

Teen Safe Driving Communications Plan for High School Students

Presented by the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles Teen Advisory Council

Strategy #1: Teen Safe Driving Group at Your School

Most schools have SADD chapters and/or student councils in their schools, but few have a teen safe driving group or club. Each high school in Connecticut should create a teen safe driving group to help raise awareness about the dangers of teen driving and to promote the teen driving laws. The group could organize events throughout the year to spread the message about driving safely to their peers.

Strategy #2: School-Wide Announcements Over Intercom System

One of the best ways to reach every single student in school is through the intercom system. Most high schools have morning and afternoon announcements. Choose one day of the week to make an announcement about teen safe driving every week for the entire school year. Preferably the announcement should be made in the afternoon, before teens get into their cars to drive home. The ideal day of the week for the announcements to be made would be either Thursday or Friday because most teens drive more on the weekends. The student making the announcement could be any student from the school, including: the class president, a member of the new teen safe driving group, a member of the SADD organization, a student involved in an accident, or a student affected by another person's poor driving. It would be best to switch announcers every week (or somewhat regularly) so the students stay interested. The message should be short, simple, and easy to understand. The student can read an interesting driving statistic, remind students to buckle up, or follow the teen driving laws.

Strategy #3: School-wide Poster Contest

Launch a poster contest within your high school to promote Connecticut's teen safe driving laws. Consider making it mandatory (or for extra credit) in health class, gym class or art class. Also, advertise the contest throughout the entire school so every student can get involved. You can choose a specific theme for the posters or have different categories and a winner in each category. Suggestions for poster contest topics include:

- Curfew law
- Passenger restrictions law
- Prohibition on using cell phones while driving
- Buckle your seatbelt
- Don't drink and drive
- Dangers of Speeding

Make sure you create a list of criteria that must be followed to be eligible, such as size of poster, what materials can be used to create poster (markers, crayons, computer), no copy written material allowed, etc. Also let students know what criteria the posters will be judged on, such as creativity, impact of message, artistic quality, etc.

Create a judging panel for the posters made up of a teacher, a student, a law enforcement official, DMV official, etc. If funds are available at the school, the winning poster(s) can be enlarged or duplicated and placed around the school or within the town. The first

place winner(s) should be placed in a prominent place in the school such as the main entrance or the cafeteria. All of the other entries can be hung in the hallways. Reach out to your local paper to see if it would print the winning poster(s) in a special section of the paper as the reward for the winner(s) or think of another special prize for the winner(s).

Strategy #4: Teen Safe Driving Banner

Create a school banner that promotes teen safe driving. The banner could be a collage of the teen driving laws such as, the curfew or passenger restrictions laws, buckling your seatbelt, and/or the consequences of drinking and driving and speeding. The banner could be used in parades, at athletic events or placed in a prominent area at the entrance of the school.

Strategy #5: School Athletic Event/ “Teen Driving Night”

Hold a teen driving night at a well-attended, popular athletic event. Organize a special event during halftime, such as a shootout in basketball, catching a football, etc. Have students enter the contest by answering a teen driving question correctly. Donate a front row parking space to the winner. During the game, have brochures and other information available at the concession stand.

The cheerleaders or another organization can create a teen driving banner that the players can run through at the beginning of the game. The cheerleaders can also perform a teen safe driving cheer during halftime.

Have a booth set up at the entrance of the gymnasium, football field, etc. with brochures and fact sheets that students, teachers, and parents can read. Don't just educate the fans in teen safe driving, but educate the players as well. Have each team's captain(s) talk about teen safe driving and encourage team members to follow laws.

Strategy #6 Teen Safe Driving Awareness Day

Organize a teen safe driving awareness day or awareness week. Get a group together and brainstorm different ways you could spread awareness. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Print out statistics in big, bold, letters and hang them up all over the hallways.
- Have a booth in the cafeteria with 5-question teen driving quizzes. Those who get all of the answers right will be entered into a raffle for a front row parking spot.
- If funds and resources available, organize a mock crash to symbolize the day.
- Coordinate guest speakers to come in that day/week (see assemblies below).
- Put teen driving brochures and fact sheets on the student cars in the parking lot.
- Organize a school-wide activity. Take students out of class and have them dress in all white. Let other students see that deaths due to unsafe driving could happen to anyone.
- Have a moment of silence for all of the teens who have passed away due to unsafe driving.

