



DRIVE SMART

VIRGINIA



CEREMONY RESOURCE

GUIDE

**With Freedom Comes
Great Responsibility**

A Guide to Assist Juvenile and
Domestic Relations Court Judges
in Conducting the Juvenile Driver
Licensing Ceremony

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

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Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges rarely have an opportunity to interact with teenagers in a positive setting. Usually, a teenager is before the judge because he or she is accused of violating the law. The Juvenile Driver Licensing Ceremony required by Virginia Code §46.2-336 gives judges an opportunity to have a positive interaction with teenage drivers. While it is incumbent upon the judge during the ceremony to impress upon the teenagers and their parents the responsibility that comes with a license to drive; this can be done in a manner that is serious, yet recognizes the excitement of this important milestone in our culture.

The price of this rite of passage is steep. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles, teenagers represent only 10 percent of the population, yet they represent 13 percent of the deaths on the highways, and 14 percent of the injuries. Automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for these age group nationwide, states the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The purpose of the driver licensing ceremony is to take the opportunity to explain to parents and their children that a great deal of responsibility goes with this “ticket to freedom.”

It is not the purpose of the ceremony to conduct a “mini driver’s education” class. Evidence shows that it is often not poor driving skills that cause crashes among this age group; it is inexperience and attitude. Judges should take this opportunity to explain to the parents and teens present that although the teens have attained basic driving skills through an approved driver education program, they are not necessarily ready to get behind the wheel of a car alone. Teenagers need to hear that they are inexperienced. Parents and teens need to know that parents have the final say as to whether their son or daughter is really prepared for this responsibility.

This guide is designed to be a resource for judges. It contains suggestions for conducting your ceremony, statistics, resources that you may want to use during your ceremony, and ideas from your colleagues. In addition, it includes items that you may want to reproduce and give to parents to use in discussions with their children once they get home. While we would all like to think that parents will take the time to discuss the seriousness of this event with their children, we know that many parents fail to do so. Our hope is that if you impress upon parents their role, encourage them to talk to their children, and provide them with copies of some of the tools included in this guide, we can take a step toward minimizing the risks associated with teenage drivers.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the judges, organizations, and individuals who played a part in developing this resource guide. We hope that you find it useful and we invite you to provide us with feedback.

PART TWO

JUVENILE DRIVER LICENSING CEREMONY AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES SURVEY

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Appreciation is expressed to the many judges who responded to the survey about their licensing ceremonies and traffic safety issues. The response rate for the survey was 66 percent. The information that judges provided was shared with the Supreme Court of Virginia and was used to develop this resource guide. A summary of survey responses follows.

SCHEDULING OF COURT CASES

Most courts hear juvenile traffic cases in the early morning (51). Others hear cases in the afternoon (15) or late morning (9).

There are a number of factors that influence the times juvenile traffic dockets are set; the most common are scheduling of other types of court cases (44), police officers' schedules (38) and school schedules (26). Other factors include lawyers' schedules and parents' schedules. Judges were almost evenly split on whether or not juvenile traffic cases should be scheduled to avoid or minimize conflicts with school schedules.

THE LICENSING CEREMONY

The majority of courts average 100 or fewer people attending each licensing ceremony. The ceremonies are held as frequently as once a week to as infrequently as once every two months, depending on the needs of the locality. The majority of ceremonies are held in the courtroom. Half of the ceremonies take less than 30 minutes; the other half, 30 minutes to an hour.

About half of the judges who responded reported that they distributed handouts as part of the ceremony. Eight judges reported using videos. The most frequently requested topics for materials were: parental responsibilities related to the juvenile's license; the Use and Lose law; drinking, drugs and driving; safety belts; the point system/driver improvement and responsible/defensive driving. Many judges also were interested in receiving local crash statistics for young drivers, traffic violation statistics for young drivers, and information on the financial implications of traffic violations and juvenile license revocation.

Thirty-six judges invite speakers to participate in their licensing ceremonies; police officers, attorneys, and sheriffs' office staff members are the most frequent participants. A number of judges expressed interest in having teens who have been involved in fatal or serious crashes address their ceremonies.

