sociodemographics](#). *Pediatrics*. February 13, 2012.

Curry AE, Mirman JH, Kallan MJ, Durbin DR. [Peer Passengers: How Do They Affect Teen Crashes?](#) *Journal of Adolescent Health*. January 24, 2012.

Jacobsohn LJ, García-España JF, Durbin DR, Erkoboni D, Winston FK. [Adult-supervised Practice Driving for Adolescent Learners: The Current State and Directions for Interventions](#). *Journal of Safety Research*. December 29, 2011.

Mirman JH, Albert D, Jacobsohn LS, Winston FK. [Factors Associated with Adolescents' Propensity to Drive with Multiple Passengers and to Engage in Risky Driving Behaviors](#). *Journal of Adolescent Health*. January 24, 2012.

Seacrist T, Saffioti J, Balasubramanian S, Kadlowec J, Sterner R, García-España JF, Arbogast KB, Maltese MR. [Passive Cervical Spine Flexion: The Effect of Age and Gender](#). *Clinical Biomechanics*. December 5, 2011 (online).

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Recent Center Presentations

Arbogast K. [Biomechanical Differences Between Children and Adults](#). University of Virginia Department of Emergency Medicine. Charlottesville, VA. January 4, 2012.

Arbogast K. [Motor Vehicle Crashes: Reducing the Morbidity and Mortality Burden for Children](#). University of Virginia Department of Emergency Medicine. Charlottesville, VA. January 4, 2012.

Arbogast K. [Setting the Future Agenda for Child Occupant Protection](#). Protection of Children in Cars 9th International Conference. Munich, Germany. December 1, 2011.

Curry AE, Durbin DR. [Evaluation of New Jersey's Graduated Driver Licensing Decal Provision](#) (Poster Presentation). Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Public Health Law Research Conference. New Orleans, LA. January 19, 2011.

Durbin DR, Curry AE, Zonfrillo MR, Myers R, Arbogast KB. [Collecting Child-specific Supplemental Crash Data: The NCOSS Project](#). Society of Automotive Engineers Government/Industry Meeting. Washington, DC. January 26, 2012.

Kassam-Adams N. [Development of Web-based Tools for Parents, Children, and Health Care Providers](#). Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies, University of Oslo, Norway. January 2012.

Kassam-Adams N. [Secondary Prevention After Acute Medical Trauma in Children](#). Conference on Pediatric Trauma. Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies, University of Oslo, Norway. January 2012.

Mathews E. [Kinematics of Children and Adults in Lateral Low Speed Loading](#). Society of Automotive Engineers Government/Industry Meeting. Washington, DC. January 25, 2012.

Winston FK. [Supplemental Funding: How to Make Your Funding Opportunities Pay Off: Collaborative Opportunity for Research Between IUCRCs \(CORBI\)](#). National Science Foundation IUCRC Annual Meeting. Arlington, VA. January 11, 2012.