Strategy #7 In the Classroom

One of the best ways for students to get information is through the classroom. Have the administration require each first-period class donate 20 minutes a month to talk about teen safe driving and allow students to share their personal experiences.

Teachers can also give a 10-question quiz on an issue the students are studying in the class. The teacher can make the classroom very disruptive to see how well the children can concentrate. After the quiz the teacher can compare it to distracted driving.

Strategy #8 Guest Speaker Assemblies

Organize a school-wide assembly that features one or more speakers to promote safe and responsible driving. Assemblies provide a cheap, easy and effective forum to send a direct message to a large group of people. The presenter(s) should be someone with special knowledge relating to teen driving.

While the speakers' backgrounds could vary, the overall message should highlight the importance of safe driving. Think locally when considering who the school can invite to speak. There may be people within your community that could offer a personal story with a connection to your town or school. The intended safety message may be more powerful if your audience can relate better to a person, place or thing within a presentation.

Here's a list of speakers you could invite to your school that should be able to deliver a clear and significant message:

- A teen, possibly from within your school, who can share a unique driving or passenger experience that underscores the need for responsible and safe operation of a motor vehicle.
- A member of the DMV's Teen Advisory Council to speak about why teenagers should take a more active role to promote safe driving.
- A local police officer who could speak to the enforcement of teen driving laws and possible consequences for violating the laws.
- A local emergency medical technician or firefighter who could talk about responding to accidents as a first-hand witness to teen driving crashes.
- A DMV staff member who can talk about the teen driving laws and the process for getting a driver's license.
- A physician or pediatric surgeon from a local hospital or from the University of Connecticut Health Center's Department of Pediatrics at Connecticut Children's Hospital, such as Dr. Brendan Campbell.
- A parent who has lost a child due to a teen-driving related crash. One possibility could be Mourning Parents Act, Inc., otherwise known as !MPACT, or other groups offering those kinds of speakers.
- A school administrator, teacher or guidance counselor who can relate a personal story of a former student who was involved in a serious motor vehicle crash.
- A representative from your local Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) or Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) who can speak about the missions of their respective organizations.

- Any person you can think of who can offer an interesting story or information that encourages teens to drive safe.

Strategy #9 School Newspapers/Newsletters

School newspapers and newsletters have a specific audience – students. Most schools have a newspaper or newsletter that informs this targeted audience. Take advantage of this communication tool. Contact your school newspaper/newsletter editor and offer to submit a story (and photos if possible) on the issue of safe teen driving to generate attention in your school. The story could spotlight a safe-driving related event at your school, inform readers about the new teen driving laws, or feature newly licensed drivers who discuss the dangers faced while behind the wheel. A focused and responsible article can be a valuable tool to raise awareness and spark meaningful discussions of this important issue in your school.

Strategy #10 School Dances

School dances are popular social events that offer a low-stress and enjoyable environment for teens. Propose to your school student council to organize a dance in the school gym or cafeteria with a theme that relates to being a responsible driver. Think of a catchy name for the event that promotes safe driving. Consider creating a “safe-driving promise” card and make copies of it. Then, require students to sign the card before receiving a ticket to the event. Develop creative ways promote the dance’s theme throughout the evening.

Strategy #11 School Web Site

A Web site can be a valuable communications tool. Most high schools have their own Web site. Contact your school’s webmaster and utilize your school’s site. Here are some ideas on how you could use the site:

- Provide a link to the DMV web site (ct.gov/teendriving) for information on the new laws
- Post statistics related to teen driving
- Create a page to share a student’s personal story related to safe driving
- Utilize class time to help students think of unique ways to use the site
- Make a class assignment to develop a web page
- Promote Web site by requiring students to visit the sign to get information for a class assignment.
- Start a student blog, moderated by a teacher, to generate discussion about the issue of teen driving.
- Find a useful teen safe driving fact of the week and post it on the site.