Judges who responded to the survey emphasize a variety of messages during the ceremony. These messages include driver responsibility (54), the legal consequences of breaking traffic laws (49), traffic safety (37), understanding the court process (15), and parental responsibilities (9). A number of judges shared information about their licensing ceremonies and programs for juvenile traffic violators that have been effective in their court.

WHAT JUDGES THINK

A majority of judges (45) feel the licensing ceremony is beneficial to new drivers. Four judges disagreed entirely, and several others were uncertain of its benefits. Following is a sample of the judges' responses to whether the ceremony is beneficial:

"Judging from the comments I constantly receive from parents concerning the content and presentation, I believe my ceremony is very beneficial to new drivers."

"Absolutely yes, but short term only."

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"Yes, if kept short and to the point, with no great theatrics. For 15 years as a practicing attorney I sat through the same 'terrorizing' speech for 45 minutes by the sitting judge. The new drivers thought it was a joke that had to be endured. The parents need to be reminded of their responsibility."

"I think it has some benefit but with added resources could be better. A format involving more than a lecture from the judge would be better and I would appreciate any help with resources for making the presentation have more impact."

"I really believe it is more meaningful for the parents than the new drivers."

"Parents like it. Insurance companies like it. Most kids, after the driver's education course and passing test, resent it. Some take away something that will be positive. I think our schools' driver's education courses are doing an outstanding job in training kids in good driving habits and 'Use-Lose.'"

"I think it is important to realize that most young people have a very short attention span, unless the material is very entertaining. In

the past we had a longer ceremony, including information regarding fatalities and death. I do not think it was listened to very well. I do not think young people respond to fear tactics. I also do not think the driver ceremony should be educational. I think that is the responsibility of driver education. I think the program should be relatively short, and the judge should inform them of what will happen if they are found guilty of certain offenses . . . In this suburban environment, what does get the attention of teens is loss of license. It is important to tell them that you follow your policies, and use some graphic examples . . . the parents should also be informed of their responsibilities, and the consequences."

"Absolutely! It gives young people a chance to hear from a judge that they are responsible for their actions. I would suggest that no child be allowed to drive alone until he/she has attended such a ceremony."

"No, it seems to have little effect on the way they drive."

"Probably more beneficial to parents in understanding how a child can lose the privilege to drive including their rights and responsibilities to control license."

"Yes, very important and beneficial; it sets a tone or expected level of responsibility for young drivers who are also informed of consequences of failure to abide by law. Informative as to parent also; gives them authority to withhold driving privileges."

"Probably, but would like to see statistical verification."

"Parents appreciate a reminder that they continue to be in charge."

“Yes. The parents say it is. The children hear me; when I ask in court, ‘Do you remember me talking about this when you got your license?’ They always say yes.”

“Our ceremony is a model for other jurisdictions. We have received many favorable responses from teenagers, parents, and others. It is absolutely beneficial and enthusiastically received.”

“Yes. This ceremony is generally the only opportunity a judge has to interact, positively, with juveniles who are not facing a legal consequence. I love the opportunity!”

THE RESOURCE GUIDE

This survey was essential to the development of this guide; the contents of the guide were included as a response to the answers to the survey. A number of judges who responded to the survey provided details of the procedure used and topics covered in their licensing ceremonies. Summaries of that information are contained in the resource guide. Based on the responses to the survey, lists of materials, speakers, and helpful organizations are included. Finally, based upon our discussions with judges, parents and teens, and our observations of ceremonies around the commonwealth, we have included additional information for your use.

PART THREE

CONDUCTING THE JUVENILE DRIVER LICENSING CEREMONY

PRESENTATION IDEAS

Virginia Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judges are nearly unanimous in their support of the juvenile driver licensing ceremony. Each judge brings his or her unique style and perspective to the licensing ceremony. The ceremonies vary greatly in format and content, depending on the particular needs of the jurisdiction.

- 7 Following are suggestions for planning memorable and effective juvenile driver licensing ceremonies. These ideas were provided by judges, parents, and teens in Virginia who found them to be effective. There is no right or wrong way to conduct the ceremony, but the experiences of others may be useful to you in planning your own licensing ceremonies.

