

Child Passenger Safety Experts Respond

October 10, 2002 is “Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day” across the US and the I Promise Program – teen safe driving initiative, is participating by sharing the survey results of child passenger experts on the matter of new teen drivers, transporting children.

In addition to being the leading cause of death in teens, car crashes are also the leading cause of death in children under age 15 too with over 600 deaths of children ages 0 – 4 in year 2000.

<http://www.brakesonfatalities.org/>
www.ipromiseprogram.com

Many parents while white knuckled about the thought of their teen hitting the streets with the family car, also look forward to the relief their teen may bring by sharing in the transportation needs of younger siblings. But is this a good idea? While clear statistics comparing the number of child fatalities by age of the driver are not readily available, advice was sought from child passenger safety experts on the matter. Specifically they were asked in a recent survey by the I Promise Program, “Knowing that some parents may rely on their son or daughter to transport children, what advice do you have for parents, whose new teen driver may be transporting a young child or infant?”

At first blush, many experts suggest that parents not rely on teens to transport children. Barb Center of the Region II Disaster Medical Health Specialist for California recommends that, “If the parent gets the sense that the teen isn't taking the responsibility seriously, DON'T DO IT.”

Passenger safety experts well recognize that teenagers, less experienced in driving are also less equipped to handle the distraction that transporting younger children may cause. This sits on top of the many other issues faced in the safe transportation of children. With some 85% of children improperly restrained in car seats, parents should first learn to use car seats themselves and then have a passenger safety technician train their teen driver.

“Child passenger safety technicians have been trained in the appropriate use of car seats and are in the best position to instruct parents and teens,” explains Gary Direnfeld, Executive Director of the I Promise Program – teen safe driving initiative. “If they must transport a child it is the parent's responsibility to obtain the best instruction possible.”

Child passenger safety experts were also quick to point out that parent's can begin giving teens experience before the teen get their license. Teens can have ample opportunity to observe and practice putting younger siblings in their car seat under parent's supervision. Knowing this parents should be cautious as to the role model they present.

Kathy Kruger of the Safety Restraint Coalition in Kirkland, WA may have found another benefit to letting young persons practice installing an infant car seat, “We frequently hear young single persons comment that "learning how to install child car seats is good birth control!" Perhaps learning about proper car seat use has more than one useful purpose.”

Parents interested in reading the entire survey result are encouraged to go to the I Promise Program website at www.ipromiseprogram.com. For more information about child passenger safety parents can go to www.nhtsa.org.

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This survey was conducted by the I Promise Program – a teen safe driving initiative that promotes parents as role models by entering into a mutual safe driving contract with their teen. To provide accountability, a rear window decal is then affixed to the vehicle. The decal display a toll free number and the question, “Am I driving safely?” Calls are received by a call center and responses are sent by letter only back to the family. Youth, parents, community members, police and interested stakeholders in traffic safety have participated in developing this program.

To view the entire set of replies by child passenger safety experts, please scroll down...

See: www.ipromiseprogram.com

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SURVEY QUESTION AND RESULTS

To: Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Experts

In 100 words or less, the question is:

Knowing that some parents may rely on their son or daughter to transport children, what advice do you have for parents, whose new teen driver may be transporting a young child or infant?

Responses:

