Safe Driving Awareness Programs for High School Students

10 Points

School

The goal of the Safe Driving Awareness Programs for High School Students action is to enhance existing drivers' education programs and creatively address "modern" driving issues such as texting and distracted driving. In order to earn points for this action, the high school must implement at least two initiatives addressing teen driving safety beyond the standard Drivers' Education curriculum. At least one of the initiatives must be an ongoing program. In order to choose the most effective programs for a particular school, it is recommend that the selection process include school staff, community leaders, police, students and parents. The safe driving initiatives must be completed within 12 months of the certification application deadline in order to be eligible for points.

Why is it Important?

Every ten minutes a teen crashes a car in New Jersey. With the proper training and education, many teen-driver accidents can be prevented. In order to receive a learner's permit, new drivers in New Jersey are currently required to complete thirty-six hours of instruction: thirty in the classroom and six behind the wheel. A recent survey of driver education teachers by the New Jersey Safe Teen Driving Coalition found that while educators are discussing "modern-day" safe driving topics such as texting while driving, distracted driving, and New Jersey's Graduated Driver Licensing, there has been no lasting change to the curricula (Fischer, 2014). This may lead to gaps in students' knowledge about crash risks and the danger involved in driving while distracted. Given that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people in New Jersey between the ages of 16 and 20, expanding current programs or integrating new initiatives addressing distracted driving and other risk factors relevant to novice drivers may reduce crashes and save lives (Berg, 2006; George Institute, 2010).

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study found that the number of teen drivers using cell phones totaled more than all other age groups combined and was a significant distraction from safely operating the vehicle. Distractions while driving have implications for crash risk. Sixteen percent of all drivers age 20 and under involved in fatal crashes were distracted. Safe Kids Worldwide found that the odds of a crash or near-crash in newly-licensed teen drivers were more than eight times greater when dialing a cell phone.

New York and Connecticut have launched distracted driving enforcement programs, which have been met with huge success. In Syracuse, New York, because of high-visibility enforcement, both handheld cell phone use and texting behind the wheel have declined by one-third since implementing the program. In Hartford, Connecticut, where researchers initially identified drivers talking on their cell phones as a significant concern, the NHTSA reported that handheld phone use and texting dropped off sharply following the campaign: cell phone use fell by 57%, texting by 72%. In 2014, New Jersey Attorney General, John J. Hoffman reported, with representative crash statistics, that distracted driving has surged. With the help of the NHTSA, New Jersey implemented the "U Drive. U Text. U Pay." campaign that increased checkpoints and patrols for distracted drivers. Hoffman reports that halfway through the campaign, New Jersey police departments had already issued 3,000 summonses. The high visibility of law enforcement in this program alerts and lets drivers know how serious they are about stopping this dangerous behavior. These programs have proven effective for the average driver; however, educating novice drivers may instill sensible driving decisions from early on, further preventing future crashes.

Who Should Lead and Be Involved with this Action?
This action could be led by the school's Health and Wellness Committee and/or a related group of people more specifically focused on the subject. It is important to include teachers, driver's education staff, students, parents, and community representatives, including law enforcement, in the evaluation and selection of potential programs. A community-centric group ensures that the people most familiar with the issues are the ones deciding which program is most relevant and fitting for their particular school.

**Timeframe**

The length of time needed for implementation varies depending on the initiative. Some initiatives, such as the Share the Keys Program and the New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company's Teen Safe Driving Program can be readily implemented. Other initiatives, like the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey's Champion School's Program, involve more planning and programming at the school level.

**Project Costs and Resource Needs**

Depending on the program selected and the resources needed, the cost of this action will vary, but typically costs are low. Businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations offer an array of free programs and/or grants specifically for schools. For example, programs like New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company's Teen Safe Driving Program are free.

**What to do, and how to do it ("How to")**

*This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A school does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.*

In order to complete this action it is recommended that schools follow the steps outlined below:

1. **Assemble a Project Team:** It is recommended that a committee comprised of representatives from the greater school community be formed to discuss the topic of teen driving and ways the schools can be a catalyst for raising student safety consciousness. Key stakeholders include school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and local police. In addition, representatives from the municipal health department, local healthcare system, or businesses might be interested in getting involved. Students may be able to provide experiential evidence as to why teens may drive while distracted, as well as comment on particular challenges student drivers at the school may face. School staff and parents may be useful in identifying what programs can easily be carried from the classroom to the home, so that the reach of the program is as wide as possible. Police and other professionals can provide insights into the scope of the problems and resources available to the school to address the issue.

