

The Office of Governor M. Jodi Rell



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 21, 2008

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Governor Rell Announces Results of Teen Driving Survey

Governor M. Jodi Rell announced today the results of a recent statewide survey on teen driving that found a majority of those polled favored strengthening laws, toughening penalties for violations and increasing educational requirements for young drivers under 18-years-old.

The Governor said that the survey, which was done the first week of January and polled both parents and members of the public without children, found support for many of the initiatives under discussion by her Task Force on Teen Driving. The survey was requested by the task force so that a current indication of parental and public opinion could be considered when reviewing strategies.

On Friday, Governor Rell announced proposed changes to state law that aim to crack down on underage drinking and driving.

- Upon a referral to the Department of Motor Vehicles by the arresting officer for operating under the influence, the license of a 16 or 17 year old will be suspended for a period of not less than one year. The 16 or 17 year olds still have right to a hearing, but there will be no discretion on the length of the suspension. This is an entirely separate and distinct process from the criminal proceeding.
- If the license of a 16 or 17 year old is suspended for operating under the influence by DMV, the 16 or 17 year old must complete a mandatory Substance Abuse Training Program (SATP). Again, this is an entirely separate and distinct process from the criminal proceeding. DMV contracts with private entities to administer the SATP program.

“These findings are important because they show that both parents and other members of the public want change in how we deal with our teenage drivers,” Governor Rell said. “There have been too many tragedies that tell us that we need to do something more.

“Just last week, I proposed tougher drinking and driving laws for teens and this survey shows we need to take more action. It is clear that parents want safety addressed in more ways and that makes sense.”

More than three-quarters of both parents and other adults support increasing the amount of supervised driving required for drivers under the age of 18 before they receive their license (parents 75%, other adults 76%.

See full summary of findings below).

Also, the survey found support for:

- A longer learner's permit period (parents 63%, other adults 70%),
- A longer period of time when drivers under age 18 cannot carry passengers other than their parents (parents 64%, other adults 68%). Most parents responded that drivers under 18 are more likely to cause or have an accident when they have passengers in the vehicle (parents 92%, other adults 91%).
- Increased penalties for drivers under 18 with more than one moving traffic violation (parents 61%, other adults 62%).
- Extending a curfew at night for drivers under 18 (parents 51%, other adults 59%). Drivers under 18 currently cannot drive after midnight.

The survey also showed parents were very aware of the current requirements for teen drivers:

- That a teen must be 16 years old to get a learner's permit and must hold it for 4 to 6 months (97% were aware).
- That 20 hours of supervised driving are required before a teen under age 18 can take the road test for a license (91% aware).
- That in the first three months after receiving a license a driver under age 18 cannot carry passengers other than parents (93%) and cannot drive after midnight (81%).

The survey was designed and managed by PRG, Inc. of Trumbull for the Connecticut Department of Transportation in support of the Governor's Task Force on Teen Driving. The phone survey called 398 parents of teens aged 15, 16, or 17 and 409 other adults aged 18 and older during the week of January 7, 2008. The persons were selected at random. PRG conducts a number of highway traffic studies for the state and federal Departments of Transportation. It has studied teen driving for more than a decade in various states around the country and for the federal DOT.

In November, Governor Rell created a special task force to examine laws related to teen driving and to explore new ways to raise awareness among teens and their parents about critical safety issues following the accident-related deaths of several Connecticut teens. The Governor charged the group with establishing a timeframe and developing short and long term recommendations.

Summary of Findings

(Note: All percentages are combined totals of support or awareness from the survey)

Learner's Permit

Were you aware that the law in Connecticut states that a driver must be at least 16 years old to get a permit and that the permit must be held for 4 to 6 months before taking the driver's test?

Parents – 96.7 % aware

General population – 83.9 % aware

Would you support a longer permit holding period for drivers under 18?

Parents – 62.5 % support

General population – 70.4 % support

Would you support an increase in the minimum age at which a driver may get a learner's permit?

Parents – 45.7 % support
General population – 54.6 % support

Speeding and Other Moving Violations by Teen Drivers

How much do you agree with the statement: In general, drivers under 18 speed more often than older drivers?

Parents – 66.1 % support
General population – 74.8 %

How much do you agree with the statement: Drivers under 18 with more than 1 moving violation are more likely to have an accident or cause an accident than older drivers with more than 1 moving violation?

Parents – 65.1 % agree
General population – 69.7 % agree

Would you support increased penalties for drivers under 18 with more than 1 moving violation?

Parents – 61.3 % agree
General population – 62.1 % agree

Training and Education of Teen Drivers

Were you aware that drivers in Connecticut under 18 must have at least 20 hours of supervised driving before being able to take their road test?

Parents – 91 % aware
General population – 72.6 % aware

Would you support increasing the minimum required amount of supervised driving for drivers under 18?

Parents – 74.9 % support
General population – 75.5 % support

Do you plan on self teaching your teen or using a private driver's education class?

Parents – Self Teach – 11.6 %
Professional driver's education and further instruction at home – 86.5 %

Do you think that driver's education adequately trains drivers under 18 for solo driving?

Parents
48.6 % – yes
35.9 % - no

Alcohol and Teen Driving

How much do you agree with the statement: In general, drivers under 18 are more likely to drive after consuming alcohol or using illegal drugs than older drivers?

Parents – 44.5 % agree
General population – 55.2 % agree

Passengers and Teen Driving

How much do you agree with the statement: In general drivers under 18 are more likely to have an accident or cause an accident when they have other teens in the car with them?

Parents – 91.9 % agree
General pop – 91 % agree

Were you aware that in Connecticut for a period of time drivers under 18 are not allowed to carry passengers other than their parents?

Parents – 93.2 % aware
General population – 76.8 % aware

Would you support lengthening the length of time that drivers under 18 may not carry passengers other than their parents?

Parents – 63.8 % support
General population – 68.2 % support

Teen Driving and Curfews

How much do you agree with the statement: Drivers under 18 are more likely to have an accident or cause an accident at night than older drivers?

Parents – 63.3 % agree
General population – 62.1 % agree

Were you aware that in Connecticut drivers under 18 are not permitted to drive after midnight (with some specific exceptions)?

Parents – 80.7 % aware
General population – 52.3 % aware

Would you support a time earlier than midnight for the night driving restriction to begin?

Parents – 51 % support
General population – 58.9 % support

What is the earliest start time you would still support:

Parents – 10 pm – 38.4 %
11 p.m. 49.8 %

General population – 10 p.m. 45.6 %
11 p.m. – 37.3 %

Vehicle Identification of Teen Drivers

Would you support a law requiring vehicles operated by drivers under 18 to display a sticker identifying the driver as a novice driver?

Parents – 38.4 %
General population – 43.3 %