

CDOT Teen Campaign :: GDL

Messaging Platform + FAQ

MESSAGE PLATFORM

KEY MESSAGE PURPOSE AND USE

- Provide foundational language for use in earned media communications
- Resource for all internal stakeholders
- Approved language allows for rapid response and consistency in brand message

OVERARCHING MESSAGE

The Colorado Department of Transportation has instituted their annual teen driving safety campaign for 2021 focusing on increasing awareness of Colorado's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program to encourage adherence of GDL restrictions and ultimately promote safe driving among teens.

SUB MESSAGES

The Case for Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL):

- GDL laws are a set of laws that states have adopted to minimize risk and reduce fatalities among young drivers and their passengers by providing young drivers with an opportunity to safely gain driving experience before "graduating" to obtaining full driving privileges.
- In addition to being the responsibility of a young driver or a parent, GDL laws are a community commitment. When the networks that support young drivers - doctors, teachers, parents, and law enforcement - work together, young drivers receive GDL messaging, information and resources from multiple places within their community and feel supported as they learn to drive.
- GDL laws keep everyone safe - not just young drivers.
 - GDL offers young drivers the opportunity to gain valuable and needed on-road experience before driving under more challenging conditions.
 - By restricting the number of passengers, banning cell phone use and setting curfew, GDL limits danger and potential risks young drivers face while learning to drive safely, making our roads safer for them and others.
- GDL is a proven intervention for effectively reducing young driver related crashes and roadway fatalities in the U.S.
 - Research shows that GDL systems are associated with reduced injuries and fatal crashes among 16-year-olds.
- GDL laws have helped reduce fatalities among young drivers and passengers in Colorado since the laws were strengthened in 2005.
 - Since the passage of GDL laws, overall fatal crashes declined significantly for young drivers ages 16 -17.

Colorado GDL: Mandatory Seat Belts

By law, ALL teen drivers and passengers must wear seat belts (no sharing!).

Why this matters:



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Tragically, seat belt use is lowest among teen drivers. In fact, the majority of teenagers involved in fatal crashes are unbuckled. In 2019, 45% of teen drivers who died were unbuckled. Even more troubling, when the teen driver involved in the fatal crash was unbuckled, nine out of 10 of the passengers who died were also unbuckled. (NHTSA)

Colorado GDL: Cell Phones and Texting Banned

Teens under age 18 are prohibited from using a cell phone while driving. Teens can be fined and may risk losing their license. Exceptions include emergency calls to the police or fire department.

Why this matters:

Teens' inexperience behind the wheel makes them more susceptible to distraction behind the wheel. One in three teens who text say they have done so while driving. Research has found that dialing a phone number while driving increases your teen's risk of crashing by six times, and texting while driving increases the risk by 23 times. (NHTSA)

Colorado GDL: Passenger Restrictions

Teens with a permit:

- Teens with a permit must be accompanied by a driving instructor, parent, legal guardian or a licensed adult 21+ years of age (authorized by parent/guardian) in the front seat, buckled up.

Teens with a license:

- For the first six months, no passengers under 21, unless a parent or other licensed adult driver over 21 is in the vehicle.
- For the next six months, one passenger under age 21.
- Medical emergencies are exceptions.
- At any time, no more than one passenger is allowed in the front seat.

Why this matters:

In a study analyzed by NHTSA, teen drivers were two-and-a-half times more likely to engage in one or more potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage peer, compared to when driving alone. The risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of teenagers in the car.

Importance of Parent Involvement (Adapted from The Driver's Seat):

CDOT is committed to keeping teens safe, and working toward reducing crashes and fatalities.

- The more parents know about the [licensing process](#) and [teen driving laws](#) in Colorado, and the more they communicate about the responsibilities that come with driving to their teen drivers, the better prepared everyone will be.
- Getting a driver's license comes with a lot of responsibility. Teens can find out how they can [get – and keep – their license](#), and learn about the [laws for teen drivers in Colorado](#).
- Teens who say their parents set rules and pay attention to their activities in a helpful, supportive way are half as likely to crash.
- Youth who feel connected to and have trusted relationships with adults, such as a parent or caregiver, coach or teacher, are more likely to succeed in school and work, be happier overall, and make healthier choices leading into adulthood - including making safe driving choices for themselves.
- Parents can support their future teen driver by understanding the options available when it comes to Driver's Ed and encouraging their teen to get as much training as possible.



