



PUBLIC COMMENTS

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The National Safety Council (NSC) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit public comments about the proposed collection of information for a Youth Traffic Safety Survey. According to the Federal Register notice on June 6, 2013, The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) proposes to conduct a survey of young drivers ages 16 through 20 concerning traffic safety issues affecting young people in that age range. NHTSA expressed its intent to fill in the gaps that NHTSA has regarding young drivers.

NSC convened a conference call with our network of organizational partners and teen driving coalition members from across the country to gather their feedback about needs from such a survey. These traffic safety experts were comprised of peer-to-peer organizations, coalitions, state departments of transportation, parents, youth, prevention organizations, advocates and survivors of crashes.

During the call, we considered attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, beliefs, preferences and other factors that play a role in crashes involving teen drivers. We considered what we might need to know to identify specific problems and strategic points for intervention. What might we need to know that is not readily available through other sources of information about teen drivers? Below are potential ideas generated for the survey by these traffic safety professionals and advocates for safer teen driving.

Our comments address these areas:

- Traffic violations
- Experiences with crashes
- Driver education
- Parental oversight and GDL
- Distraction and driving
- Seat belt use
- Drinking and driving
- Speeding and racing

Traffic Violations

Because violations and consequences -- as well as the perception or threat of such consequences -- could play a role with behavior change, we suggest collecting information that could inform how to better leverage this as a prevention strategy. The survey could examine:



- Whether teens have been pulled over and the circumstances
- What level of violation could influence behavior change
- The influence of financial impact of traffic violations, including who pays fines - teens or a parent/guardian
- At what point do teens care about getting pulled over
- Whether law enforcement presence makes a difference, or whether perception of law enforcement presence through highly-visible media and/or word of mouth by peers makes a difference
- Did teens receive a speeding citation within the first six months of licensure

Experiences with crashes

We suggest examining the potential teen driver behavior change and deterrent effects of near misses. To what extent might near misses affect driving behavior? What are the experiences that teens have with near misses? Opportunities to collect information about near misses are rare, and this survey may provide an opportunity.

Driver Education

The survey could deliver insight and about how driver education is being obtained and what survey respondents are experiencing during driver education:

- Where are teens taking driver education (ex: school, private, parent) and how much did it cost
- Are teens using simulators or other technology when learning how to drive
- Who is the primary educator of new drivers
- Assess whether information about distracted driving is being taught in the classroom
- Is driving time during driver education giving teens practice time in different weather conditions

Parental Oversight and GDL

Some studies have examined parental involvement and oversight of graduated driver licensing requirements, but there is much more we could know to further improve the effectiveness of GDL:

- Are the required GDL supervised driving hours actually completed or is a parent/guardian just signing off on them
- Are parents relaxing their enforcement too soon, are they following the GDL requirements, are they requiring more



- Are teens and parents using a parent-teen agreement and if so, what are the elements of the agreement
- How are parents enforcing GDL from the teen driver's perspective
- Get insight as to whether GDL is viewed by parents as the maximum or minimum standard of enforcement
- For teens who have their licenses, assess specific parent education, involvement and supervision after they received their license?

Distraction and Driving

There is already a survey that examines teen driver texting and other cell phone use, so the recommendations regarding distraction are more general:

- What do teens define as distracted driving
- Do teens see passengers as a distraction
- Rank distractions in order of being the most challenging

Seat Belt Use

Much information has been collected regarding seat belt usage, but there is still much knowledge to gain that could lead to how to better influence teens to buckle up:

- Are teens wearing seat belts properly
- Why aren't teens buckling up
- Does media make a difference or influence a teen to buckle up

Drinking and Driving

It's possible with some of these issues, such as drinking and driving, the survey could gather prevention strategies that teens have developed for themselves that work:

- Assess how teens are protecting themselves from the dangers of driving under the influence, both in preventing themselves from getting behind the wheel while impaired as well as riding as a passenger with an impaired driver
- Do teen drivers know and understand the effects of driving impaired
- Do teens use designated drivers and what are the circumstances (e.g. what is the impairment level, if any, of designated drivers)



Speeding and Racing

Our contacts who work with teens suggest asking "Do you know of any illegal street racing in your area?" because this question would shed light on the prevalence of street racing in an indirect way. Teens who are aware of illegal street racing in their area may possibly be participating in it, or be influenced by it.

General

Suggestions that didn't fit other areas were raised:

- What is the motivation for teens to learn to drive and get their license when they decide to do so
- Are teens influenced by a peer-to-peer program within their school or community that affects/impacts teens
- Do teens belong to an organization that deals with prevention efforts for teen safe driving
- Who do the teens think are good role models for driving behaviors

The National Safety Council and our partners in safe teen driving look forward to the information that this Youth Traffic Safety Survey will bring, and the contribution it will make in helping us to develop improved crash prevention strategies.