

Uniform Guidelines *for* State Highway Safety Programs



March 2009

Highway Safety Program Guideline No. 4

Driver Education

Each State, in cooperation with its political subdivisions and tribal governments, should develop and implement a comprehensive, culturally competent highway safety program, reflective of State demographics, to achieve a significant reduction in traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries on public roads. All programs should be data driven, and the highway safety program should include a driver education and training program designed to educate new drivers and provide remedial training for existing drivers. This guideline describes the components that the State driver education program should include and the minimum criteria that the program components should meet. Resources permitting, schools should also include traffic safety education for children and youth designed to engender knowledge of safe driving practices.

I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Each State should have centralized program planning, implementation, and coordination to deliver comprehensive and uniform driver education that applies to both public and private programs. Evaluation should be used to revise existing programs, develop new programs, and determine progress and success. The State Highway Safety Office (SHSO) in collaboration and in cooperation with other State agencies involved in driver education, such as Transportation Departments, Motor Vehicle Departments, Licensing Departments, and Education Departments, should:

- Provide leadership, training, and technical assistance to public and private providers of driver education to ensure consistency and quality;
- Resources permitting, work with other relevant State agencies to identify staff resources to provide full-time oversight over driver education programs delivered within the State; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the State's driver education program.

II. LEGISLATION, REGULATION AND POLICY

Each State should enact and enforce laws and policies intended to reduce crashes caused by novice drivers. To enhance the effectiveness of driver education, States should:

- Enact Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws that include three stages of licensure, and that place restrictions and sanctions on high-risk driving situations for novice drivers (i.e., nighttime driving

restrictions, passenger restrictions, zero tolerance, portable electronic communication and entertainment devices restrictions, and required seat belt use);

- Ensure that the GDL restrictions and sanctions for GDL licensure are adapted for and applicable to motorcycle operators, and enforceable for motorcycle operators;
- Develop driver education standards and guidelines to which all driver education programs, whether public or private, must adhere to satisfy licensing requirements for novice drivers; and
- Ensure that completion of driver education programs will not reduce time required for novice drivers to proceed through a GDL system.

III. ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Components of a State driver education enforcement program should include:

- Visible and well-publicized law enforcement of the components of GDL and zero tolerance laws;
- Licensing sanctions for violations of these provisions;
- Evaluation of enforcement efforts to determine effectiveness;
- State agency oversight of driver education programs to ensure delivery of approved State curriculum; and
- Administrative or financial penalties for programs in noncompliance.

IV. DRIVER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM

A driver education program should be available to novice drivers and all youths of licensing age and include the following criteria:

- The program is taught by instructors, public or private, certified by the State as qualified for these purposes; examples of such standards might include: minimum levels of education and continuing education, not being convicted of any felony or certain misdemeanor crimes, holding a valid driver license, and setting limits on numbers and types of driving violations.
- All vehicles used in public or commercial Behind the Wheel training have appropriate safety inspections and are equipped with, at a minimum, a safety brake accessible by the driver side passenger, a first aid kit, a fire extinguisher, an instructor rear view mirror and an eye check mirror for the instructor.
- It provides each student with practice driving and/or instruction in at least the following:
 - Basic driving techniques, including starting, stopping, turning, and basic interaction in controlled environments in light and moderate traffic;
 - Additional driving techniques, including balanced vehicle movement through steering, braking, and accelerating in a precise and timely manner;
 - Cognitive aspects of driving, including gap management, recognizing blockage and hazards, responding early and appropriately to hazards and potential hazards, signaling techniques, methods for speed management and effective visual searching, and decision-making and habit-development strategies;
 - Risk prevention techniques such as skid prevention;

- Rules of the road and other State laws and local motor vehicle laws and ordinances;
- Attitudinal awareness training that includes how attitudes can have an impact on driving behavior;
- Peer pressure training including how vehicle operators and passengers can say no in unsafe peer-pressure situations and how to utilize leadership skills in managing the driver and the passengers in a vehicle;
- Vehicle technology and the benefit of braking, traction, intelligent handling, and stability systems;
- Critical vehicle systems and sub-systems requiring preventive maintenance;
- Vehicle and highway features (including different vehicle and roadway conditions) that:
 - Aid the driver in avoiding crashes;
 - Protect the driver and passengers in crashes; and
 - Maximize the care of the injured.
- Signs, signals, and highway markings and highway design features that require understanding for safe operation of motor vehicles;
- Differences in characteristics of urban and rural driving including safe use of modern expressways;
- Safe Driving Practices, including making good driver decisions; use of occupant restraints; not driving under the influence; and dealing with fatigue, distractions, and aggressive drivers; and
- Sharing the roadway with other users, especially pedestrians, bicycles, scooters, and motorcycles, who are more physically vulnerable to injury or death in the event of a crash. This should include techniques to increase awareness of motorcycles and other road users.

Each State should also ensure:

- That research and development programs include adequate research, development, and procurement of practice driving facilities, simulators, online teaching resources, and other similar teaching aids for both school and other driver training use;
- There is a program that engages parents and/or guardians in the driver education and GDL programs;
- There is a program for adult driver training and retraining; and
- Commercial driving schools are licensed and instructors are certified in accordance with applicable State laws, regulations or other criteria.

V. COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

States should develop and implement communication strategies directed at supporting policy and program elements. The SHSO, in collaboration and cooperation with driver education and training and highway safety partners, should consider a statewide communications plan and campaign that:

- Informs the public, especially parents, about State GDL laws;
- Identifies audiences at particular risk and develops appropriate messages;
- Provides culturally competent materials;
- Informs parents/guardians and young drivers about the role of supervised driving and the State's GDL law;

- Informs novice drivers about underage drinking and zero tolerance laws (in effect in all 50 States and the District of Columbia), such as including information in manuals for new drivers and including a question about the topic on the written test for a learner's permit;
- Informs the public on the role of parental monitoring/involvement; and
- Informs the public about State guidelines and regulation of driver education.

VI. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND DATA

The SHSO, in collaboration and cooperation with the State agencies responsible for driver education and training, should develop a comprehensive evaluation program to measure progress toward established project goals and objectives and optimize the allocation of limited resources. The State should promote effective evaluation by:

- Supporting the analysis of police accident reports;
- Encouraging, supporting, and training localities in process, impact, and outcome evaluation of local programs;
- Evaluating the use of program resources and the effectiveness of existing countermeasures for the general public and high-risk populations; and
- Ensuring that evaluation results are used to identify problems, plan new programs, and improve existing programs.