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- A Teen/Parent Driving Contract allows parents and teens to work together to establish driving rules and consequences. Contracts cover a range of driving safety issues, such as passenger restrictions, seat belts, traffic laws, and more. Parents can download a [sample driving contract](#).

Key Stats (Unless noted, source is: [Colorado Department of Transportation 2021 Problem Identification Statewide Report](#))

- 2015-2019: The number of young drivers aged 15-20 years old who died in Colorado increased 13%.
- 2019: More than twice as many young males died while driving than young females.
- 2019: The majority of young drivers in a fatal crash had an intermediate driver's license (restrictions include nighttime driving and a limit on the number of passengers)
- 2019: The top contributing factors associated with injury and fatal crashes among young drivers, ages 15 to 20 were inexperience followed by being distracted.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 18-year-olds in the U.S. (NHTSA)

FAQs

Campaign Fundamentals

Who is the target audience?

This is a statewide campaign targeting Colorado teens, ages 15 - 18 who already have their driver's license. Parents and caregivers of teens that have yet to receive their license are a secondary campaign target.

How is this campaign funded?

This campaign is federally funded through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The NHTSA is an agency of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government, part of the Department of Transportation, whose mission is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes, through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement.

Where is the research for the campaign based?

Much of the research that informs the campaign was culled from studies conducted by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) as well as the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Additional research was collected from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety as well as data from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA).

What creative tactics are planned for the campaign?

The campaign will primarily utilize social media to reach its target audience. Through a combination of video awareness and traffic tactics that drive viewers to the CDOT GDL teen landing page, the aim is to educate Colorado's teen drivers on the three primary GDL issues:

- Number of passengers in car
- Mobile phone distractions
- Seat belt safety

To get teens interested in learning about and adhering to the rules of the road, funny and informative digital content will be delivered to teach them how to GDL. A short vignette series called, 'Keep Your



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License Safe,' will live as paid posts, ads, or videos on social media. Each short video will illustrate a different driving tip - not using your cell phone, how many passengers you should ride with and seat belt safety.

The campaign will be live on social media starting August 9, 2021. It will be pushed out through the following platforms: Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram. Snapchat is a hugely popular platform with teens, regularly reaching 79% of the teenage population in the U.S. and Instagram reaches 73% of U.S. teens regularly. Goals include high engagement with the audience as well as quality impressions and reach.

Why should teens and/or their parents pay attention to this campaign? Why should they care?

It takes time for teen drivers to become familiar with driving practices, vehicle response, traffic conditions – other drivers, roads, weather, etc. In Colorado, the Graduated Driver Licensing program started 21 years ago, in 1999, to promote safe driving among teens by reducing distractions, such as the number of passengers permitted, and requiring driver education. Since 2004, when GDL laws were strengthened to include passenger restrictions and nighttime curfews, there has been a 66 percent reduction in deaths of teens ages 15 - 19.

In 2017, the number of teen driving fatalities increased – substantially – to 81 - the highest number of teen driving fatalities since 2015. Teens are not paying attention to the rules once they have their license. It's also been found that teens don't really know all the rules to begin with.

By motivating teens to first understand and subsequently follow the GDL rules, the end result will save lives by encouraging teens to become responsible drivers. Driving represents a new, exciting phase of freedom that contributes to teens' growth. Driving is also a serious responsibility that involves other people – passengers and other drivers on the road.

Teens also need to understand that they can be fined heavily for breaking driving laws, including GDL restrictions, and they could lose their license altogether, not to mention the trust of family and peers.

Who is the campaign contact person?

Sam Cole is the communications manager of the Colorado Department of Transportation and can be contacted with questions regarding the campaign at sam.cole@state.co.us.

How will the campaign be evaluated?

With this being a public awareness and safety campaign, evaluation will be based on a variety of metrics, including paid social campaign performance, number of impressions, website engagement and earned media coverage.

Definitions/Background Information

What is the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program?

In Colorado, the Graduated Driver Licensing program started in 1999 to promote safe driving among teens by instilling laws that reduce distractions, such as the number of passengers permitted, and requiring driver education.



