



GDL FOR ALL NOVICE DRIVERS YOUNGER THAN AGE 21



The Issue

- Novice drivers, particularly young drivers, have a higher crash risk that is 1.4 times greater than older and more experienced drivers. Their crash risk is especially elevated during the first six months of licensure.
- Patterns of crash involvement among teens aged 18 to 20 years are very similar to patterns among 16 to 17 year-olds with high crash rates which rapidly decline with experience. Novices age 21 and older have lower initial crash rates than younger novices, and less of a learning curve, so are not a primary target group.
- Data reveal that young drivers delay licensing and are aging out of GDL requirements and are not protected as they learn to drive.

Policy Questions

1. Why should GDL apply for all novice drivers younger than 21?

This policy reduces their crash risk. Novices of all ages are at risk because of their inexperience, not age per se. GDL applies to teens younger than 18 in almost all states, but at age 18, these drivers automatically graduate to full licensure before completing the GDL program. Of concern, teens who begin driving at age 18 or later may entirely bypass GDL requirements.



2. Are GDL programs for older novice drivers effective?

Yes. A few evaluations have been conducted that provide some evidence that GDL programs for older novices can reduce their crash involvement.

3. Do many beginners in the U.S. bypass some or all of the GDL requirements?

Yes. Nationally representative surveys reveal that approximately 1 in 4 teens (about 25%) aged 18 and older have not yet begun the licensing process. It has been estimated that as many as 1 in 3 (or 36%) of beginners in the U.S. will be licensed after their 18th birthday and will be exempt from most or all GDL requirements beyond the learner stage.

4. Do GDL restrictions influence teens to delay licensure?

No. The most common reasons that teens delay licensing until an older age include not having a vehicle, being able to use other types of transportation, and the cost of driving. Some teens may also delay licensing to avoid peer pressure when they are behind the wheel. There is little evidence that GDL itself is a major reason or motivator for delaying licensure.

5. Do any U.S. states apply GDL to those 18 and over?

Yes. Seven jurisdictions¹ have policies that apply to novices 18 and older, and New Jersey applies full GDL rules to novices through age 20. New Jersey requirements include a 6 month learner stage plus night and passenger restrictions for one year. Older novices have fewer requirements and the learner stage is 3 months for older novices. An evaluation of the program in New Jersey showed positive effects. Studies in Canada and Australia also demonstrated that GDL reduced crashes among older novice drivers.

6. Do teens support this GDL policy?

Yes. A survey of 17 to 19 year olds in New Jersey indicated 3 out of 4 (or 77%) approved of the policy.

7. Are there other options available to extend GDL to older novices?

Yes. Maryland and Connecticut apply only the learner period requirement to novice drivers aged 18 or older. In addition, these states do not permit teen drivers who have not completed GDL requirements before age 18 to graduate to a full license at age 18.

¹ DC, IN, ME, MD, CT, MN, NJ



Examples of Practice

States that have adopted GDL requirements for young novice drivers utilize a variety of implementation strategies to apply GDL to 16 and 17 year olds as well as to older novices.

These approaches are briefly described below and can be considered by states that are interested in pursuing this component of the GDL Framework.

- **New Jersey.** This state has the most complete system. The full GDL program is consistently applied to all novices younger than 21 years. Features include a 6 month learner stage, night driving restrictions (11 p.m. to 5 a.m.) and passenger restrictions (no more than 1 passenger). Novice drivers aged 21 years and older are required to complete a learner holding period of 3 months.
- **District of Columbia.** License applicants younger than age 21 must complete the intermediate stage of the GDL program. If the requirements are not completed by age 21, these drivers graduate to full license status. Completing the learner stage is a pre-requisite before entering the intermediate stage, and a nighttime restriction (9 p.m. to 6 a.m.) is a feature of the learner stage.
- **Indiana.** Operator licenses issued to individuals younger than age 21 are probationary (provisional) licenses. Persons with a probationary license must adhere to both the night and passenger restriction for 6 months or until age 21, whichever occurs first. In addition, probationary license holders under age 18 are subject to a night restriction that goes beyond the initial 6 months and lasts until age 18. During the first 6 months the restriction is from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., and thereafter, from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. Sunday to Friday and 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.
- **Maine.** Teen drivers younger than age 18 years are required to complete driver education to obtain a learner's permit and a driver's license. For license applicants younger than age 21, the learner permit holding period and the certification of practice driving (70 hours, 10 of which must be at night) are applied. The 9 month period of license restrictions may extend beyond the person's 18th birthday until they have completed it.

For more information about the current status of states with GDL policies that apply to novices 18 and older, please refer to the GDL Framework Online Resource Center: Priority Component - GDL for all novice drivers under age 21 (<http://gdlframework.tirf.ca/module/components/gdl-for-all-novice-drivers-younger-than-21/tools-to-support-applying-gdl-to-novice-drivers-younger-than-21/>).

Policies in other countries

In Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, GDL applies to older novice drivers. The length of time spent in the GDL program determines when novice drivers graduate to full driving privileges. Novice drivers are not able to graduate from the program upon reaching a specific age.

- **Canada.** Full GDL policies apply to all novices regardless of age in Canada. To view GDL and driver education requirements for each jurisdiction in Canada visit the Young and Novice Driver Resource Centre (www.yndrc.tirf.ca).



- **Australia and New Zealand.** Policies in several Australian states and New Zealand are adapted to older novice drivers. For example:
 - In Victoria the minimum holding period in the learner stage is 12 months for novices under age 21. For novices aged 21 to under age 25 the period is 6 months, and just 3 months for novices aged 25 and older.
 - In South Australia, GDL conditions are applied to all applicants under the age of 25. Night driving restrictions and passenger restrictions are not applied to older novice drivers.
 - In New Zealand, novices under the age of 25 can apply for a full license if they hold a current restricted (intermediate) license and have held it for at least 18 months (or at least 12 months if they have successfully completed an approved advanced driving skills course). Novices 25 years of age or older can apply if they hold a current restricted (intermediate) license and have held it for at least 6 months (or at least 3 months if they successfully completed an approved advanced driving skills course).

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