



Keeping Teen Drivers Safe

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IPRC INJURY
PREVENTION
RESEARCH
CENTER

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Issue Addressed:

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the U.S.

Activity:

In Iowa, motor vehicle crashes account for more than 70% of deaths from the age of 14 through 18. Comprehensive approaches are needed to address this problem, including roadway policies to protect new drivers and improved programs to prepare teens to drive safely.

The Injury Prevention Research Center (IPRC) has partnered with state agencies, businesses, an interdisciplinary team of researchers, and families to reduce the burden of injury from motor vehicle crashes.

The IPRC has been part of a statewide coalition to ensure that Iowa has state-of-the-art policies for new drivers. In addition, the IPRC has partnered with Blank Children's Hospital to create *Steering Teens Safe*, a parent communication and driving supervision program that helps parents motivate their teens to drive safely. Evaluations of *Steering Teens Safe* were conducted through two randomized controlled trials funded by CDC and the National Institute of Health. Now, the IPRC

is actively translating the program to parents. We have integrated the program into three business workplace wellness programs, and we are working with state Driver's Education programs to make *Steering Teens Safe* available as a parent component.

Impact:

The IPRC has helped identify the burden of teen driving crashes, define causal mechanisms that explain increased risk among teens, and identify and fill policy gaps. The IPRC has also developed, evaluated, and translated prevention programs. In sum – it has been active in all public health phases of reducing this problem.

Since starting this work, the policy taskforce has been successful in upgrading the state's Graduated Driver's Licensure Law, which has led to an estimated decrease in fatalities of 15%. Evaluations of *Steering Teens Safe* estimate a 21% reduction in teen risky driving.

Population:

Novice teen drivers and their parents throughout Iowa.

A parent of a new teen driver: “Even though we feel he’s a good driver, we worry about other drivers and we worry about his reactions in unexpected circumstances.”

“This is the reason we developed *Steering Teens Safe*,” said IPRC Director Corinne Peek-Asa. “Parents play a critical role in developing the driving skills of their children, but studies show that driving is one of the tensest topics in parent-teen communication.”