WHAT IS TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT?

Started in 2002 by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) is a peer-to-peer program that focuses solely on traffic safety and addresses all major driving risks for teens. TDS has now reached approximately 1,000 schools and 1 million students. Recognized multiple times as a National Best Practice Program and National Award Winner, the program assesses risk awareness and driving behavior among student populations in active program schools to monitor and refine program effectiveness year after year.

TDS is offered at no charge to high schools in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Nebraska and Texas. The program provides new educational materials, resources, activity ideas, events and contests each year to any interested schools and their supporters. Many of these are accessible at t-driver.com.

SOME TDS SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES:

- Catch the CRAZE! a nine-week activity that encourages students to report observed violations of safe driving practices (e.g., low seat belt use and distracted driving). A gift card goes to the school upon completion.
- Driving the Message contest: provides thousands of dollars in cash to schools that submit winning videos, posters and t-shirt designs.
- Teen Advisory Board: 30+ members strong from four states, the teens meet quarterly, offering insight, feedback and help steering the program.
- Ride with Me: an activity to get parents involved. Teens present graduated driver licensing laws and risk awareness messaging directly to parents of teen drivers, as well as encourage community-wide commitment to traffic safety.
- TDS Cup: awards points to active TDS programs and grants thousands of dollars in cash prizes to top schools.

TDS PRESENCE

TDS PROGRAM SCHOOLS

Most recently, State Farm has partnered with TDS to offer the program nationwide to the top high schools that completed their 2014 Celebrate My Drive challenge but did not win a cash award. This partnership has extended the TDS program opportunity to 100 additional schools.

TDS PARTNERS

- Texas Department of Transportation
- Georgia Department of Transportation
- California Office of Traffic Safety
- State Farm Insurance
- Houston-Galveston Area Council
- El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Nebraska Office of Highway Safety
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

FOR MORE INFO

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HOW IT WORKS

TDS gives schools the science, guidance and project resources to implement a successful program. Teens help shape the program and are responsible for implementing it. Activities and messaging are up to the school. Teen teams, with the support of teachers and administrations, shape and sustain their own awesome program.

TDS IS EASY TO IMPLEMENT

TDS is available to schools at no cost in Texas, Georgia, California, Connecticut, North Carolina and Nebraska. The program can be started at any time and is designed for continued activities throughout the year. The school provides a sponsor and a teen team, and Texas A&M Transportation Institute staff provides the science, guidance and project resources to help teams develop activity ideas and messaging for their schools and communities.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN!

The most common causes of teen driving crashes are the ones that young drivers (and their parents) know the least about. Combined with a lack of driving experience, the top five dangers are:

- Driving at night
- Speeding and street racing
- Distractions, such as cell phones/texting and other teen passengers
- Low seat belt use
- Impaired driving

Raising awareness of these issues in schools and communities can save lives.

Some 1,000 schools have implemented TDS programs, reaching nearly 1 million teens. In Texas, the number of teen drivers, age 15 to 17, involved in fatal crashes has dropped nearly 70 percent. In fact, Texas is the only state where fatal crashes involving teen drivers have decreased every year since 2002.

A rigorous 20-county control group analysis for Texas indicates the program results in an average decrease of 14.6 percent in total injury and fatal crashes where the program has been sustained for three or more years.
USING TDS TO FULFILL MAP-21 REQUIREMENTS

Enacted in 2012 and recently extended, The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) specifically stipulates that federally funded teen driver safety programs should include a peer-to-peer component. There are three reasons why TDS offers the best path to fulfill this peer-to-peer requirement.

1. NO NEED TO REINVENT THE WHEEL. TDS IS A READY-MADE PROGRAM.

The impressive growth of TDS, coupled with the rapid growth of social networking among teens, creates the potential for a safety culture among young people and the prospect of saving hundreds of lives. The program has enjoyed a decade of growth and refinement across the United States. Further evidence of its popularity and success is TDS’s proliferation from Texas, where it began, to other states nationwide.

2. DEVELOPED BY TEENS FOR TEENS, TDS USES THE POWER OF POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE.

Every element, every facet and every refinement of TDS are influenced by young people. The program’s professional staff provides support and direction when needed, but teens are responsible for making it successful. The range of young people reached by the program is unprecedented and unmatched.

3. IT’S SIMPLE — THE TDS PROGRAM WORKS.

TDS was one of a few initiatives selected in 2012 to be a part of Curbing Teen Driver Crashes: An In-Depth Look at State Novice Driver Initiatives, the national best practices guide released by the Governor’s Highway Safety Association.

PROGRAM GROWTH

Building on the unprecedented success of TDS, the program now extends beyond high school drivers in both directions: to younger, future drivers in junior high school and to college students.

TDS JR. HIGH PROGRAM

Aimed at junior-high and middle-school students, the Teens in the Driver Seat—JR. High program recognizes that before they can drive a car themselves, younger teens can play a significant role in promoting safe driving by their older peers. They can even remind their parents what it means to be a model driver by promoting safe driving as a passenger. Empowering them to feel comfortable saying “Stop that — you’re putting my life at risk” is one goal of the program.

U IN THE DRIVER SEAT (UDS)

UDS promotes peer-to-peer education among university students regarding driving safety, especially the risks of impaired driving. Each program is unique to its host university. UDS allows students to tailor the program to their college’s unique cultural and environmental needs. Despite the diversity of UDS’s component programs, our ultimate goal is the same — to reduce the number of college students involved in car crashes.

BY THE NUMBERS

Schools with the TDS Program:

- 200% increase in risk awareness
- 14% increase in seatbelt use
- 30% cell phone use dropped by

WHAT TEENS SAY

“…” About being a safer driver
“…” It’s about having each other’s backs.
“…” It’s part of our culture.

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THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

300 schools are implementing a first-in-the-country program called “Teens in the Driver Seat,” an initiative that gets teens talking to their peers about the risks of driving. Preliminary research says the program, begun in 2003, has worked.

AUSTIN AMERICAN STATESMAN

Teen seat belt fatalities continued to fall once Texas brought peer-to-peer safe driving programs into high school.

THE EL PASO TIMES

Fatal teen crashes in Texas declined more than in any other state, the study showed. It was an improvement lawmakers and the institute chalked up to the state’s graduated driver’s license law and a program called Teens in the Driver Seat.

USA TODAY

Young people develop and deliver safety messages that reflect gaps in their knowledge about driving in their community. Since its inception, 250,000 teenagers in 300 high schools in Texas have participated in Teens in the Driver Seat, which is now being tested in California, Connecticut and Georgia.