

## Graduated Driver Licensing in North Carolina

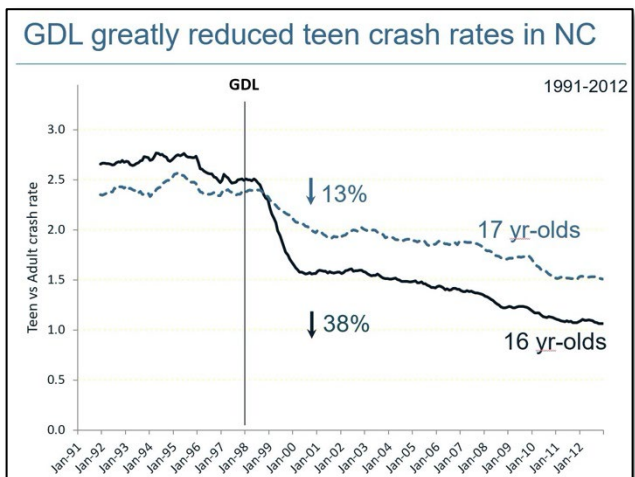
Improving Teen Driver Safety for 25 Years

**A Life Saving Teen Driver Safety Program Started in NC:** North Carolina’s young driver licensing system, commonly known as Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL), was enacted in 1997 with overwhelming support of the general public and legislators in both the House and Senate. North Carolina led the nation in embracing this science-based approach to reducing deaths and injuries in teen motor vehicle crashes. As a direct result of GDL, 16-year-old driver crashes in North Carolina declined by 38%; fatal/serious injury crashes declined by 46%. The idea for GDL was first developed at UNC and, in part because of its proven success in NC, all but two U.S. states have now adopted comprehensive GDL systems.

**How and Why It Works:** Inexperience is the primary reason for teen driver crashes. GDL addresses this problem by 1) maximizing experience while 2) minimizing risks. To ensure

necessary experience, young drivers begin with a 12-month learner period. This critical period of practice is an opportunity for teens to safely become familiar with all types of driving situations, on all types of roads, and in all types of weather. They then graduate to driving mostly on their own. But because driving with multiple young passengers or at night are particularly dangerous for new teen drivers, an adult co-driver is needed for another 6 months in these conditions.

**12 Months of Practice is the “Gold Standard:”** GDL has reduced teen crashes in every state, but virtually no other state has seen the extensive benefits found in North Carolina. This is largely due to the 12-month learner period, which is considered by safety experts to be the gold standard.



### Longer learner periods mean safer roads

State-specific change in 16-17-yr-old driver fatal crashes

| Learner period duration (months) | State-specific rate decline | Average decline by learner duration |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>12 Months</b>                 |                             | <b>- 30%</b>                        |
| North Carolina                   | - 30%                       |                                     |
| <b>6 Months</b>                  |                             | <b>- 12%</b>                        |
| Minnesota                        | - 19%                       |                                     |
| Connecticut                      | - 17%                       |                                     |
| Kentucky                         | - 9%                        |                                     |
| Virginia                         | - 6%                        |                                     |
| <b>3 Months</b>                  |                             | <b>- 4%</b>                         |
| Hawaii                           | - 11%                       |                                     |
| South Carolina                   | - 3%                        |                                     |
| Tennessee                        | - 0.8%                      |                                     |

And it’s not just safety experts. Since its beginning, parents of teens have overwhelmingly approved of the key elements of North Carolina’s GDL system. In a recent survey, 88% of parents of teen drivers in North Carolina said the 12-month duration of the learner period was “about right;” 6% said it was *not long enough*. Only 5% said it was too long.