2. **Implement Initiatives:** The action requires the implementation of two initiatives that include at least one ongoing effort. An ongoing effort is defined as something that is sustained throughout the school year (not a one-time event), and involves multiple audiences (i.e. parents and students) and/or activities. In choosing the initiatives, it is important to remember that context is key. Schools must consider both their location and issues that may be specific to their student body. Location can be important in that some of the issues that novice drivers face may be different for urban, suburban, and rural communities. This is not to say that the initiatives are more useful for one area than another, but some may be more targeted in respect to the type of community in which the school is located. A list of potential safe driving initiatives is provided in the Resources section of this document. The list is not exhaustive and there could be other alternatives that are available, as well as locally developed programs that meet the goal of this action.

Some examples of the programs that qualify under this action include:

**New Jersey Manufacturer's Teen Driver Safety Program**

New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company's Teen Driver Safety Program is designed for drivers who will be obtaining or have just received their driving permit. Statistically, the first few years of driving are the most dangerous. New Jersey Manufacturer's Teen Driver Safety Officer, a retired New Jersey State Trooper with more than 25 years of experience on the state's roadways, has been giving presentations throughout New Jersey to help educate teens on safe driving habits and things to avoid when behind the wheel. The multimedia presentations are tailored to the needs of each
high school and can run anywhere from 20 to 90 minutes. Topics include driving distractions such as texting and talking, the dangers of aggressive and fatigued driving, and the effects of operating a vehicle while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Since the program's inception in 2013, New Jersey Manufacturers has given more than 250 presentations, reaching a total audience of nearly 15,000 young drivers. There is no cost to participate in this program. The program is fully funded by New Jersey Manufacturers in a continued effort to keep the Garden State's roadways safe for all who travel on them.

**Share the Keys**

Share the Keys is an orientation program for parents and teens. It is designed to reduce teen driver crashes by increasing parental involvement. It was created by Kean University in partnership with the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety and the New Jersey State Police.

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws are recognized as the single most effective tool for reducing teen driver crashes, injuries, and deaths. While New Jersey's GDL is considered one of the most progressive and stringent in the United States, it must be clearly understood and supported by parents to save lives. To that end, ensuring that parents and teens fully understand the risks and responsibilities associated with driving is essential to teen driver safety. The program is approximately 60-90 minutes in length, and is presented by trained facilitators. It can be linked to other events such as parking permit requirements, classroom driver education orientations, and back-to-school nights. The orientation is designed for parents and their teens in the pre-permit/permit stage of licensure and includes a resource guide full of materials that support parental involvement and safe driving behaviors. Facilitator training workshops are conducted throughout the state and include a comprehensive review of relevant research materials and the unique approach taken to construct the orientation.

**The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey's "U GOT BRAINS?" Champion Schools Program**

This program provides an opportunity for students and staff of New Jersey high schools to develop campaigns to address teen driving safety. Each school develops its own project based on a topic pertaining to teen driving safety. Schools can utilize social media, videos, blogs, or other means to help spread their message. This program is open to all NJ high schools. Online applications are accepted from September until November: chosen schools are notified by mid-December and each Champion School is awarded a cash stipend to help implement its campaign.

After a school has been chosen, a staff member from the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey—who will become that school's technical support person—will notify the school. Even though schools are not notified until mid-December, any teen safety programs or projects that a school works on during the school year can count towards the campaign. Some schools host presentations or events in the beginning of the school year, before they know whether they are selected: such events would need to be added when submitting a final report. All schools should begin work on their project by January at the latest. In the past, the two grand-prize winning schools received a driving simulator donated by New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company.

It is important to extend the reach of the programs selected by publicizing them inside and outside the school community. For example, inform parents about programs implemented in school; invite the local press to sit in on a special program; feature events on the school website; or enlist students to initiate a social media campaign. The more teen driving safety is talked about, the safer the roads will be for everyone.

**What to submit to earn points for this action**

In order to earn points for this action, a high school must have implemented at least two initiatives addressing teen driving safety beyond the standard curriculum within 12 months of the certification application submission date. At least one of the initiatives must be an ongoing program. Please submit the following documentation as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met.

1. **Description of Implementation.** In the text box provided on the submission page for this action, provide a brief summary of the initiatives implemented (about 300 words or less). Include dates, number of participants, and perceived impact on the students, the school, and the school community.

2. **Documentation of Initiatives.** Provide evidence that two separate but complementary initiatives were implemented. At least one of the initiatives must be an ongoing effort, defined as something that is either sustained throughout the
school year (not a one-time event) and involves multiple audiences (i.e. parents and students) and/or activities, or a program that is continued from year to year. Documentation should identify what event/activity took place, the audience, and where and when initiative occurred. For example, documentation may consist of news articles, promotional materials, copies of presentations, certificates of participation, pictures from an event, related correspondence, etc. The events/activities must have occurred within 12 months of the certification application submission date in order to be eligible for points.

