

## **TDSA FAQ's**

### **What is the Teenage Driver Safety Act?**

The Teenage Driver Safety Act (TDSA) is a graduated driver licensing program (GDL) that was introduced to the Arizona legislature on January 25, 2007. The legislation received bipartisan support with a 21-6 vote in the Senate and 50-7 vote in the House. It was signed into law by Governor Napolitano on May 14, 2007.

Prior to TDSA, Arizona was one of only five states that did not have a genuine GDL law. TDSA and other GDL programs are designed to give teen drivers full driving privileges in phases as they develop their driving skills.

### **What does TDSA mean for new teen drivers?**

TDSA will go into effect on July 1, 2008 and place the following restrictions on new teen drivers:

- Change the instruction permit time frames so that a permit may be issued to an individual who is 15 years and six months old, up from 15 years and seven months old.
- Increase the hours of supervised training necessary to obtain a driver license from 25 hours to 30 hours, of which ten must be during nighttime driving conditions.
- Require an instruction permittee to be accompanied by a licensed individual who is at least 21 years of age.
- Establish nighttime driving restrictions (midnight to 5:00 a.m.) for the first six months that a class G licensee holds the class G license and provides exemptions to the restrictions for employment, religious, school activities or family emergencies.
- Limit the number of non-family, teenage passengers in the vehicle to no more than one passenger for the first six months that a class G licensee holds the class G license.
- Establish graduated monetary penalties and extensions of the nighttime restrictions and passenger limitations for non-compliance of the restrictions and limitations.

### **Why is the TDSA necessary in Arizona?**

To save more lives on our roads.

Statistics show that car crashes are the number one killer of children and teenagers in Arizona and nationwide. From 1995 to 2005, more than 700 people in Arizona were killed in crashes involving teen drivers. However, those without teens in their household are not immune, as this issue affects everyone on the road. A study released by AAA last year showed that two out of three fatalities nationwide involving teen drivers are not the drivers themselves. Unfortunately, the rate is higher in Arizona—75% of fatalities involving teen drivers in this state are not the teen drivers, but are other drivers, passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

## TDSA FAQ's

States that have adopted legislation similar to TDSA have seen reductions in teen-related incidents by as much as 30 percent. States with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during those restricted hours. In addition, research has shown that the crash risks for teenage drivers increases exponentially with each additional passenger in a vehicle with a teenage driver. With three or more passengers, the crash risk for teenage drivers is about four times greater than when driving alone.

In the 2006 Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) [National Scorecard on State Highway Laws](#), the ENA ranked Arizona as last among the 50 states in regards to highway safety laws; six of the ten scorecard criteria reviewed states' teenage driving laws. On the 2006 [Arizona Child Fatality Review Report](#) published by the Arizona Department of Health Services, the report revealed that motor vehicle crashes continued to account for the highest number of preventable child deaths.

### **Why does TDSA target teenage drivers?**

Teenage drivers make up the majority of beginning drivers, and their crash rates are particularly high. While teens make up less than 7% of the driving population, they account for approximately 14% of drivers involved in all deadly crashes. In fact, according the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 16-year-old drivers have higher crash rates than drivers of any other age.

Studies have shown that teen drivers are more likely to engage in risky driving behavior. Because of their inexperience on the road, studies have shown that teen drivers are also the least able to cope with hazardous driving situations.

### **Why not just penalize the problem drivers?**

The logic of addressing all teenage drivers is that they are beginning drivers who do not yet have the experience necessary to navigate our roadways under a variety of conditions. It is impossible to identify the characteristics of teen drivers who are more likely to get into crashes. The TDSA is really about *protecting* our teen drivers, giving them time to develop driving skills in low-risk settings, and granting them full driving privileges as they develop their driving skills.

### **What are the nighttime driving restrictions and why are they a component of the TDSA?**

The proposed nighttime restrictions of the TDSA would be from midnight to 5:00 a.m. and would be in effect for the first six months after a class G license has been issued.

The purpose of nighttime driving restrictions is to protect teen drivers by keeping them from driving during high-risk nighttime hours during the first six months of their driving experience.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reported that four of every 10 deaths of teenagers in motor vehicles occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Studies show that

## TDSA FAQ's

states with nighttime driving restrictions in place have seen crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours.

### **What if a teenager has a job, school or religious activity that falls within the restricted driving times?**

The TDSA has exemptions for these types of activities.