CEREMONY LOGISTICS

Location

Most judges find that the ceremony is most effective when it is conducted in the courtroom. The courtroom lends a note of seriousness to the ceremony and signals to the teen and the parent that this is, in fact, an official, serious court proceeding. Coming to the courtroom also lets teens see where they will be if they commit serious traffic violations. Teens interviewed while developing this guide indicated that the courtroom setting sent them the message that the event was not something to be taken lightly.

Some jurisdictions are unable to hold the ceremony in the courtroom due to the number of students who attend. The judges in these jurisdictions suggest that all typical courtroom procedures and decorum be followed.

Time of Day

Due to heavy court dockets, parent schedules, and school schedules, there is no time of day that is convenient and agreeable to all parties involved in the ceremonies. Some ceremonies are conducted in the morning, others are held after school, and some are held in the evenings. The time of day that the ceremony is held does not appear to impact its effectiveness.

Length of the Ceremony

Although the length of the ceremony varies according to the number of teens attending, most ceremonies vary from 30 minutes to one hour. Several judges commented that they tend to lose the attention of both the parents and the teens if the presentation is any longer.

Attire and Decorum

Judges who conduct their ceremonies in a courtroom wear robes. Most of those who use other locations wear robes as well. Generally, teens and their parents are required to dress in a manner that is appropriate to appearing in court. Observations of ceremonies across the commonwealth indicate that attire varies from

ceremony to ceremony. Some judges have deputies tell people to leave if they are inappropriately dressed. Some judges, however, do not enforce the dress code indicated in the notice sent to the students prior to the ceremony.

Most judges require the attendees to follow the normal rules of their courtroom, such as not allowing chewing gum. Insistence on appropriate attire and decorum adds to the seriousness of the responsibility the teen is being given.

Topics to Cover

The information judges cover in their licensing ceremonies varies according to the judges' beliefs and the issues in the jurisdictions. Following are several topics that most judges have found to be important.

Responsibility

Remind parents and teens that driving is a privilege, not a right. Driving an automobile is a huge responsibility that should not be entered into lightly. Successfully passing a driver's education course does not, alone, make a teenager responsible enough to drive. If teens do not drive responsibly, they can lose their license, or worse, their lives.

Ways Teens Can Lose Their Driver's License

Describe how the license can be suspended or revoked under the following circumstances:

- Parents choose to take the license based upon teen's actions both in and out of the car
- The judge chooses to suspend or revoke the license
- The law requires that the license be suspended for alcohol-related offenses
- DMV can revoke the license because of accumulated violations

Major Causes of Violations

Discuss the major causes of violations:

- Inattention (especially due to teen passengers or adjusting the radio)
- Following too closely
- Speeding
- Aggressive driving
- Alcohol use
- Thrill seeking and risky driving
- Fatigue

Major Causes of Crashes

Most crashes involving young drivers are the result of one of two driver actions: following too closely, or going off the road and overcorrecting. Discuss proper following distance and what actions to take if the vehicle goes off the road.

Prevalence of Crashes among Teen Drivers

Explain that in Virginia and the nation, crash statistics for teens are higher than they are for adults. This variation in statistics is caused by a number of reasons including:

Teens are inexperienced drivers

Teens have the attitude that they are invincible so they often drive too fast and do not wear safety belts

Teens often have been drinking when they drive or ride in a car

Impact of Violations

Many teens and parents think that if a teen gets a ticket, the only punishment will be a fine. Many parents and teens interviewed for this guide reported being surprised at how easily a license can be suspended or revoked. Describe the other ways in which tickets impact the teen and the family such as:

- Increase in insurance rates
- Loss of insurance coverage after an alcohol-related conviction
- Loss of driving privileges which can impact the entire family
- Missed time from school (for teens) and work (for parents due to court appearances)

right skills to handle the responsibility. Ask parents to hold onto their children's license until they have had an opportunity to think about and discuss with their children the implications of having a driver's license.

