



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



January 2009 – Teen Drivers

Thomas M. Hart is Assistant Chief of Police with the State College Police Department. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

One of the biggest challenges for any parent in dealing with your teenage children is to teach them to drive safely. Some may think that the hardest part of teaching them to drive is getting them to the point that they pass their road test and get their license. I personally believe that this is just phase one and the more challenging part begins when they get their license and now are able to take the car and drive on their own. Though they now have a license to drive they still lack that experience that can only be gained from being behind the wheel and driving. I have developed the following list to help parents ease their children onto the road as they gain this valuable experience and improve their confidence and driving skills.

What parents can do:

Give 16 year olds as much driving time SUPERVISED by an adult as possible, even after the teen gets their license.

Be aware of the high risks when teen drivers and their peers travel together without any adults present. Make new drivers wait to go out with just friends until they get plenty of supervised driving time.

Don't assume that your teen drives the same way with their peers as they would when you are in the car.

Prohibit/limit late night driving that is unsupervised. Late night teen outings tend to become recreational and pose more risks.

Don't assume that seatbelts are used all of the time, especially when the teen is out with their peers unsupervised. Belt use is lower among teenagers than older people, so insist on belt use all of the time.

Choose safe cars for your teen to drive. Larger ones are safer than smaller ones! Safety features such as airbags and antilock brakes enhance safety. AVOID PERFORMANCE CARS! The combination of high performance cars and a young driver, especially with peers is *deadly*.

Prohibit driving after drinking any alcohol.

Ease your child into the more challenging driving situations such as inclement weather, trips, and congested driving.

When teens begin to drive, allow them to use the car only for specific destination trips, such as to the library, store, and work. Discourage unnecessary driving.

To instill a sense of responsibility, require your teen to shoulder a portion of the responsibility for gasoline, maintenance, and insurance costs.

Consider making the teen earn driving privileges through household chores or academic performance.

Set a good example for teens yourself by adhering to the traffic laws and safe driving practices.

When driving with your teenager, LET THEM DRIVE. They need the practice and you probably don't.

No motorcycles. Accidents involving motorcycles are much more deadly even when it is not the motorcycle driver's fault.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*
Serving State College Area School District
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer
814-237-6191
dtaylor105@gmail.com
Web address: carecentreregion.org

Centre County *Communities That Care*
Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and
Philipsburg-Osceola
Elizabeth Eckley, Community Mobilizer
814-404-9511
centrecountyctc@yahoo.com
Web address: centrecountyctc.org