

The Georgia Driver's Education
Commission

Report to the State of Georgia
Strategic Highway Safety Plan

November 10, 2008

The Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC)

I. HISTORY

The Georgia Driver's Education Commission (GDEC) was created on May 10, 2005 as a result of Senate Bill 226, which was passed during the 2005 Georgia Legislative Session. Senate Bill 226, or *Joshua's Law*, mandates the completion of driver training for anyone who wishes to obtain a Class D (Intermediate) Georgia driver's license prior to age 17. Satisfaction of this requirement involves the completion of 30 hours of classroom study and 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training.

Senate Bill 226 also sets forth that the GDEC may "recommend" to the Governor and the General Assembly changes in programs, statutes, policies, budgets, and standards relating to the provision of driver training and training in this state, with the *objective of maximizing participation in driver's training, training and accident reduction.*

As a result of the GDEC's tireless efforts to identify options to enhance driver training throughout in Georgia, a comprehensive plan that is both ***accessible*** and ***affordable*** has been developed. More importantly, however, a viable framework has been created for the future advancement of Georgia driver training.

As for the statutory objective, participation has increased in Georgia's driver training programs due to the GDEC's efforts. Driver training has been established in rural areas that previously had no prior access to driver training. Thus, each newly licensed 16-year-old is better prepared to take a vehicle out on the road alone as a result of exposure to a variety of best practices for safely operating a motor vehicle.

The GDEC is also a collaborative partner in the State of Georgia's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The GDEC plays an important role in the SHSP's balanced and effective "4-E" strategy, a comprehensive approach to saving lives by bringing together the four safety components essential to highway safety: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Medical Services.

II. GDEC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Increased access to and affordability of driver training in Georgia.**
- **105 of Georgia's 159 counties now have driver training.**
- **Has overseen the number of driver training instructors increase to 940 statewide.**
- **Has overseen the number of driver training schools increase from 197 to 280 schools.**
- **Has overseen the number the number of teens taking driver training increase from approximately 20,000 teens to approximately 55,000 teens.**

- Implemented a “40 mile radius” provision in the grant program RFP to ensure accessibility.
- Worked to expand the definition of driver training to include online programs through House Bill 1252 (2005).
- Created www.gateendrivereducation.com, a website dedicated exclusively to driver training in Georgia. Free, practical training information for parents, such as the “Hazard Recognition Checklist” and “What’s Your Driving IQ?” can be assessed. The website also includes a web-based *Ask Teen Driver* function directly answered by DDS. In 2007, DDS handled 1,690 questions/comments from the *Ask Teen Driver* feature.
- Supported the implementation of a secure, web-based system for driver training programs to submit certificates of completion to the DDS electronically.
- Approved implementation of the Parent/Teen Driving Guide, a free and comprehensive guide for parents who choose to teach the critical behind-the-wheel training requirement.
- Currently piloting the Drive Program, an innovative attitudinal approach in educating teens on hazard recognition and avoiding risky behaviors.

The following describes some of the GDEC’s accomplishments in more detail:

A. Creation of Accessible and Affordable Driver Training

The first task for the GDEC was to ensure that options were available for Georgia’s teens to complete mandatory driver training before the January 1, 2007 statutory deadline of Joshua’s Law. Four options were approved with each meeting the *accessible* and *affordable* criteria. The recommendation allows for numerous public and private programs to coexist and expand and each method incorporates parental involvement. All options are state approved and administered by the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS).

In addition to the existing traditional high school and private driver training programs, House Bill 1252 expanded the statutory definition of driver training to include virtual or internet-based programs. Currently, there are three DDS-approved virtual driver training programs available to teens in Georgia. In addition, a free and comprehensive *Parent/Teen Guide* was created to help parents who choose to teach the critical behind-the-wheel training requirement.

Parents and teens can choose the methods that best fit their lifestyle and budget to meet the requirements of Joshua’s Law. Fees for the various programs range from no cost to \$750.00. In addition to the free **Parent/Teen Guide**, the GDEC Grant Program enables many school programs to offer driver training at no charge or a reduced rate. Many of the grant

supported schools offer scholarships for students from low income families.

Many more are able to access internet-based driver training via their local community in 110 public libraries.