### **What are the passenger restrictions and why is it a component of TDSA?**

The TDSA would limit the number of non-family, teenage passengers in the vehicle to no more than one passenger for the first six months that a class G licensee holds the class G license.

The purpose of passenger restrictions is the result of numerous studies that have shown the crash risk for teenage drivers' increases significantly with each passenger they carry. A teen driver carrying three passengers has a crash risk that is four times greater than when driving alone.

The presence of passengers is a major distraction to new teenage drivers. Restricting the number of passengers a new driver can carry will reduce a teenage driver's crash risk, making the road safer for all drivers.

### **What happens after the six month period of passenger and nighttime restrictions?**

Under the TDSA, the first six months after a class G license has been issued would serve as an intermediate license period.

If the teen driver adheres to passenger and nighttime restrictions, as well as other traffic laws, they will be granted full driving privileges at the end of the six months.

Should a new teen driver choose not to comply with the passenger and nighttime restrictions during their first six months of holding a class G license, they could be faced with monetary fines and extensions of TDSA restrictions.

### **Who is responsible for the extended driver training?**

The TDSA increases the hours of supervised training necessary to obtain a driver license from 25 hours to 30 hours, ten of which must be during nighttime driving conditions.

The increased training time must take place with a parent, guardian, approved driving school or licensed individual who is at least 21-years-old.

### **Does the TDSA apply to 17 and 18-year-olds that go to get their licenses?**

The TDSA will apply to a 17-year-old if they did not get their license until they turn 17. The restrictions would go into effect for the first six months that a teen gets their license, whenever that happens to be, prior to turning 18. If they do not get their license until they are 18, then the restrictions would not apply, except if they got

## **TDSA FAQ's**

their license late and it runs over their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or had penalties that make it so that the time period runs over their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Shouldn't it be a parent's responsibility to place restrictions on their new teen drivers?**

It's important for parents to be responsible for their teenagers, and place their own rules and restrictions upon them as new drivers.

While we know parents have their child's best interests at heart, parent's rules and regulations can vary from household to household. AAA Arizona wants all of our teens to be safe and adhere to the same guidelines.

It is easy for a parent to say "ok, just this once" in order to keep the peace at home, or because it is convenient for them.

The reality is that the TDSA will provide parents with another tool to use when enforcing safe driving practices for their teen driver.

### **Do parents and other motorists support the TDSA?**

We have had overwhelming support for the TDSA. In fact, a first-of-its kind opinion poll of Arizona residents conducted last year showed the majority of respondents' favored stronger teen driving laws, including nighttime restrictions and passenger limitations.

The poll measured the attitudes of Arizona residents towards teen drivers, and to ascertain the appeal of certain limitations on these drivers.

The poll revealed:

- Nearly 70% of respondents considered teenage drivers to have "poor" or "only fair" driving habits
- 75% of respondents would support teen driving restrictions if the new restrictions reduced the crash rates involving teen drivers
- 81% of respondents favor nighttime restrictions from midnight to 5 a.m., unless for religious, school or employment purposes
- 76% favor raising the number of supervised driving hours from 25 to 30
- 68% favor raising age of the supervising driver from 18 to 21 years
- 64% support passenger restrictions for the first six months of driving

### **Why doesn't the TDSA place more restrictions on teen drivers?**

As previously noted, Arizona was one of only five states without a GDL program in place. Most of the states with a GDL component in place have much tougher rules and guidelines than the Arizona TDSA.

As a result of past endeavors, we've made the current TDSA more modest than previous versions of this legislation, while still offering safety benefits that this legislation has been proven to provide.

## TDSA FAQ's

One of our goals in supporting the TDSA is to create a dialogue about this issue with parents, teens, decision makers and other motorists and ultimately create safer roads for everyone.

### **What other tools does AAA offer to assist parents with their new teen drivers?**

AAA offers several tools to assist parents with their new teen drivers including the [Parent to Parent Contract](#), [Teaching Your Teens to Drive](#) (CD-Rom), [Driver-Zed](#) (CD-Rom) and Dare to Prepare, a pre-permit workshop that walks you through the steps necessary to obtain a permit and a driver's license in the state of Arizona. It will also provide guidance and useful tools to help you and your teen go through the learning-to-drive process.

AAA also hosts parent/teen driving seminars that are free to AAA members. To register, call 602.650.2736.