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Colorado implemented Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws to help teens develop important driving skills gradually. GDL laws include the steps required to get a license and set driving restrictions in your first years of having a license. GDL restrictions include passenger restrictions, curfew and a cell phone ban.

What are the GDL restrictions?

When a teen is behind the wheel, attention to driving must take precedence. Passenger restrictions help ensure their focus remains on the road. Restrictions for licensed teen drivers ease gradually as they become more experienced.

Curfew: For the first year as a licensed driver, a teen must abide by a curfew - no driving between midnight and 5 a.m. unless accompanied by an instructor, parent or legal guardian. Exceptions include driving to and from school or work (signed statement from school or work is required), medical emergencies and emancipated minors. Curfew laws may vary by city or county.

Who Can Ride:

- For the first six months, only passengers 21 and over, unless a parent or another licensed adult driver is in the vehicle
- For the second six months, only one passenger under 21 (siblings and passengers with medical emergencies excepted)
- Only one passenger in the front seat at any time

Power Down: Texting or talking on your cell phone while driving is against the law for drivers under age 18 in Colorado. Teens can be fined and may risk losing their license. Exceptions include emergency calls to the police or fire department.

Seat belts are mandatory: By law, all teen drivers and passengers must wear seat belts and no sharing. Driving without wearing a seat belt is a primary offense - teens can be pulled over and ticketed for not buckling up. Teen drivers also need to understand that they are responsible for the safety of their passengers and can be ticketed if they are not properly wearing seat belts as well.

Zero Tolerance for Drinking and Driving: Even a trace of alcohol for minor drivers is punishable by law.

What are the consequences if a teen violates a traffic law or one of the GDL restrictions?

Violating a law or one of these restrictions could carry an expensive fine, including community service, a revoked license or lost driving freedom, or worse, their life or the life of another passenger. Each violation costs two points; it takes only three violations (six points) through age 18 for a license suspension.

Penalties for seat belt, curfew and passenger restriction violations:

- First offense: Minimum \$65 fine, eight to 24 hours of community service, two license suspension points
- Second offense: Minimum \$100 fine, 16 to 40 hours of community service, two license suspension points



- Third offense: Minimum \$150 fine, 16 to 40 hours of community service, two license suspension points

Penalties for cell phone ban violation: For violating the no talk/text law, teens can be fined one point off their license and a \$57 fine for the first offense, and \$107 for subsequent offenses.

What are the types of training one may be required to complete before getting a driver's license?

- Driver's education: An approved 30-hour classroom, internet or home study course.
- Instruction permit: All new drivers under the age of 18 require a parent or legal guardian's signed "Affidavit of Liability and Guardianship" to get an instruction permit. Whoever signs the Affidavit is responsible for the supervision of the minor's driving and for any financial liability.
- Fifty hours of logged driving time: Completed under the supervision of the Colorado-licensed parent or legal guardian who signed the Affidavit of Liability or a Colorado-licensed alternate permit supervisor appointed by the parent or legal guardian. Ten of the fifty hours must be at night.
- Behind-the-wheel training: Six hours of driving, in traffic situations, with an instructor employed or associated with an approved driver education course.
- Driver awareness program: A four-hour classroom course on safety and driver education.
- Driver's license: Teens can apply for a license after having a permit for a full 12 months.

What steps does a teen (under the age of 18) need to take to get their license?

The training required before a teen can apply for a license varies depending upon what age the teen starts the GDL process:

GDL process started at age 15 up to 15 and six months:

1. Complete 30-hour driver's education course
2. Apply for a permit
3. Log 50-hours driving time AND six hours behind-the wheel training is mandatory if under the age of 16 and six months at time of applying for a license
4. Apply for a license after 12 full months with a permit

GDL process started at age 15 and six months up to 16:

1. Complete a four-hour classroom driver awareness program OR complete a 30-hour driver's education course
2. Apply for a permit
3. Log 50-hours driving time AND six hours behind-the wheel training is optional if under the age of 16 and six months at time of applying for a license
4. Apply for a license after 12 full months with a permit

GDL process started at age 16 - 17:

No requirements prior to applying for a permit. Driver's education and behind-the-wheel training are strongly recommended.

1. Apply for a permit
2. Log 50-hours driving time AND six hours behind-the wheel training is optional
3. Apply for a license after 12 full months with a permit

What is distracted driving?