21	Number of New Start-up Driver Training Programs
38	Number of Existing Driver Training Programs Enhanced or Expanded
348	Number of New Driver Trainers Hired and Trained
68	Number of New Private Driver Training Schools
3	Number of Internet Based Programs for Classroom Component
47,195	Number of 16-year-olds receiving a Class D License (January 2007 through January 2008)

B. Grant Program

Perhaps the one of the most significant achievement has been the creation of the GDEC Grant Program to be issued to school systems or high schools and public libraries across the state. The Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) facilitates the allocation and application of funds to generate the highest return on the GDEC investment to improve the performance of beginning high school licensed drivers. A rating system for applications ranges from 1-100 points with a score of 75 points needed to be met for consideration. Preference points are given to applicants outside the metro-Atlanta area and also for areas where the nearest driver training is at least 40 miles away.

Specifically the purpose and objectives of this program are:

- To promote, aid and encourage the successful completion of a DDS approved driver training course for high school students who desire to qualify for a Georgia Class D driver's license as required in Joshua's Law.
- To facilitate knowledge and application of traffic safety rules, regulations, and procedures necessary for the safety of young licensed beginning drivers.

GOHS provides support to applicants and grantees through sponsorship of pre-grant application training workshops and new grantee workshops; maintains a secured web site which provides a means to report and manage grant accomplishments, progress, problems, challenges, planned events, grant announcements, financial reimbursement claims, claim histories, grant amendment procedures and approval protocol; encourages local grantees to partner with state and national highway safety campaigns; and distributes supplemental teenage driver safety program guidance and information to enhance the quality of grant projects.

Currently, the GDEC requires applicants to submit program information when applying for grant funding. This information includes:

- Number of students currently served
- Net increase in the number of students served within the submitted proposal
- Demographic information on students served
- Geographic information pertaining to the location of existing Driver Training programs with 40 miles.

This information is used when vetting the grant application. For instance, bonus points are given for schools outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Additionally, underserved areas (located greater than 40 miles from the nearest Driver Training Program) are given additional points.

After being awarded the grant, schools are required to submit monthly, quarterly and annual reports pertaining to the activities, including the number of students being served. Additional reports currently being provided the GDEC include:

- Number of students completing Driver Training statewide by month, student age and program type.
- Number of students completing Driver Training in Grant Funded locations
- Amount of state collections from a five percent surcharge on moving violations.

C. Public/Private Partnerships

The GDEC has merged talents from all areas: training, industry, and law enforcement among other community partners. The GDEC members have welcomed recommendations and many partnerships have been formed to further the GDEC's mission.

A. L. Burruss Institute-The Burruss Institute prepared a "Public School Research Project" to identify Georgia school system needs regarding

implementation of driver training programs and to raise awareness of resources and best practices.

Children and Youth Coordinating Council-The GDEC approved funding to support the distribution and television network broadcasting of an Emmy Award Winning Video, ***Driving Ambition***. The video explains the new teen driving laws and responsibilities of teens and parents. It is designed to get the public interested in driver safety in a teen friendly way.

C&C Driver Alliance-A partnership with C&C Driver Alliance assists with teen driver safety awareness campaigns and provides information about “Caution-Newly Licensed®” car magnets. When magnets are displayed on the rear bumper, it helps protect the teen and their parents during mandatory driving lessons as well as other motorists. DDS customer service centers distribute informational brochures to parents urging them to identify their teen driver.

Community Outreach- GDEC members often participate in state and local media events and coordinate press releases related to safe teen driving.

III. SUBCOMMITTEES

The GDEC formed subcommittees in 2008 to identify strategies to promote and improve teen driving safety. The subcommittees were chaired by GDEC members in the areas of (1) Training for New Drivers and (2) Influencing Cultural Change.

Below you will find the Executive Highlights of the subcommittees and the primary discussion items to be forwarded to the GOHS for the State Highway Safety Plan for recommendation.

GDEC Subcommittee Summaries

A. Subcommittee on the Training of New Drivers (ages 14-17)

Chair: Lynn Breck

Scope: To improve the training of our current new drivers (ages 14-17)

Discussion Item #1: Increasing Seatbelt Usage Teen Drivers and Passengers

There was dialogue related to implementing sanctions ranging from graduated fines to requiring drivers under the age of 18 convicted of multiple seatbelt violations to undergo another period of supervised driving (consistent with teens who have instructional permits).

