

Graduated Driver License – GDL Laws

The following are the most frequently asked questions regarding the Illinois Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) Program. This Q & A format is also available through the Oswego Police Department's Website under the Traffic Unit page.

Have Graduated Driver Licensing programs been effective in other states, and is it necessary in Illinois?

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for people ages 15-19. In 2007, 15 percent of all Illinois drivers involved in fatal crashes were age 15-19. Yet this same group accounted for just 7.4 percent of the driving population. Recent studies show that a comprehensive graduated driver licensing program can reduce teen fatal crashes, and the GDL program appears to be working. In 2008, 8.2 percent of Illinois drivers involved in fatal crashes were between the ages of 15 – 19.

Do the provisions within the Illinois' Graduated Driver Licensing Program raise the minimum age at which an individual may obtain a driver's license?

No. Even with the changes made to the GDL Program on January 1, 2008, a person age 16 who has successfully completed a driver education program may apply for a driver's license. The graduated system establishes additional requirements during the instruction permit phase, with the goal of producing more experienced and skilled 16-year-old drivers.

How many hours of practice driving with my parent/guardian are required prior to obtaining my Illinois driver's license?

The GDL law currently requires 50 hours of practice driving, including 10 hours of night driving. Driving must be supervised by a parent, guardian or adult age who has a valid drivers license, a minimum of one year of driving experience, is seated in the front passenger seat, and is 21 years of age or older.

Why do Graduated Driver Licensing laws limit the number of passengers in a car driven by a teen?

Passenger restrictions reduce the likelihood of an inexperienced driver being distracted by a car full of passengers. The GDL law limits the number of passengers for a new driver to only one passenger for the first year of his/her driver's license. The GDL law mandates the passenger limitation time for one full year, or until the license holder turns 18, whichever occurs first.

What happens if a new driver is caught violating the passenger limitation rule?

The driver of the vehicle, as well as all passengers in the vehicle, can be ticketed if the driver is in violation of the passenger restriction rule.

Will the new passenger restriction prevent my 16-year-old from driving his/her brother, sister and cousin to events?

Siblings, step-siblings, children and step-children of 16-year-old drivers are exempt from passenger limitations. Cousins under age 20 are not considered immediate family members and, therefore, are not exempt from passenger limitations.

What are the cell phone use restrictions for young drivers under the GDL?

A person under the age of 19 who holds an instructional permit or a graduated license, may not drive a motor vehicle on a roadway while using a wireless telephone.

How will law enforcement determine if a new teen driver falls under the one-year passenger limitation rule?

Law enforcement officers will look at the original issuance date of the driver's license and also review the license restriction section to determine whether the driver must adhere to the one-year passenger limitation rule.

What are the "nighttime driving restrictions" under the GDL provisions?

Under the GDL law, drivers under age 18 may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., Sunday through Thursday, and between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Won't the earlier driving restriction times on nights and weekends prevent me from getting a job or going to after-school activities?

Exemptions in the law allow new drivers to drive to and from employment or school-sanctioned activities outside the restriction times.

Will I lose my driver's license if I am convicted of violating the nighttime driving restrictions?

Yes, under the GDL provisions your driver's license will be suspended if you are convicted of violating the new driving curfews.

If passengers are not seatbelted in the vehicle while my teenager is driving who can be ticketed?

If the driver is under age 18, he/she can be ticketed for anyone under age 18 who is unrestrained in the vehicle. Any passenger age 16 or 17 unbuckled in the front seat may be ticketed as well. It is at the discretion of the law enforcement officer whether to cite unbuckled passengers age 16 or 17 in the back seat.

If I get a traffic ticket while I have my graduated driver license will I lose my license?

If the ticket is for an alcohol-related offense, the driver will lose his/her license for a minimum of three months.

During the initial and full licensing phases prior to age 21, a driver who receives two moving violation convictions within a 24-month period will lose his/her driver's license for a minimum of 30 days. After the first conviction, the parents/guardians of the driver will receive a warning letter from the Secretary of State informing them of the teenage driver's initial conviction and the possibility of loss of driving privileges for future violations.

Should a driver receive a license suspension for two traffic convictions, he/she is subject to additional driver's license suspensions for each subsequent traffic conviction.

Other than a warning letter from the Secretary of State, what else happens if I get a traffic ticket during the permit phase or initial licensing phase of the graduated driver license program?

Effective January 1, 2008, a driver must remain free of traffic convictions during the entire nine-month permit phase. If the driver is convicted of a traffic offense during this time, he/she will not move to the initial licensing phase until he/she is free of traffic convictions for a full nine months or until age 18, whichever occurs first. If the conviction is received by the Secretary of State's office after the driver has moved to the initial licensing phase, the driver will be remanded back to the permit phase. A letter will be sent to the driver and the parents indicating the change in driving status.

Drivers in the initial licensing phase (usually drivers ages 16 and 17), must remain conviction free for the final six months before moving to the next phase. If a new driver receives a conviction during this six-month period, he/she will not be able to move to the next phase of the program until he/she is conviction-free for a full six months or until age 21, whichever occurs first.

I would like to withdraw my consent to drive for my child who is under age 18. What is the proper procedure?

In order to withdraw consent to drive for a driver under age 18, the parent, guardian or other responsible adult who signed the application giving the driver permission to obtain a driver's license must send a notarized letter to the Secretary of State indicating they wish to withdraw consent for the minor to hold an Illinois driver's license.

I previously withdrew my consent to drive for my child who is under age 18 and would like to reinstate his/her driving privileges. What is the proper procedure?

To reinstate a minor's driving privileges after consent to drive has been withdrawn, the parent, guardian or other responsible adult who withdrew consent must send a letter to the Secretary of State indicating that they wish to have the child's driving privileges reinstated in the State of Illinois. The minor driver must visit a Secretary of State Driver Services facility and retake the vision, written and driving exams and pay the appropriate fee in order to be reissued an Illinois driver's license.

As a parent of a young driver, are there other GDL Program requirements or conditions I should know?

Drivers under the age of 18 will be mandated to appear in court with a parent or guardian and attend a traffic safety program as a requirement to receive court supervision.

A conviction of any moving violation before the age of 18 will generate a Secretary of State warning letter to the parent and teenager.

Parents may view their teen's (under 18) driving record through the Secretary of State Website www.cyberdriveillinois.com for no fee.