Encourage parents to take away driving privileges and require their children to ride the school bus for a specified period of time if they do not believe that the children are driving responsibly.

Parent-Teen Contract

The license represents a partnership between parent and child, since the parent must cosign for it. Encourage parents to use one of the parent-teen contracts available at www.drivesmartva.org.

These contracts set forth expectations and consequences regarding driving privileges.

Graduated Driving Privileges

Suggest that parents consider their children's skills, maturity level, and ability to handle responsibility and thus determine whether a graduated driving privilege is a good idea for them. Such graduated privileges may include a minimum number of hours driving time supervised by an adult after the license has been obtained before the child can drive alone, limits on teen passengers with the number expanding as the child gains experience and shows good judgment, and night driving prohibitions until the child has proven to be a responsible driver.

Provide Information

For a variety of reasons, some judges do not wish to distribute handouts from outside organizations at their ceremony. Other judges provide an opportunity for some organizations to distribute material to participants. There are

ADDRESSING PARENTS

A majority of judges feel that the licensing ceremony is as much for the parent as it is for the young driver. Parents often do not realize that they still have control over the child's license; in fact, they often do not realize that they are still responsible for their child's actions. Following are some of the issues many judges address with parents who attend the ceremony.

Parental Control

Empower the parents. Tell them that they can take the child's driver's license for any reason until the child turns 18. Many parents, and most teens, are surprised to hear this. Let them know that the court views parents, not driver's education personnel, as the first line of defense for making sure their children are responsible, safe drivers.

Parents are in the best position to know whether their children are mature enough and have the

many excellent brochures and guides that discuss various aspects of safe driving and teenage drivers. Parents should be encouraged to visit www.drivesmartva.org to review the information available.

ADDRESSING TEENS

Several judges have commented that the licensing ceremony gives them an opportunity to come face to face with every young person who receives a driver's license in his or her jurisdiction. Teenagers can be a tough audience. Their attention spans are short and they often feel they are invincible, and therefore they think they do not really need more safety information. Most feel that they already are good drivers and have learned everything necessary to be a good driver while in drivers' education class.

Many teens feel that the licensing ceremony can be an important and memorable part of getting their license--if it is brief, concise, and well-planned. Following are some ideas so that teens will pay attention and remember information. Many of these ideas came directly from the teens interviewed for this guide.

Responsibility

First and foremost, remind teens that driving is a privilege, not a right. Tell teens that the driver's license is possibly the most important document they will get in their lives. How they handle the responsibility will affect almost all other areas of their lives, including their ability to hold a job and provide for a family.

Remind teens that when they are driving, they are equal to adults on the road who have had years of experience. No one knows whether the driver of a car is 16 or 60, so they do not adjust their own driving behavior to compensate for teens' lack of experience. They are held to the same driving standards as adults.

When discussing driving under the influence, do not focus solely on drunk driving. Like many adults, most teenagers believe they do not drink enough to be intoxicated. They need to understand that it only takes a limited amount of alcohol to impair their judgment behind the wheel of an automobile.

Additionally, teenagers and parents need to be reminded that alcohol and drugs are illegal no matter the amount used and can result in the loss of a teenagers driving privileges for a significant amount of time.

Discuss the many costs associated with traffic violations. Many teenagers do not look beyond the relatively minor fine that traffic tickets carry. They reported that judges made an impression on them when the judges talked about the loss of trust between teens and their parents if the teen committed an infraction, the grief their parents would feel if they were injured or killed in an accident, and the grief the teen would feel if he or she were responsible for injuring or killing someone.

Information Teens Can Relate To

Share information about incidents to which the teens can relate. For example, give examples of teens who have been before you as a result of driving infractions and the outcome of their court appearance, and/or discuss a crash involving students the teens might know.

Teenagers report that they do not like using "gore", or unusually graphic videos, to convey safety messages. They see so many of these in Driver's Education classes that they have become desensitized to them. They usually find these videos overly dramatic and believe what is portrayed cannot happen to them. However, the videos do make an impression on parents.

