

## What Every Atlanta, Georgia Parent Should Know As Their Teenager Approaches Driving Age

Getting a driver's license is a rite of passage for Atlanta, Georgia teenagers. Teenage driving is also a topic of great concern for parents and rightfully so. According to the Georgia Department of Driver Services (GDDS), in the year 2000, one out of five fatal crashes in Georgia involved speed, with drivers ages 16-17 having the highest rate of motor vehicle fatalities. Statistics like this led to a collaborative effort of highway safety advocates, legislators, law enforcement officials, educators, businesses and media for the creation of a number of laws aimed at educating and slowly introducing Georgia teenagers to the privilege of driving. These are laws that every Atlanta, Georgia Parent should be familiar with as their teenager approaches driving age.

The first such law enacted by our Georgia Legislators is **The Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA)**. Enacted on July 1, 1997, TADRA is a three-step educational process that requires Georgia teenagers obtain the experience they need before being granted a full license:

**STEP ONE - INSTRUCTIONAL PERMIT (CP)** - At the age of 15, a Georgia teenager can obtain an instructional permit upon the passing of a written examination. This type of permit allows a Georgia teenager to drive as long as they are accompanied by a passenger who is at least 21 years old and possesses a valid Class C driver's license.

**STEP TWO - INTERMEDIATE LICENSE (Class D)** - Georgia teenagers between the ages of 16 and 18 who have held an Instructional Permit for 12 months, may take a driving test and if passed, they may obtain an Intermediate License (Class D). The Intermediate License has a number of very important restrictions:

1. No driving between the hours of 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. No exceptions.
2. Passenger restrictions:
  - **For the initial six-month period immediately following the issuance of an Intermediate License**, a Georgia teenager may not drive with any other passenger in the vehicle that is not a member of the driver's immediate family.
  - **During the second six-month period immediately following issuance of Intermediate License**, a Georgia

teenager may not drive with more than one other passenger in the vehicle who is less than 21 years of age. This restriction does not apply to passengers that are members of the driver's immediate family.

- **After the second six-month period**, a Georgia teenager may not drive with more than three other passengers in the vehicle who are less than 21 years of age. This restriction also does not apply to passengers that are members of the driver's immediate family.

**STEP THREE - A FULL LICENSE (Class C)** – A Georgia teenager who reaches the age of 18 having held an Intermediate License for 12 months and having incurred no major traffic convictions during that 12 month period will finally be granted a Class C License. The following violations must not occur during the preceding 12 month period:

- DUI
- Eluding a police officer
- Drag racing
- Reckless driving
- Hit and run
- Any violation that assesses four or more points on the driver's license

The Second Law that every Atlanta, Georgia parent should be familiar with as their teenager approaches driving age is Georgia's "Joshua's Law." Enacted on January 1, 2007, Joshua's Law requires that all 16-year-olds applying for an Intermediate License (Class D) must complete a Department of Driver Services *Approved* driver education course *AND* complete a total of 40 hours of *supervised* driving, 6 hours of which must be at night, with a parent or guardian's sworn verification that these driving requirements have been met. Any Georgia teenager who has *not* completed an approved driver education course must wait until age 17 to be eligible for an Intermediate License. He or she must still complete a total of at least 40 hours of supervised driving, including at least 6 hours at night. The same verification in writing by a parent or guardian is required.

The Third Set of Laws that every Atlanta, Parent should be familiar with before allowing their teenager the privilege of driving concern the use of a cell phone while driving. According to the **National Highway Transportation Safety Administration**, 16% of all distracted driving crashes involve drivers under the age of 20. Therefore, it should not be surprising that **Georgia law regarding texting while driving** bans texting for all drivers of any age. However, for Georgia teenagers holding an Intermediate License, **Georgia law** bans *all* cell phone use (both handheld and hands-free) while driving.

These laws have generally been viewed as successful in educating Georgia Teenagers in just how dangerous a motor vehicle can be as well as easing them into the privilege of driving a motor vehicle on Georgia roads. In fact, according to the GDDS, in the 18 months after the enactment of TADRA there was a 44.5 percent decline in teenage speed-related crashes, which was five times less than the rate of drivers over age 24. However, many believe that more is needed. Check back here frequently as we will post any updates to Georgia Law that Parents of teenagers should be familiar with as soon as they are enacted.

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### **Sources**

Georgia Department of Driver Services

<http://www.dds.ga.gov/drivers/DLdata.aspx?con=1742926996&ty=ten>

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration

<http://distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/faq.html>

Joshua's Law

<http://www.gateendrivereducation.dds.ga.gov/>

### **Related Web Resource**

Georgia General Assembly

[http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009\\_10/search/hb23.htm](http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/search/hb23.htm)