

## **Governor's Task Force on Teen Safe Driving**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting date: January 11, 2008**

**Time: 10 a.m.**

**Place: Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Room 1B**

*Task force members present:* Commissioner Robert M. Ward (Co-Chairman), Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D. (Co-Chairman), Stephen Simalchik, Lt. Col. Peter R. Terenzi, Robert L. Willsey, Bill Ciotto, Dean Pagani, Yvette Bello, Jim MacPherson, Mario Damiata, Joseph Cristalli, Timothy S. Hollister, Stephanie Demchik-Pascual, Brendan T. Campbell, M.D., Albert S. Dabrowski, , Sherry Chapman, Chief James Rio, Rose Marie Cipriano, Dr. Jack Thaw, Susan Naide, Gillian Mosier

*Task force members absent:* Tony Cashman, Paula Burchard, Charles Hollis

*Others present:* David Preusser, Maria Cruz (Big A Driving School)

#### **Proceedings:**

##### **1) Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. by Co-Chair Ward.

##### **2) Presentation on teen behavior and attitudes toward driving -- Dr. Thaw**

Dr. Thaw made a presentation to the task force regarding the attitudes and behaviors of 21<sup>st</sup> century generation teenagers. His discussion outlined the following factors:

- Today's teens growing up in a 21<sup>st</sup> century society that creates pressures and stress not experienced by previous generations.
- The link between the parent/teen communication and its relationship to a teen's driving behavior. Connection and discipline that parents show towards their teenager is linked to the use of motor vehicles by that teenager.
- The role of emotionally safe dialogue between teenagers and their parents, and how that influences driving outcome. There is a difference between process and content. Content is what you talk about; process is how you talk about it. Process trumps content every time. If the process is not emotionally safe, it may not be effective.

After the presentation, Co-Chair Galvin said that the task force should be mindful of issues facing teens in inner-cities. Mr. Hollister said that an item like a "parent-teenager" contract may be an example of emotionally safe dialogue. Ms. Cruz said based on her experience the "weak link" in this process is the parents.

**3) Report on short-term recommendations from Legislative Subcommittee – Mr. Hollister**

Mr. Hollister spoke on behalf of the task force's law subcommittee to outline short-term recommendations to changes in the law. Mr. Hollister distributed a memo to the task force members that was broken into two parts – 1) Defining Connecticut's Teen Safe Driving Problem, 2) Recommendations for 2008 legislative action. There were seven short-term recommendations:

1. Eliminate "youthful offender" pleas for moving violations.
2. Strengthen penalties under the "Administrative Per Se" program for teenage drivers who fail alcohol, drug, or urine tests.
3. Amend Conn. Gen. Stat. § 14-36g(a)(4) [part of GDL requirements] to require (a) that all passengers in all seats in any vehicle operated by a driver under age 20 wear seat belts; and (b) increase penalties for drivers 16 – 19 years old who do not wear their seat belt, to provide for points toward license suspension/revocation.
4. Revise passenger restrictions for 16 – 19 year olds to sequential periods as follows:
  - (a) During the entire period that a teenage driver holds a learner's permit, except for students who are in the vehicle as part of driving school or driver education instruction, and the instructor, no passengers are permitted except a parent or guardian who is supervising the driver.
  - (b) For first six months after a teenage driver progresses from a learner's permit to a provisional/intermediate license, no passengers except parent/guardian or one licensed driver over 20, licensed for four years or more, license currently valid.
  - (c) For next six months, add to allowable passengers immediate family members, no others.
5. Increase the penalties for moving violations committed by teenage drivers.
6. As soon as this can be accomplished administratively, increase the learner's permit period of required, supervised driver training/practice from the current 20 hours to 50 hours.
7. Amend night time driving curfew for drivers 18 and younger from midnight to 10:00 p.m.; retain current exceptions.

Co-Chair Ward opened the floor to discussion of the recommendations, but added that no vote would be held by the task force during this meeting. In addition, Co-Chair Ward said the public could comment on the recommendations through the task force's Web site.

**4) Report on long-term recommendations from Legislative Subcommittee – Mr. Hollister**

Mr. Hollister spoke on behalf of the task force's law subcommittee to outline the long-term recommendations. Mr. Hollister distributed a memo to the task force members that broke down ideas for subject matter for longer term recommendations to be discussed. Those subjects included: minimum age for learner's permits,

training and education for 18 and 19-year-olds, driver curriculum and training materials, parent and guardian awareness/education/oversight, penalties, enforcement, data gathering/public opinion and administrative functions of state agencies.

#### **5) Creation of additional subcommittees**

The task force consented to several new subcommittees be formed. These committees were:

- Training and education (Chaired by: Mr. MacPherson and Ms. Mosier)
- Public and parental awareness (Chaired by: Ms. Bello and Ms. Cipriano)
- Comparison of other states' laws, policies and regulations. (Chaired by: Dr. Campbell and Mr. Hollister)

The subcommittees have until April 4 to make a final report back to the full task force. In addition, there will be two interim meetings (Feb. 15 and Mar. 14) where the subcommittees can update the entire task force. In addition, Co-Chair said the task force should consider two or three public hearings in February. Members of the task force were asked to contact subcommittee co-chairs if they wish to serve on a particular committee.

#### **6) Parental and general public survey on teen driving issues**

Mr. Preusser discussed a survey that is currently being administered by telephone via random-digit dialing throughout the state. The survey is being conducted through a sample of 400 households, and 400 parents of 15, 16 and 17-year-olds. The survey will analyze attitudes on teen driving issues, including ideas for changes in current laws.

#### **7) Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.