

4 Quick Facts about Teen Driver Licensing and Safety in North Carolina

- 1. The 9-month period to obtain a Level 2 License isn't a "waiting period." It's an essential time to learn and practice how to drive under the supervision of an experienced, licensed driver.**
 - Inexperience is the leading cause of teen driver crashes. And the kind of practice new drivers get matters.
 - The only way for new drivers to become competent is by getting lots of supervised practice in a variety of situations – across different seasons, weather, light conditions - over time.
 - Requiring a set number of practice hours (like NC's 60-hour requirement) doesn't result in fewer crashes among new teen drivers, but 12 months with a Learner License does.

- 2. All North Carolinians are already experiencing the negative impact of reducing the Learner License period for teens.**
 - Preliminary data analysis shows that the crash rate of 16-year-old drivers in NC increased 13% after the Learner License period (Level 1) was reduced in 2021.*
 - Although teen driver crashes have declined markedly since NC adopted a modern approach to licensing in 1997, motor vehicle crashes continue to be a leading cause of death for teens, and a major safety concern for all.
 - 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.

- 3. Longer learner permit periods = fewer crashes, injuries, and deaths.**
 - When originally enacted in 1997, the 12-month learner permit period decreased 16-year-old driver fatal & injury crashes by 46%, and all crashes by 38% in NC.
 - Reducing the Learner License period in 2021 has already resulted in a 13% increase in the crash rate for 16-year-old drivers.*
 - Based on historical information and recent data, removing this critical learning period outright is certain to lead to additional increases in teen crashes, along with more deaths and injuries to all road users.

- 4. Most parents of NC teen drivers strongly support requiring 12 months of practice.**
 - HSRC researchers have tracked parent approval of the licensing process since it began and approval rates have remained virtually unchanged over time, with 95% approving the 12-month learner license period.

****UNC Highway Safety Research Center representatives are available to provide information about teen driver safety research and data anytime.***

For questions, please contact: Caroline Mozingo, mozingo@hsrc.unc.edu or 919-923-1359

Learn more at www.hsrc.unc.edu and www.ncteendriver.org.



Updated April 8, 2025