Approved actions will be set to expire on August 31 of the year the certification application was submitted. To reapply for this action, documentation must be updated to verify that the programs are ongoing in the current school year.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

There is a limit of six uploaded documents per action and individual files must not exceed 20 MB. It is recommended that related documentation be combined into a single PDF if possible and excerpts of relevant information from large documents be provided.

All action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submissions should not include any information or documents that are not intended for public viewing.

Spotlight: What New Jersey Schools are Doing

Lenape Regional High School District (Burlington County)

Lenape Regional HS District (a four-time participant and a three-time grand-prize winner of the Champion Schools program) created their “Heads Up, Eyes Forward” (HUEF) campaign in 2011. The mission of the campaign is to spread the message of safe driving and the dangers of being distracted while behind the wheel. Along with social media, educational service announcements and posters were created in order to spread the word. The announcements were posted on the "Heads Up, Eyes Forward" YouTube channel, Lenape District Television, in Lenape District Driver's Education classes, and on the district's website. Posters with QR codes were developed and distributed to all schools so staff and students could scan them with their smartphones. The YouTube page featured videos created for the campaign, including PSAs, news packages, and a music video, “Drivin' Like You Care.”

The students visited a local elementary school to help the second graders create safe driving gifts, including a HUEF car magnet, to remind their parents to always drive safely. HUEF car magnets were also distributed at a district-wide safe driving event. The event featured a Share the Keys presentation and a presentation by safe driving advocate Jacey Good. Students who displayed the HUEF magnets on their vehicles were entered into a drawing and the winner received a preferred parking spot for a month. HUEF also partnered with a Lenape District senior who developed a “Stay Alive, Just Drive!” campaign, after she was hit head-on during a behind-the-wheel driving lesson in 2012. Due to her serious injuries, she was airlifted to Cooper University Hospital where she spent 11 days in the Trauma ICU with major internal injuries requiring life-saving surgery.

The HUEF team developed a documentary detailing the events leading up to, and following, the accident. HUEF worked with New Jersey Department of Transportation to display its message on the state’s digital highway signs in April, during Distracted Driving Awareness month. For more information on Lenape's campaign and to view the posters and videos, visit http://www.lrhsd.org/HeadsUp.

Wayne Hills High School (Passaic County)

In 2013, New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company instituted a Teen Driver Safety Program for New Jersey high schools in honor of its 100th anniversary and its continuing commitment to safety on the road. Wayne High School is just one of many high schools that have welcomed the program, which includes safety officer Carsten Boethig's use of compelling videos, teen driving statistics, and real-life examples to drive home the point of safety. Distracted driving topics such as texting, alcohol and drug use, and outside-the-vehicle distractions are addressed. The students themselves report shock at some of the stories but ultimately a changed mind when it comes to texting, wearing a seatbelt, specific New Jersey driving laws, and general driver safety.

http://njasa.net/Page/1109
http://www.njm.com/Teen-Driver-Safety/
Westfield High School (Union County)
In February of 2014, Westfield High School brought in a speaker for the Share the Keys program to address distracted driving, crash statistics, and the strategies for change. The program was presented to the students and parents of Westfield, as the initiative itself is essentially a contract between parents and student drivers to extend their supervised training and reduce the risk of crashing. The acclaimed program expands on topics covered in driver education classes and looks in depth at New Jersey GDL and how respecting those limits can save lives. It requires the attendance of one presentation and extensive collaboration between students and parents, but administrative involvement is limited. More information can be found at http://patch.com/new-jersey/westfield/westfield-high-school-presents-share-keys-presentation-0 and http://www.nj.gov/oag/hts/downloads/STK_Resource_Guide.pdf.

Resources

Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey, U Got Brains Champion Schools Program?
http://ugotbrains.com/champion-schools

EndDD: End Distracted Driving
http://enddd.org/about-enddd/

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.distraction.gov

National Safety Council's Safety on the Road
http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Pages/safety_on_the_road.aspx

New Jersey Department of Highway Traffic Safety
http://www.nj.gov/oag/hts/index.html

New Jersey Teen Driving
http://www.njteendriving.com/

New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition
http://www.teensafedriving.org/nj

New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company’s Teen Driver Safety Program
http://www.njm.com/Teen-Driver-Safety/

Share The Keys Program

The Children’s Hospital Of Philadelphia, Center for Injury Research and Prevention
http://injury.research.chop.edu/

The Governor’s Teen Driver Study Commission, 2010
http://www.nj.gov/lps/hts/teen-driver-study.html

References


The George Institute, 2010.
http://www.youngdriverfactbase.com/media/young-drivers-have-40-reduced-risk-of-crash-due-to-school-driver-education-program/