What To Expect If Stopped by a Police Officer

Many teens report that they have never been taught what to do if they are stopped by a law enforcement officer. Review the process with them including:

- Stop your vehicle as far out of the lane of traffic as possible
- Turn your flashers on
- Stay in your vehicle and turn on the interior light if you are stopped at night
- Keep your hands in view, preferably on the steering wheel
- Keep your seatbelt fastened
- Provide your registration and driver's license when requested
- Do not argue with the officer; you can state your side of the story before a judge if you wish.

In addition, provide an explanation of what process they can expect if they have to appear in court.

Stress Consistency in Your Court

Many teenagers know exactly what they can and cannot get away with in their locality. They realize that punishment can vary depending on the police officer who stops them and the judge they must appear before. When judges describe the sanctions for a particular violation, teens will pay attention if the sanction has been consistently applied by the court. If teens know that all the judges in their area consistently apply sanctions, they are more likely to pay attention because they realize they cannot “play the odds” that they will get a lenient judge.

ADDITIONS TO THE LICENSING CEREMONY

In their survey responses, many juvenile and domestic relations court judges expressed interest in learning about unique ways of adding to the juvenile driver licensing ceremony. The following section contains descriptions of programs that are used in various courts in Virginia.

SPEAKERS

Participation of EN C.A.R.E.
(Emergency Nurses Cancel Alcohol-Related Emergencies)

EN C.A.R.E. is a national organization currently operating in 40 states. The organization's goal is to educate students and parents about the tragic consequences of drinking and driving.

Professionally trained emergency medical personnel conduct all or a part of the licensing ceremony at the request of the judge. The volunteers use a graphic slide presentation that shows crash victims being treated in an emergency trauma center. The slides illustrate the consequences of drinking and driving, driving recklessly, and not wearing safety belts. Volunteers also describe the physiological effects of alcohol use.

Because EN C.A.R.E. volunteers treat crash victims each day, they are able to paint a realistic picture of the devastating consequences of crashes. Judges who have used EN C.A.R.E. volunteers have received positive feedback from teens and parents.

Contact Information:

Virginia Emergency Nurses Association
<http://www.virginia-ena.org/>
Cathy Fox, RN
757-434-2782

Law Enforcement

State and local law enforcement officers make presentations at licensing ceremonies in several jurisdictions. Officers discuss the causes of crashes and the inexperience that often leads to crashes. In Charles City, state troopers show Zero Tolerance, a video that emphasizes parental responsibility. The troopers hand the licenses to the drivers.

Teens Who Have Been Involved in Crashes

Often, teens will pay close attention to another teen who shares information with them as part of the licensing ceremony. Teen drivers and crash victims can be particularly compelling. In Spotsylvania, a young girl who killed one friend and injured another addresses the ceremony as part of the 1,000 hours of community service to which she was sentenced.

Teens Who Have Received Traffic Violations

In Prince William, teen traffic violators describe to licensing ceremony attendees the many negative consequences of receiving a ticket. These teens frequently discuss the acute embarrassment they feel when they are required to ride the school bus for a month, one of the requirements in this court. They also describe how angry their parents were, the costs they were required to pay, and how the ticket has haunted them.

MADD Representatives

Mothers who have lost children in alcohol-related crashes address Henrico licensing ceremonies. They describe the gut-wrenching experience of losing a child and the resulting impact of their lives and those of their family and friends. The speakers often move audience members to tears. Many times, both parents and teens will

talk with the speakers after the ceremony. The speakers are able to personalize the devastating consequences of drinking and driving.

Contact Information:

Virginia MADD
Chris Konschak
804-353-7121

Virginia Bar Association

In Arlington County, the Virginia Bar Association/ASKUS, Inc. works with judges to conduct the licensing ceremony. Attorneys who have received special training address the ceremony to discuss the legal and financial consequences of traffic violations. The attorneys describe the many costs associated with tickets, most of which are a surprise to the participants. They also discuss the impact of convictions on their college applications and future employment opportunities.

A video, produced specifically for Arlington County and narrated by Katie Couric, illustrates how easily violations can occur. A second edition of the video has been produced without the references to Arlington County so it will be relevant to other jurisdictions and is available through the Virginia Bar Association.