According to the Young Adult Driver Task Team of the State of Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan, 64% of all young adult driver fatalities in 2005 were the result of not properly restrained with a seatbelt. Additionally, numerous studies have found teenagers to be the most prone to ignore seatbelt laws. Although all persons under the age of 18 must wear a seatbelt, current Georgia law provides for only a \$25 fine for violating such ordinance. In addition, no points are assessed against the driver's license, unless the violation involved a child under the age of 6 not properly restrained in a child safety seat.

Discussion Item #2: Increasing the Accessibility of Driver Training Instructor Training

All new Driver Training Instructors must attend a four hour training course offered by the DDS. Exceptions are made for teachers who hold a "Safety & Driver Education" endorsement on their teaching certificate. Currently the only university in the State of Georgia that offers the "Driving & Traffic Safety" endorsement is Albany Sate University in Albany, Georgia.

In FY2009, the University of Georgia's College of Education submitted a multi-year grant request to the GDEC to fund a driver training instructor training program. Due to budget uncertainties, however, the program was not funded. The GDEC did, however, commit to revisit the University of Georgia's proposal for FY2010.

Discussion Item #3: Ongoing efforts to enhance the skills of Driver Training Instructors

In August of 2008, over 100 certified driver training instructors from around the State of Georgia attended three Drive Program workshops funded by the GDEC and coordinated by the GOHS. The purpose of the workshops was to train driver training instructors on how to teach the program. The Drive Program is an

attitudinal approach in educating teens on hazard recognition and avoiding risky behaviors

Efforts can continue to enhance the skills of driver training instructors.

Discussion Item #4: Continuing efforts build upon the successes of TADRA

In a 2009 report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety grading the US Graduated Licensing laws, Georgia received the highest ranking in the “Learners”, “Intermediate” and “Full-Privilege” categories. Additionally, the Georgia’s Teenage and Adult Driving Responsibility Act (TADRA) has been cited as reducing the fatal crashes of 16 year olds by 37% in the first five years.

To further build upon the successes of TADRA, there was discussion of increasing the amount of supervised driving experience a teen must have prior to being allowed to upgrade to a Class D (Intermediate) license. For example, the amount of supervised driving experience could be increased to 50 hours, of which 10 hours must be at night. Currently, all Class CP holders are required to have 40 hours of supervised driving, 6 of which must be at night.

In addition, there was dialogue on amending TADRA so that Georgia’s teens are restricted from driving between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Currently, teens are restricted from driving between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.

California, for example, enacted AB1474, which took effect January 1, 2006. The new law, which restricts teens from driving between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m., one hour earlier than required in the original Brady Jared Teen Driver Safety Act of 1998, has shown some promising results.

“The Auto Club's review of AB1474, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2006, examined fatal and injury crashes where novice 16-year-old drivers were at-fault. During 11 p.m. to midnight, these crashes fell 34% in 2006 and 2007 (combined) compared to the two previous years. In Los Angeles County, from 11 p.m. to midnight, these crashes fell even more - nearly 50%.

In 2004 and 2005, California had an average of 81.5 at-fault fatal and injury crashes among 16-year-olds from 11 p.m. to midnight. This number fell to an average of 54 in 2006 and 2007.”

Auto Club of Southern California (2008, October) *Teen Licensing Law Enhancement Shown To Reduce Young Driver Crashes*. Retrieved November 3, 2008 from <http://news.aaa-calif.com/pr/aaa/Enhanced-Teen-Licensing-Laws.aspx>

B. Subcommittee on the Training of New Drivers (ages 14-17)

Chair: Frankie Jones

Scope: Teaching Young Children That Good Driving is a Way of Life: Exploring an Attitudinal Approach to Driver Education.

Discussion Item #1: Utilizing existing distribution channels to more effectively reach the 5-13 age group.

The most cost effective way to reach this targeted age group would be to add additional education tools, such as Hazard Recognition to existing programs, such as the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (ADAP). Completion of ADAP is a statutorily required component for a teen to obtain Class CP (Instructional) license.

