Teen Drivers

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among American teenagers.\(^1\)
- An average of 7 U.S. teenagers died every day from a motor vehicle crash in 2010.\(^2\)
- The seat belt use rate for teens is lower than adults; in 2008, teens had the lowest seat belt use rate of any age group at 80 percent.\(^2\)
- In 2010, 81 percent of teenage motor vehicle deaths were passengers in the vehicle.\(^3\)
- Texting and having other teens in the car while a teen is driving are the greatest distractions proven to kill teens.\(^4\)
- The majority of teens are sleep deprived. The average amount of sleep suggested for teens is about 8 to 9 hours. The lack of sleep can significantly impair driving.\(^5\)

Prevent Crashes and Fatalities

- Safe and responsible driving begins with each driver and passenger.
- Before the car is started, the seat belt should be secured!
- Secure cell phones in a place where they are out of sight so there is no opportunity to text, talk, or surf the web while driving.
- Putting on makeup, eating, and blasting music are also distractions and can easily cause a crash. FOCUS on the road to avoid any opportunity for a crash.
- Follow traffic safety rules. Tickets are expensive and some violations can result in jail time.
- It is imperative to drive sober. Driving while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is not only illegal but slows reaction time.
- Practicing healthy habits, like getting enough sleep, helps teens to stay alert while driving.
- New drivers tend to make some wrong decisions when first getting behind the wheel; the graduated driver licensing (GDL) system helps new drivers gain skills from stage to stage. Each stage offers more experience and more privileges. Parents play a key role at each stage and should become familiar with the GDL system.
- It is also important for parents to take their teen out to practice their skills in a variety of settings, set ground rules for safe driving, and be a good role model. Teens will typically model what their parents do.

Internet Resources