Contact Information:

Virginia Bar Association
Brian McCann
804-697-4176

Teen/Adult Drinking Patterns Activity

Well-known National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study examined the drinking patterns of teens ages 16-19 and compared them with those of adults. The results provide important information about why the combination of teen drinking and driving is so devastating.

Several judges use this study as an interactive part of their licensing ceremonies. A large, dry-erase board with the basic chart preprinted provides the categories. The judge may ask, for example, “When teens are driving after drinking, where are they going” and call on a teen to provide the answer. Parents are asked the questions about the adult drinking and driving patterns. Answers are recorded on the board, or can simply be discussed.

Because the activity is interactive, some judges have found that it holds participants’ attention well while illustrating the real differences between teens and adults. The activity has received very positive feedback from parents.

Licensing Ceremony As Part of the Juvenile Traffic Court Docket

13 The Hampton court holds its licensing ceremony as part of the juvenile traffic court docket. The ceremony begins after traffic cases are heard, thus allowing teens and their parents to view the consequences of traffic violations. Both parents and teens appreciate the opportunity to see what really happens in court.

Community Group Presence

In the interest of time, the Chesterfield Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court does not use speakers as part of the juvenile driver licensing presentation. However, the court invites community organizations and law enforcement agencies to set up table exhibits in a common area before the ceremony begins. Teens and parents can stop by, ask questions, and pick up literature about various traffic safety issues. In this way, groups can provide useful information without unnecessarily lengthening the licensing ceremony.

Contact Information:
DRIVE SMART Virginia
Tamara Mann
804-340-2870

Parent-Teen Driving Contract

A number of judges provide parents with suggested language for a driving contract that parents and teens can sign. The contract outlines the teen’s responsibilities associated with driving the family vehicle and includes a promise that the teen will not drive after drinking and will always wear a safety belt. Some contracts include a description of what the parent will do if the teen calls for a ride home.

Contracts can be modified to fit the needs of the court distributing them and can be photocopied on standard size paper. Parents and teens can modify the contract to suit their family’s needs. The contracts can serve as a focal point for a discussion about what the parent expects from the teen for the privilege of driving the family car, and what type of support the teen can expect from the parent.

Giving the License to the Parent

Most judges feel that, during the licensing ceremony, addressing parents is just as important as addressing teens. Many judges emphasize that although having a driver’s license may seem to give teens more independence, parents still have control over the license until their children are 18. The judges remind parents that if they do not feel their teenager is driving safely or behaving responsibly, they can take the child’s license away or have the license revoked.

As a reminder of this control and responsibility, some judges hand the teen’s license to the parents and ask that they hold onto it until they have had a discussion with their child about their expectations and the responsibilities that come with driving. Handing the license to the parents effectively catches the attention of both parents and teens.

VIDEOS

Some judges show traffic safety videos before or as part of the licensing ceremonies. Topics range from the aftermath of drinking and driving to an explanation of the court process. Most of the videos used are produced by traffic safety organizations, although the Arlington County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court produced a video locally that is suited to the court's needs.

Judges have mixed opinions about the use of videos as part of the licensing ceremony. Those who use them feel a short, professionally produced video can assist in keeping teens' attention and getting across important traffic safety messages. Other judges feel that young drivers see enough videos in driver education, and that they add nothing to the ceremony.

Several judges who use videos are listed below. Also, please refer to the listing of videos in the Part 5 of this guide.

4 PROGRAMS FOR JUVENILE TRAFFIC VIOLATORS

- COMMUNITY SERVICE
- LICENSE SUSPENSION
- PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
- THINKING ACTIVITIES

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judges have an opportunity to be creative in determining consequences for juvenile traffic violators, especially first-time offenders. It is an opportunity to select a consequence that will make an impression on the teenager, hopefully one that will last for a lifetime of safe driving.

