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**Driver Education and Traffic
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from Recent Driver
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**2016 Annual ADTSEA
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Driver Education and Traffic Safety Programs: Findings from Recent Driver Education Studies

Nina Jo Saint and Patricia J. Larke, EdD.²

This paper discusses the findings from two recent studies that have shown a safety effect for young drivers who have completed driver education programs. The two studies are: 1) Evaluation of Beginner Driver Education Programs: Studies in Manitoba and Oregon by Mayhew, Marcoux, Wood, Simpson, Vanlaar, Lonero, and Clinton (2014); and 2) Driver Education and Teen Crashes and Violations in The First Two Years Of Driving In a Graduated Driver Licensing System by Shell, Newman, Cordova-Cazar, and Heese (2014). To provide a context for the review, this paper also includes sections on background and the history of driver education studies.

Background

Driver education programs are available as either a mandatory requirement of the licensing process or on a voluntary basis to novice drivers in the United States of America (USA). Successful completion of a driver education program is part of graduated driver licensure systems for people under the age of eighteen in many jurisdictions. It is a widely held belief that young people feel that obtaining a driver's license is a rite of passage that enables them to become a productive member of society and more importantly, this passage provides them the opportunity to drive to and from work and for recreational purposes. However, young people

while acknowledging that obtaining a driver's license is a privilege, this privilege, comes with obligations, responsibilities, and consequences. One of the consequences is a motor vehicle crash which is the leading cause of injury and death for teens (CDC, 2014). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) crashes are a predictable and preventable public health problem (CDC, 2014). Driver education can be the foundation of a systems approach to address this public health issue. In an effort to provide some consistency and competence in driver education programs across the United States, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) supported the creation of the "Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards" (NTDETAS) (USDOT, 2009).

Driver education experts from across the United States and Canada were involved in the development of the NTDETAS. The NTDETAS includes the areas of administration, education and training, instructor training, parental involvement, and coordination with driver licensing (USDOT, 2009). States are able to evaluate how their driver education program aligns to the NTDETAS by completing a self-assessment evaluation found on the Information Sharing System on the

Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education's (ANSTSE) webpage (<http://www.anstse.info/Survey/survey/index.php>) (ANSTSE, 2015). ANSTSE has also developed classroom and online delivery standards, teacher training standards, and National Driver Education Standards (update to the NTDETAS) (ANSTSE, 2015). ANSTSE provides both on-site and off-site technical assistance, at no cost to states in assisting with the implementation of the National Driver Education Standards (NDES) and the improvement of their driver education program. The ANSTSE website provides resources to assist states with improvements to their program. For more information on Technical Assistance and Resources visit www.anstse.info/technicalassistance.html (ANSTSE, 2015).

NHTSA also supports driver education as a component of NHTSA's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) System model. This support can be found in the NHTSA GDL model: a), Stage 1: Learner's Permit includes "completion of basic driver training" and in Stage 2: Intermediate (Provisional) License phase noting that states should include "completion of advanced driver education training (safe driving decision-making, risk education),"

(continued on page 4)

and other educational components (NHTSA, 2008).

History of Driver Education Studies

For many years, researchers have grappled with driver education and its impact on drivers. While it is commonly believed these programs teach new drivers how to pass a knowledge test and road test, there is still much debate regarding the role of driver education programs in producing safer drivers. Previous driver education research has not shown a significant finding that these programs produce safer drivers or have a safety effect. The Large-Scale Evaluation of Driver Education: Review of the Literature on Driver Education Evaluation 2010 Update, (pages 31 - 33 summarizes results of previous driver education studies) included the following five United States studies: (1) Robertson and Zador (1978) study involving twenty-seven states in which the findings showed that there is no relationship between the drivers who completed a driver education course and the fatality rates; (2) Dekalb County Georgia (1980 & 1983) study findings showed that the drivers studied had fewer collisions for the first six months, but not beyond that time; (3) Levy (1990) study's findings involving forty-seven states, showed only a small effect on fatal crashes; (4) McKenna, Yost, Munzenrider and Young (2000) study in Pennsylvania showed that driver education programs did not produce drivers with lower crashes or convictions; and (5) Masten and Chapman (2003 & 2004) study in California findings showed that the