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, adjusting the stereo, entertainment or navigation system—anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Texting, by either sending or reading a text, can take your eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.¹

What are some tips for parents of new drivers?

- Recognize that some driving guidelines and laws have changed since you learned to drive. For example, "10 & 2" are no longer recommended hand positions on the steering wheel (it's now "9 & 3").
- Be a good role model. Your teen is watching you when you drive and is learning by example. Make sure that you practice what you preach by buckling up, putting down your cell phone and not driving aggressively.
- Only practice driving when you are both ready, in good moods and have plenty of time.
- Start simple. Learning to drive can be overwhelming - for your teen and for you. Begin with the basics, such as turning, parking and backing up. Then move on to more advanced skills including merging, changing lanes and parallel parking.
- Begin practicing during the day, in good weather. As your teen improves, gradually start driving during different driving conditions, including different times of day, in a variety of weather conditions and on all road surfaces.
- Use "commentary driving" - ask questions on what your teen is doing, and what they would do in hypothetical situations. Praise them when they do something right, and if they do something incorrectly, ask them to safely pull over and discuss the mistake calmly. After each driving session, evaluate their progress as a team.
- Start with safe, low-risk driving conditions, such as empty parking lots and quiet rural roads. Gradually progress to neighborhood streets with little traffic, then busier roads and highways.
- Be patient. Teens will show the greatest improvement in the first 1,000 to 5,000 miles of driving.
- Pay attention. Know where teens are going and why. Discuss how they'll get there and when they will be home.
- Set family rules and limits by creating a [Parent/Teen Driving Contract](#).

Are there also cost benefits to GDL laws?

Yes. By reducing teen fatalities, GDL laws save Colorado both the medical costs for treating injuries as well as the years of income lost from untimely death.

Where can one find additional resources on safe teen driving?

- Get tips, take a quiz and discover other helpful resources from the Colorado Department of Transportation at www.coteedriver.com or www.coloradodot.info.
- Info about driving schools, permit applications, testing locations and more can be found at the Colorado Department of Revenue Division of Motor Vehicles at www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv.

¹ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>



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- Parents can download and print CDOT's Parent/Teen Driving Contract that clearly states driving rules and possible consequences for breaking a rule.
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/teen-motor-vehicle-safety>
- Colorado Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD): <https://co.sadd.org/state/colorado>
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD): <https://www.madd.org/>
- Swedish Medical Center: <https://swedishhospital.com/>
- Children's Hospital Colorado: <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/>
- AAA Colorado: <https://www.colorado.aaa.com>
- Colorado State Patrol: <https://csp.colorado.gov>
- Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association: <http://www.rmiia.org/index.asp>

Data Questions/Statistics

What are some key statistics related to this campaign?

- Teens face the greatest risk of crashing during the first year of their license. One out of every five licensed 16-year-olds will be in a motor vehicle crash.² (5)
- For 16-17-year-olds, carrying just one passenger increases the crash risk by about 50 percent.
- Distracted driving claimed 3,450 lives in the U.S. in 2016³
- According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, half of all unintentional injury deaths for Coloradans between ages 5 and 24 are due to motor vehicle crashes.

Do GDL laws work?

The bottom line? Yes.

Since Colorado's GDL restrictions went into effect in 1999, the number of teens killed in car crashes in Colorado has dropped by more than 50 percent. Since 2004, when GDL laws were strengthened to include passenger restrictions and nighttime curfews, there has been a 66 percent reduction in deaths of teens ages 15 - 19:

- Teen-caused fatal crashes (ages 16-17) went from 41 in 2004 to 12 in 2011.
- Teen driver fatalities (ages 16-17) went from 23 in 2004 to eight in 2011.
- Teen passenger fatalities (ages 16-17) went from 24 in 2004 to four in 2011.
- Teen drivers (ages 16-17) in fatal crashes during curfew, which is designated as the hours between midnight and 5 a.m., went from seven in 2004 to zero in 2011.

Of the teen drivers at fault in fatal crashes in 2011, what factors contributed to the crash?

- Fifty-eight percent were speeding
- Seventeen percent were drinking
- Sixty-seven percent were not wearing a seat belt

² https://www.codot.gov/safety/colorado-teen-drivers/driving-tool-kit/teendrivinggeneral/General_BrochureforParents_English.pdf

³ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812456>