



Dana Mortensen
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
(267) 426-6092
mortensen@email.chop.edu

Xochitl Yañez
State Farm Insurance Companies
(202) 263-4406
xochitl.yanez.swtw@statefarm.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Teen drivers' perceived risks point to gaps in education strategies *Thousands of teens reveal their perceptions, experience in scientific survey*

PHILADELPHIA, May 5 — Perception does not equal reality with teen drivers according to a study released today by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and State Farm Insurance® in the journal *Pediatrics*. Using the National Young Driver Survey, researchers studied more than 5,000 9th through 11th graders from across the country to examine their attitudes about 25 risky driving situations. Teens identified the factors they perceived as most important in a safe driving situation, and then estimated how often they see their peers exhibit these behaviors. Their answers revealed important gaps in teens' understanding of factors that can lead to crashes.

“Teens revealed that our current messages about inexperience and distractions are missing the mark, and that different populations of teens face different risks when it comes to alcohol and speeding,” explains Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MEd, an adolescent medicine physician and lead author of the study. “It’s up to parents, educators and policymakers to make sure teens receive the right messages to keep them safe, and this research tells us they need to hear very specific and actionable messages.”

Armed with teens' input, the researchers created a list of prioritized areas for parents and educators to increase their efforts. These areas include delivering more specific messages about inexperience and distractions, along with reinforcing the hazards of speeding and alcohol use for certain groups of teens.

“This survey reinforces that teens need sufficient time to gain experience and build critical skills behind the wheel. Graduated Driver Licensing laws [GDL] are one measure proven to address inexperience and distractions,” said Laurette Stiles, vice president of strategic resources at State Farm. “State Farm continues to be a strong supporter of GDL laws; and together with CHOP we are working to address a variety of teen driver issues including education.”

Key insights from the survey include:

Teens don't recognize themselves as inexperienced drivers.

Sixty percent of teens believe inexperience heavily influences safety, but only 15 percent consider their peers to be inexperienced. This contradiction is quite dangerous, considering this sample of teens is almost exclusively comprised of inexperienced, novice drivers. Focus group data from CHOP suggest teens judge experience based on driver licensure, rather than miles driven or exposure to difficult driving circumstances.

Teens identify some distractions as more dangerous than others.

Although only one-quarter of respondents correctly view cell phone use while driving as very dangerous, the overwhelming majority of teens (79%) recognize text messaging as a very dangerous behavior while driving. Additionally, most teens recognize that when cell phones trigger emotions, they pose a greater danger in the car.

Similarly, only 10 percent of teens correctly view passengers as potentially hazardous; however, many more acknowledge that certain passenger behaviors increase risk, such as “acting wild” (65%) or encouraging the driver to speed (62%).

“Teens do not see their world in black and white; they see it in Technicolor,” says Dr. Ginsburg. “Educational messages that address these many gradations of risk within distractions may resonate better with teens. We need to reinforce teens’ accurate perceptions of risk and correct any misperceptions.”

Certain teen populations are receiving insufficient education about risks, such as speeding and drinking and driving.

The survey also showed that ethnic disparities exist with regard to perception of and exposure to certain risks. However the researchers note that these findings were not as strong as those concerning inexperience and distractions. Caucasian teens are more likely than Hispanic or African American teens to see their peers racing or speeding and also do not rank these behaviors to be as risky.

On average, all teens reported rarely seeing their peers drink and drive. However, African American and Hispanic teens viewed drinking alcohol while driving as less risky than did Caucasian teens. Moreover, African American teens were somewhat more likely to report seeing peers drink and drive than were Caucasian teens.

“It’s important to acknowledge that specific sub-populations of teens are not receiving or are rejecting the current messages about these risky driving behaviors,” explains Flaura Winston, MD, PhD, co-scientific director of CHOP’s Center for Injury Research and Prevention, and a co-author on the study. “Educators and advocates need to change their strategies to more effectively engage different populations of teens with the messages that they need to hear.”

The researchers say this survey is the first step in exploring how to make adults who care about the safety of teenagers – educators, clinicians, parents, and others – more effective in conveying safety messages that resonate with all teens and meet their needs.

For more information, visit www.chop.edu/youngdrivers. To download an audio news release, visit <http://www.mediaseed.tv/Story.aspx?story=35050>.

About the Young Driver Research Initiative

Motor vehicle crashes remain the No. 1 cause of death among teens in the United States. Teen drivers (ages 16 to 19) die at four times the rate of adult drivers (ages 25 to 69). To reduce injury and death from young driver-related crashes through scientific research and outreach, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm Insurance Companies® have formed an alliance called the Young Driver Research Initiative (YDRI). This academic-industry alliance also created Partners for Child Passenger Safety, the world’s largest study of children in crashes.

About The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia was founded in 1855 as the nation's first pediatric hospital. Through its long-standing commitment to providing exceptional patient care, training new generations of pediatric health care professionals and pioneering major research initiatives, Children's Hospital has fostered many discoveries that have benefited children worldwide. Its pediatric research program is among the largest in the country, ranking third in National Institutes of Health funding. In addition, its unique family-centered care and public service programs have brought the 430-bed hospital recognition as a leading advocate for children and adolescents. For more information, visit www.chop.edu.

About State Farm

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