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In their survey responses, many judges expressed an interest in learning more about disposition alternatives used by their colleagues. They were especially interested in finding programs that impact teens enough to decrease the number of repeat offenders and increase safe driving behaviors. The information that follows includes descriptions of alternatives used by some courts in the Commonwealth.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Hospital Emergency Room Program (HERP)

When a young person pleads guilty to a minor traffic offense, in lieu of a conviction, Judge Aundria Foster gives the driver the opportunity to go on probation, complete driving school, and participate in the local Hospital Emergency Room Program.

Participants are required to complete 25 hours of volunteer service in the emergency room of a local hospital. Before they begin their volunteer work, they are required to complete a blood-borne pathogens training session. Once that is completed, the teens develop a work schedule

and are required to abide by the rules of the program. They often run errands for physicians, transport patients, pick up laboratory tests, and sit with patients while they wait to receive care. Since the work schedule often is conducted over a weekend, teenagers have an opportunity to observe traffic crash victims who are brought into the emergency room.

The program has received a very favorable response from young drivers. When they return to court after completing their service, the judge asks if they saw or learned anything that will make them better drivers. Most respond that they will drive much more carefully because, after viewing the consequences, they do not want to be in an automobile crash.

Judge Foster noted that she rarely sees the same young drivers come back through the court for another violation. She highly recommends this program for juvenile traffic violators.

Contact information:
Officer Gary Downey,
Program Coordinator
Department of Juvenile Justice
(757) 926-8582

Community Service of the Teens' Choice

In Botetourt, first time juvenile traffic violators often are given the opportunity to perform a certain number of hours of community service in lieu of a conviction. The number of hours assigned varies according to the seriousness of the violation.

Community service hours are coordinated through the Court Services Unit. Usually, teens can select the type of community service they would like to provide. Examples include picking up trash, working at the fire station or school bus garage, working at the local animal shelter, and volunteering in libraries or retirement homes.

Teens and their parents appreciate the opportunity to provide a service to the community instead of receiving a conviction. For subsequent violations, teens often are required to complete community service again in addition to having the incident on their record.

LICENSE SUSPENSION

Riding The School Bus

In lieu of a conviction and in addition to completing driving school, juvenile traffic violators are required to ride the school bus to school for one month. To ensure that the teenagers actually ride the bus, the bus driver must initial a form for the teen each morning and afternoon.

According to Judge Robeson, young people find the experience humiliating and it gets their attention. Although teens are told during the licensing ceremony that riding the school bus is a possible consequence of a ticket, most are horrified when it is actually imposed. Often, a young person who has been riding the school bus is asked to talk about the experience during the juvenile driver licensing ceremony. Usually, the student expresses regret for having been careless and recounts the extreme embarrassment of having to ride the bus with younger students.

Zero Tolerance Agreement between Judges

The Code of Virginia gives judges the authority to suspend the licenses of young drivers convicted of alcohol-related offenses, even if those offenses do not involve driving under the influence. The Code also allows for a restricted license to be issued so the teen may drive to and from school or work.

In Chesterfield, four juvenile and domestic relations court judges have agreed that they will not issue a restricted license for any reason. Teenagers and their parents are told during the licensing ceremony that if the teen commits an alcohol- or

drug-related offense, his or her license will be suspended and no restricted licenses will be issued. The judges also make presentations at local high schools and middle schools, and describe the Use and Lose program in detail.

Teens who receive convictions usually are quite distraught when their license is suspended, and often their parents are angry at the court for not issuing a restricted license. However, the policy has become well-known among students and the judges believe it is effective.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Perceptive Driving Seminar

Most courts in Virginia require first-time juvenile traffic violators to participate in a driver improvement program. Several Virginia courts have begun requiring first-time juvenile traffic violators to participate in a course entitled the Perceptive Driving Seminar. The biggest difference between this and other driver improvement programs is the requirement that at least one parent complete the seminar with the teen.

Studies have shown that parental involvement has the biggest influence on a teen's driving behaviors. The Perceptive Driving Seminar pairs the teen and the parent as a team, and requires that all exercises and activities be completed together. The course includes classroom learning as well as on-the-road exercises. Instructors work with parents to provide them with the skills they need to help their child learn from their own experience.