Educational tool kits distributed to schools, hospitals, and doctor's offices containing age-appropriate exercises could also be a means of effectively reaching the 5-13 age group.

These educational tool kits could be

- Developed around a consistent marketing message
- Distributed from centralized location
 - Model polices & procedures
 - Lesson plans for teachers & parents

Examples of these educational tool kits include the following:

- Grade levels K-2
 - Coloring books
- Grades 3-5 years
 - Search-A-Words
 - Where's Waldo – Hazard forms
- Grades Levels 6-8
 - Video games
 - Develop a video to specific age group
 - "Safety Cities" for driver training purposes

Discussion Item #2: Increasing Parental Participation

The subcommittee concurred that parental involvement is a critical part of influencing the 5-13 age group. New programs could expand parental choices and participation. The Georgia Teens Ride with P.R.I.D.E. Program, for example, focuses on new (or soon to be) teen drivers. P.R.I.D.E. (**P**arents **R**educing **I**njuries and **D**river **E**rror) is a free, national award-winning two-hour course

designed to help parents and teens, ages 14-16, learn what they need to do during the 40 hours of supervised practice driving time required by Georgia law.

In addition, a web site was created dedicated to Georgia Driver Education: www.gateendrivereducation.com. It includes free and practical training information for parents to utilize such as a "Hazard Recognition Checklist" and "What's Your Driving IQ?" The website includes a web-based *Ask Teen Driver* function directly answered by DDS staff. In 2007, DDS handled 1,690 questions/comments from the *Ask Teen Driver* feature.

IV. GDEC DISCUSSION ITEMS ON DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In addition to the Subcommittee discussion items, the GDEC collectively discussed available data that could be analyzed and used to further enhance teen driving safety in Georgia.

The following are Executive Highlights of those discussions:

Discussion Item #1: Number of students completing driver training by program (including method and type of driver training received).

Data is provided by the DDS utilizing the Online Certificate Reporting Application (OCRA), which all certified driver training programs in Georgia must use to report certificates of course completion to DDS.

OCRA is a real-time database containing the number of students completing driver training. Via the internet, Driver Training Schools can schedule driver training classes, add students to classes and finalize students as they complete the classroom and behind the wheel requirements. After completion, the student's driving record is updated to reflect the type of driver training completed. This allows DDS Examiners to verify completion of driver training prior to issuance of the driver's license.

Information pertaining to student demographics, course type, and graduation date is electronically transmitted from any of the 234 licensed driver trainings schools directly to DDS. This electronic data will be a key factor in evaluating the effectiveness of driver training.

Implementation of the online program has been well received not only by Georgia teens, but by the licensed driver training schools utilizing this service. Additional benefits include a reduction in unlicensed driver training schools and departmental printing costs.

Discussion Item #2: Number of statewide licensed driver training schools and instructors.

This information is stored electronically and is tracked on a monthly basis by the DDS Regulatory Compliance Division.

Discussion Item #3: Number of traffic convictions & motor vehicle crashes.

- i. By county
- ii. By age

Traffic conviction data is provided by the DDS. Local courts report convictions to DDS electronically and in paper format. This information is tracked on a monthly basis by the DDS Customer Service, Licensing, and Records Division.

Crash data is compiled by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Accident Reporting Unit.

In the future, sufficient data will have been collected for the GDEC to use any of the data from OCRA to compare to violator or crash victim, including, type of driver training completed, name of program attended, and name of instructor.

Discussion Item #4: Public high schools and libraries that received GDEC grant awards

Over \$6 million dollars has been awarded to 59 public high schools and 110 Georgia libraries to create or expand driver training efforts in their communities throughout the state. It is projected that over 17,000 Georgia students now have access to driver training in public high schools as a result of the grants thus far. Many more will be able to access virtual driver training via their local community libraries.

Data is tracked both by DDS electronically through OCRA, but also by GOHS on monthly and year-end reports.

V. CONCLUSION

We would like to especially thank everyone who has made it possible for the GDEC to expand, enhance, and make driver training in Georgia accessible and affordable. The GDEC, DDS and GOHS are committed to continuing to work in close partnership to continue these life saving efforts.