home-based program was better for the knowledge and attitude exams while the classroom was better for the Department of Motor Vehicle's knowledge exam (Lonerio, L. & Mayhew, D, 2010). Findings from these studies and others indicate it is difficult to determine if driver education just does not work to reduce crashes or that the research is inaccurate because of study limitations (Mayhew, D., et. al., 2014). As a result, some states have chosen to not fund driver education programs or just eliminated the need for driver education programs altogether by not requiring program completion to obtain a driver's license.

A study by Curry, García-España, Winston, Ginsburg, and Durbin, "Variations in Teen Driver Education by State Requirements and Sociodemographics," described findings concerning diverse populations including ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender disparities (Curry, García España, Flauro, Winston, Ginsburg, & Durbin, 2011). Results of this study showed that there is a disproportionate number of diverse learners who do not complete formal driver education instruction in the states without a driver education requirement for licensing (Curry, et. al., 2011). In states that did not have a licensing requirement for driver education, it was found that more than "1 in 3" young drivers did not receive formal driver education classroom instruction and more than "one-half" did not receive formal behind-the-wheel training (Curry, et. al., 2011). This study finding showed that approximately three-fourths of

the Latino/Latina young drivers in these states obtain a driver's license without completing a formal driver education program (Curry, et. al., 2011).

Three Recent Driver Education Studies

Evaluation of Beginner Driver Education Programs: Studies in Manitoba and Oregon by Mayhew, Marcoux, Wood, Simpson, Vanlaar, Lonerio, and Clinton (2014) and Driver Education and Teen Crashes and Violations in The First Two Years of Driving In a Graduated Driver Licensing System by Shell and Newman (Mayhew, et. al., 2014; Shell, et. al., 2014) will be discussed briefly in this section. A third study will also be reviewed.

The Oregon and Manitoba Study Findings from "The Evaluation of Beginner Driver Education Programs: Studies in Manitoba and Oregon" was published in September 2014. The study was supported by AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA), and Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). The goals of the study were to feature acceptable and useful driver education program evaluation approaches, achieve newer knowledge about the safety results and efficacy of driver education programs, and propose ways to improve the "content and delivery" of driver education to expand the safety gains (Mayhew, et. al., 2014).

In Oregon, The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) approved Driver Education Program consists of thirty hours of classroom instruction, six hours of behind the wheel instruction, and six hours of observation instruction. The study included “The New Driver Survey,” longitudinal comparison of driver education (DE) teens and non-DE teens’ safety, and a cross-sectional comparison of driving records of DE and non-DE teens (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). Findings from the New Driver Survey showed that Oregon DE teens increased their knowledge about “graduated driver licensing (GDL) and safe driving practices, had greater self-reported skills, and more driving exposure” (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). With that stated, the findings also showed that the DE teens’ knowledge level was low (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). Findings from the cross-sectional comparison of over 94,000 driving records of DE and non-DE teens showed a modest, positive safety effect as noted by a 4.3% lower incidence rate of collisions for DE teens and 39.3% lower incident of traffic convictions for DE teens (Mayhew, et. al., 2014).

In Manitoba, the MPI-Driver Education Program consists of thirty hours of classroom instruction, eight hours of behind the wheel instruction, and eight hours of observation instruction. The study had over 11,000 high school students in Manitoba complete a New Driver Questionnaire. The study also compared performance on a simulated drive test of small groups of teen drivers who had and had

not taken driver education. The finding showed that “DE was associated with slightly greater safe driving knowledge, greater self-reported skills, fewer self-reported risk-taking behaviors, better performance on a simulated drive test, and stronger hazard anticipation” (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). However, the findings showed that the “DE teens still failed to identify many hazards” (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). The Nebraska Study