Initially, many parents are unhappy about having to take the time to participate with their child. By the end of the seminar, almost all feel that it has been beneficial.

Contact information:

Sam Hill, Perceptive Driving Seminar
(804) 355-5233

THINKING ACTIVITIES

Essay Assignment

In Bedford, juvenile traffic violators are required to attend a driver improvement program for a first offense. In addition, upon completion of the program, they are required to write a 500-1,000 word essay on what they have learned. In the essay, they are expected to address stopping distances, reaction times and other driver functions that are impacted by their behavior. Additionally, teens must relive the incident that earned them a ticket and discuss what they would do differently.

Judge Wallace indicated that the combination of driving school and writing the essay has a big impact on most teen violators. He seldom sees repeat offenders in his court.

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5 RESOURCES FOR JUDGES

- COMMUNITY RESOURCES
- USEFUL WEB SITES
- DESCRIPTION OF WIDELY-USED RESOURCES
- QUICK STATISTICAL REFERENCE

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Virginia is home to many local, regional, and national organizations that are involved in one or more aspects of traffic safety. These organizations can be valuable resources to you as you plan your licensing ceremonies. Many can provide speakers, printed materials, videos, statistics, or other information to support your program.

Resources are listed by the type of assistance they can provide, such as speakers, handouts or videos. Addresses and contact information are provided in this section after the complete listing of resources.

COORDINATION OF SPEAKERS, HANDOUTS OR VIDEOS

The following organizations may be able to arrange to have presentations made in your area:

AAA Mid-Atlantic: Randy Green 804-323-6512
AAA of Tidewater: Georjeane Blumling 757-456-0019
AAA Potomac Division: Norman Grimm 703-222-4104
Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety: Christene Jennings 703-243-7501
Commission on VASAP (Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program): Deborah Gardner (804) 786-5895
Drive Safe Hampton Roads: Kathy Rayment 757-498-2562
DRIVE SMART Virginia: Janet Brooking 804-340-2870
GEICO Insurance: Teri Peterson 757-222-7966
Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: Laurel Sims, 703-247-1527
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD): Chris Kenschak 804-353-7121
State Farm Mutual Insurance Company: Jon Hannah 434-872-2927
Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police: Suzanne Ellyson 804-285-8227
Virginia Bar Association: Brian McCann 804-697-4176
Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control: Tina Atkins 804-213-4688
Virginia Department of Education: Vanessa Wigand 804-225-3300
Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, Mary Ann Rayment 757-406-5033
Virginia Emergency Nurses Association: Cathy Fox 757-434-2782
Virginia Trucking Association: Robyn Bolton 804-355-5371

OTHER RESOURCES

Virginia Department of Education
Provides traffic violation statistics by the school in which the driver is enrolled.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
Provides crash statistics by locality.

USEFUL WEB SITES

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

www.aaafoundation.org

Includes a list of available videos, traffic safety quizzes, and research reports.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

www.saferoads.org

Provides fact sheets on a number of traffic safety issues; provides legislative information and updates on traffic safety issues.

Allstate Insurance Company

www.allstate.com

Provides suggested guidelines for new drivers, lists costs associated with driving, includes a driving quiz and a safe driving contract.

Drive Smart Virginia

www.drivesmartva.org

Provides tools for both teens and parents

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

www.hwysafety.org

Provides traffic safety statistics and research information.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

www.madd.org

Gives DUI statistics and provides links to local MADD chapters.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

www.health.org

Provides information and facts on drug and alcohol use.

National Commission Against Drunk Driving (NCADD)

www.ncadd.com

Provides information and statistics on drunk driving.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administra-

tion (NHTSA)

www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Includes statistics, research reports, and testing information.

National Safety Council

www.nsc.org

Includes teen traffic safety information and links to other Web sites.

Street Safe, Inc.

www.prostar.com/web/dds/safety/archive/htm

Gives traffic safety tips.

Traffic Safety Village

www.Drivers.com

Includes safety information, a page designed for new drivers, and information for parents of teenage drivers.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

www.dmv.state.va.us

Provides crash statistics, including a breakdown by locality.

