

# 5 Quick Facts about Teen Driver Safety and Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) in North Carolina

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## 1. Motor Vehicle Crashes are a Leading Cause of Death for Teens in NC, and a Major Safety Concern for All.

- In 2021, 192 young drivers in NC were involved in fatal crashes. Preliminary analyses of the NC's temporary **reduction of the learner permit period to 6-months during the COVID pandemic indicates the crashes increased almost 12% among 16-year-olds**. A more extensive analysis with a longer follow-up period is likely to show an even greater increase.
- Victims of teen driver crashes are not just teen drivers themselves; more than half of those injured or killed are someone other than the teen driver.

## 2. NC's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) System Works because it Addresses the Primary Teen Driver Risks.

- As a direct result of GDL being enacted by the NC legislature in 1997, 16-year-old driver fatal and serious injury crashes declined by 46%.
- GDL is an evidence-based, staged system designed to provide teens with extensive practical driving experience while simultaneously keeping them safe.
  - o Level 1 Limited Learner Permit: 12 months of practice with an experienced driver
  - o Level 2 Limited Provisional License: Passenger and nighttime driving restrictions for first 6 months of independent driving

## 3. 12 months is a Practice Period, Not a Waiting Period. Longer Learner Permits = Fewer Crashes, Injuries, and Deaths.

- Inexperience is the leading cause of teen driver crashes. Learning to drive is a lot like learning to play a sport or a musical instrument, the only way to become competent is by getting lots of practice in a variety of situations/conditions. That is why a longer learner permit period leads to fewer crashes.
- **A 60-hour driving requirement doesn't result in fewer crashes among new teen drivers (U.S. DOT)**, but 12 months with a learner permit does. Obtaining driving experience in all seasons, weather and light conditions can only be gained over time and not via a prescribed number of hours.
- The 12-month learner permit period decreased teen driver fatal crashes by 30% in NC, compared to an average 12% decrease in other states that require a 6-month learner permit period.

## 4. Most Parents of NC Teen Drivers Support Requiring 12 Months of Practice.

- A 2021 survey conducted during COVID found that most parents of teen drivers in NC did not support reducing the 12-month learner period.
- A 2013 survey also found overwhelming parental support – 95% – for requiring 12 months of driving practice by beginning teen drivers in NC.

## 5. Multiple Young Passengers in the Vehicle are Risky for New Teen Drivers.

- Having **2 or more young passengers doubles the risk of a teen driver being killed** in a crash.
- The peak times for young teen driver crashes are during the hours they are traveling to and from school. Passenger restrictions are vitally important at these times.

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**Experts at the UNC Highway Safety Research Center are available to provide information about teen driver safety research and data.**

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