



The Role of Supervised Driving in a Graduated Driver Licensing Program

Traditional Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) systems, in place in all the States, include three licensing stages: the initial learner stage, an intermediate or provisional phase, and full licensure. An important component of GDL systems is the extended learner stage for beginning drivers. This stage gives novice drivers opportunity to gain valuable driving experience under the supervision of experienced adult drivers. Novice drivers rarely crash while they are being supervised by adults, but have the highest crash rates of all age groups during the first six months of unsupervised driving when they become fully licensed.

Many States require parents to certify that their teens have completed a certain amount of supervised driving practice, usually 40 to 50 hours, before they are allowed to obtain an intermediate license. Some States stipulate that a certain number of these hours should be accumulated during nighttime driving. Other States have no minimum requirement, but mandate that the teens be supervised for a longer period, such as 9 or 12 months. The following table summarizes the minimum number of supervised hours required in the States.

Table 1. Minimum Required Hours of Supervised Driving

Hours Required	Number of States
100	1
60	2
50	25
45	1
40	10
35	1
30	4
20	2
None	5

Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, April 2011

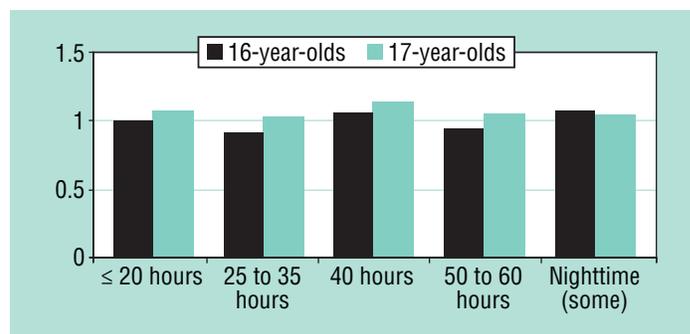
The effectiveness of mandating specific amounts of supervised driving is unknown. NHTSA conducted a cross-sectional comparison of fatal crash rates throughout the

United States and examined State-specific crash data using interrupted time-series analysis in a small number of States that had increased their required number of supervised driving hours.

Cross-Sectional Comparison of National Fatalities

Fatal crash involvements for drivers of passenger vehicles were obtained from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) for 1986 through 2007 (22 years) for all 50 States and the District of Columbia. A cross-sectional comparison examined how crash rates were related to States' supervised practice requirements. This analysis controlled for the possible effects of other elements of States' young driver licensing systems, traffic safety laws, and factors such as population and general economic conditions, to isolate the effects of mandated hours of supervision. Overall, the analyses found no relationship between the number of required supervised driving hours and fatal crash involvement among young drivers. The estimates across the different hours oscillate around 1.00, but none are reliably different from 1.00 (which represents no effect).

Figure 1. Incidence Rate Ratios for U.S. Driver Fatal Crash Involvements per 10,000 Population, 1986–2007



State-Specific Non-Fatal Crash Data

Additional analyses examined whether requiring specific amounts of supervision might affect 16- and 17-year-old driver involvement in fatal and serious-injury (F/I) crashes using data obtained from NHTSA's State Data

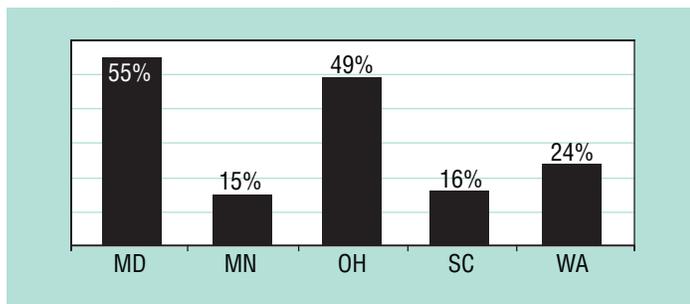
System (SDS). In 1999, Minnesota introduced a requirement that teens obtain 30 hours supervised practice during the learner stage and 10 additional hours in the intermediate phase for 40 total hours of supervised driving practice. This requirement was implemented independent of any other changes to the State's GDL system.

The ARIMA results found that this requirement was not associated with a change in either 16- or 17-year-old driver F/I crash rates. Similar analyses in Illinois, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia revealed no significant changes in F/I crash rates that could be attributed to an increase in the number of required hours of supervised driving.

Parent Awareness of State Requirements

About 100 parents of recently licensed drivers in Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina, and Washington provided information about their knowledge and awareness of supervised driving requirements. Overall, 77% of parents believed there was an hours-of-supervision requirement. However, knowledge of the specific number of required hours varied widely among the 5 States. Only one-third (32%) of parents knew the number of supervised hours their teens were required to obtain.

Figure 2. Percent of Parents Who Know the Number of Required Hours for Supervised Driving for Novice Teen Drivers by State



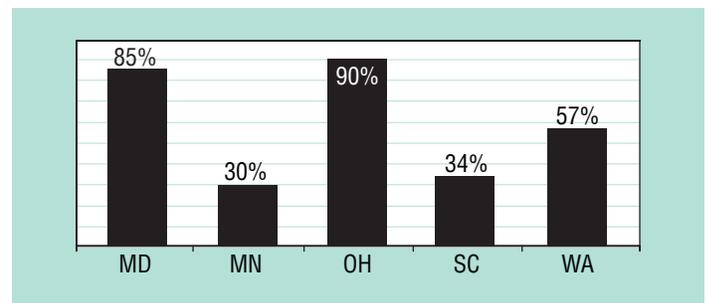
Licensing Operations

Interviews with parents and driver licensing bureau employees suggest that the requirement for supervised driving may not be well communicated. Few, if any, States other than Maryland require parents and teens to keep logs and submit them to the licensing agencies. Even in

Maryland, barely half of parents knew the actual number of hours required. In Ohio, although driving logs are not required, it is made clear in advance that the parent will be expected to provide a notarized affidavit that the teen has obtained the required hours of supervised driving.

Although each of the 5 States requires a parent or guardian to certify the teenager has obtained the required amount of practice before the teen can obtain an intermediate license, only 59% of parents said they were required to sign such forms. The proportion who reported having to do so was noticeably higher in Maryland and Ohio, suggesting greater enforcement of the requirement by licensing agencies in those States.

Figure 3. Percent of Parents Who Report They Were Required to Sign a Form by State



Conclusions

Overall, the analyses did not find evidence that requiring 30 to 60 hours supervised driving practice results in different crash rates for 16- or 17-year-old drivers. With low parental awareness and little or no licensing agency verification, it is difficult to determine whether teenagers drove the minimum number of supervised hours required by their States. Improvements in communications with parents and novice drivers about supervised driving requirements, guidance to parents about the best techniques to provide supervision, and tracking actual hours and conditions of supervised driving would be beneficial.

How to Order

Download a copy of *The Role of Supervised Driving Requirements in a Graduated Driver Licensing Program*, prepared by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center (88 pages) from <http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811550.pdf>