The 2015 Nebraska study was conducted by Duane Shell and Ian Newman, Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The name of the study is “Driver Education and Teen Crashes and Violations in the First Two Years of Driving in a Graduated Driver Licensing System” (Shell, et. al., 2014). The study involved a review of the records of 151,800 Nebraska young drivers who received a permit between 2003 and 2010 (Shell, et. al., 2014). Of this group of young drivers approximately

53% completed a state-approved driver's education program and the remaining young drivers studied received a permit by completing fifty hours of driving supervision by a parent or another other adult (Shell, et. al., 2014). The findings from the study showed that the drivers who completed a driver education program had both fewer traffic violations and crashes. The findings are as follows and shown in Figure 1:

- 11.1 percent of the driver education cohort was involved in a car crash, compared to 12.9 percent of those who did not take driver education.
- 2.1 percent of the driver education group was involved in a collision that caused injury or death, compared to 2.6 percent of those who did not take driver education.
- 10.4 percent of students who took driver education received citations for moving traffic violations, compared to 18.3 percent of those who did not take driver education (Shell, et. al., 2014).(Mayhew, et. al., 2014).

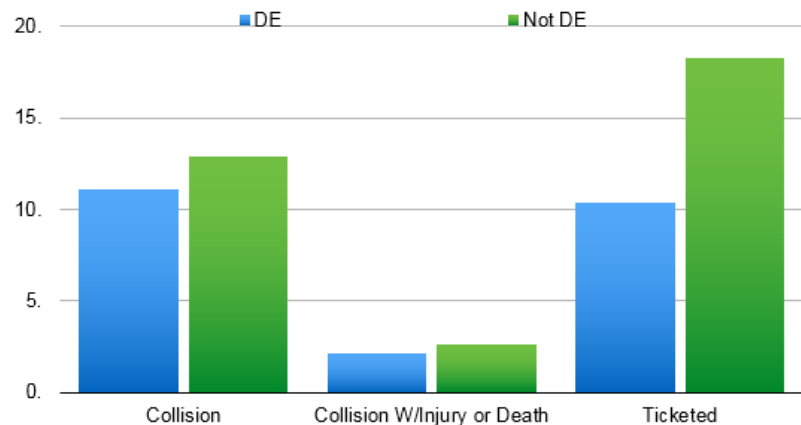


Figure 1. Nebraska Comparison of DE and Not DE Student: Collisions, Collisions with Injury or Death, and Ticketed (Shell, D. F., et. al., 2014).]

Summary

The findings from the Oregon and Nebraska studies concluded that there are modest, positive safety effects for teen drivers. These findings provide evidence that driver training can impact traffic citations and crash rates for teen drivers. The Oregon's study shows a 4.3% lower incidence of collisions and a 39.3% lower incident of traffic convictions for driver education teens (Mayhew, et. al., 2014). The Nebraska findings showed that completion of a driver education program results in fewer teen crashes and traffic citations in the first two years of driving in a graduated licensing system. The Nebraska study shows 11.1 percent of the driver education teens involved a car crash, compared to 12.9 percent of non-driver education teens; 2.1 percent of the driver education teens involved in a crash that caused injury or death, compared to 2.6 percent of non-driver education teens; and 10.4 percent of driver education teens received a moving traffic citation, compared to 18.3 percent of the non-driver education teens (Shell, et. al., 2014). These studies did have methodical limitations which was the lack of randomization as teens self-selected whether they took driver education or not (Shell, et. al., 2014; CDC, 2014).

These findings should encourage states that have a driver education requirement for driver licensing to continue this process. For states that do not require driver education for driver licensing, hopefully these finding will encourage states to adopt and implement driver

education programs following National Driver Education Standards (ANSTSE, 2015). While these recent studies show merit and provide evidence that driver education programs appear to reduce crashes and citations more research is needed to further determine the safety effects of driver education programs for teenagers. In addition, more research is needed to evaluate what should be taught in a driver education program to improve the quality of driver education.

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- Unit 14: Tire Safety



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