

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Graduated Driver Licensing System in New Jersey

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Teenage drivers have high crash rates due to immaturity and lack of driving experience. To reduce their accident involvement, many states in the U.S. and countries around the world have implemented graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs. The main objectives of GDL are to provide young novice drivers with practice in developing driving skills over an extended period of time, and increased time in supervised behind-the-wheel training during daylight and nighttime hours. New Jersey's GDL program became effective on January 1, 2001 and includes three stages for getting a basic driver's license. Stage 1 (learner's permit) may be issued to a person over 16 years of age. He/she is required to take an approved behind-the-wheel driving education course. Supervision is required at all times and driving is prohibited between 11:01 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. The holder of a learner's permit over 17 years of age can get a provisional license (stage 2) upon the completion of six months' driving experience with the learner's permit and passing a road test.



This project evaluated the conditions existing prior to the implementation of New Jersey's GDL system. The number and types of traffic crashes, traffic violations, and license suspensions in New Jersey by age for the years immediately before 2001 were analyzed. The analysis of the pre-2001 data shows that 17 year olds have substantially more crashes and violations per 10,000 people compared to other drivers. A higher percentage of their crashes are single vehicle crashes. In addition, a much higher percent of their crashes are due to unsafe speed, and a higher percent of their crashes are due to inattention, and a failure to obey traffic control devices or yield right of way, compared to middle aged drivers. A higher percentage of their violations are due to speeding than any other age group, and a higher percentage are due to careless driving than for middle-aged drivers, but not for older drivers.



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