1	In general, a new teen driver has a lot to absorb as it is. 1. Discuss issues re: transport of child/infant with the teen(s) well in advance of their first time actually doing it. If the parent gets the
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	<p>sense that the teen isn't taking the responsibility seriously, DON'T DO IT.</p> <p>2. If the parent feels assured that the teen(s) will be responsible, go over the do's and don'ts and how-to's re: child passenger safety systems.</p> <p>3. Be really clear and straightforward re: never leave a child alone in the car, not even for a minute.</p> <p>4. Remind them to pull off the road if they need to look back and attend to the child.</p>
2	<p>All new drivers, not just teenagers should have varied driving experiences and time to develop good "seasoned" driving habits before being asked to assume the additional responsibility of transporting young child passengers in the car. As teens approach the age when they will soon begin to drive, its a wonderful time for them to learn many of the things they need to know such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * how to read a map, * how to check tire pressure and fill the tires, * what fluids need to be checked and how to do so, and, * if they will one day, even in an emergency, have to transport young children then BEFORE learning to drive they should also learn how to buckle a child properly into a child safety seat along with the consequences of FAILING doing so correctly. <p>By day four in the U.S. 32-Hour Child Passenger Safety Technician Training Course, we frequently hear young single persons comment that "learning how to install child car seats is good birth control!" Perhaps learning about proper car seat use has more than one useful purpose.</p>
3	<p>Remind the new teen driver that you are entrusting them with the life (or lives) of their sibling(s). They must promise to secure the child in the their appropriate restraint properly before putting themselves in the drivers seat. Make sure they understand that it is unacceptable to transport any children without restraints. If they are unsure of how to properly restrain the child/children, instructions should be provided. If they are in a position that will not allow proper restraint of each child passenger then alternative arrangements for transport should be made. NO EXCEPTIONS.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion in this important matter.</p>
4	<p>As "busy" parents we often are very happy when that teen reaches an age where they can relieve us of all those driving obligations. We need to be certain that the inexperienced young teen driver has 100% of their attention focused on the business of driving and not on monitoring the backseat antics of younger siblings.</p> <p>I am reminded of my son's remarks when he first got his license and I had him drive his little brother to a mutual activity. He returned home and said" Mom please don't make me drive them again. They were fooling around and laughing</p>

	<p>and trying to get my attention and it was very distracting when I was trying to drive. I have a great deal of respect for my son for standing up to me and telling me how he felt. I resumed the job of transporting little brother until he had gained some confidence. As adults we can often tune out those distractions because we are comfortable driving. Teens are unable to so easily turn from the role of joining in the antics (as they had been able to do as a passenger) to the "responsible party" who needs to tune out the distractions.</p> <p>The role of driver is too important to not allow them the time to gain the maturity to switch those roles before asking them to assume the burdens of being responsible for their siblings.</p>
5	<p>Speaking from experience - I have a 17 year old son who has 4 older siblings - three of which have young children of their own. I have always taught all my children and their friends that Mom's car doesn't move unless everyone is buckled in. I am proud to say that this has stuck with all my children even into adulthood. I was very impressed and excited about my training to become a CPS Technician. Being that I no longer have young children at home, but do have six grandchildren, we do not always have a safety seat in our vehicles. We remove or install them on an as needed basis. Often my 17-year old son is the one who installs them for me. I taught him how after attending CPS Classes over three years ago.</p> <p>I think the best advice to give parents is that your child will follow your lead. If you consistently buckle-up your young children in safety seats as well as making sure yourself and all your passengers are properly buckled-up, then it will just become 2nd nature to your children as well.</p>
6	<p>Advice to parents can be summed up in one word: DON'T! The risks to your children are not worth the convenience of having your teen transport them. (Hopefully some graduated licensure laws will reflect these risks in outlawing passengers of new teen drivers (other than parent or guardian).</p>
7	<p>Teenagers are so anxious to drive, that they do not realize that the road is a dangerous and uncharted path for them, especially if they are just starting to drive. Teenagers assume that all you have to do is get behind the wheel, press the gas and go. What they fail to realize is that driving experience comes with wisdom, knowledge, years of experience of driving and using good hard common sense. You have to be on your peas and q's all the time you are behind the wheel of an automobile. There's a saying that you have to drive for yourself and others also. That is so true. To avoid having a crash, you have to keep your eyes on the road at all times and be totally aware of your surroundings which mean the other vehicles traveling the roads with you. Teens transporting children have to be especially mindful of the fact that not only do they have their lives to worry about, they have the life of an innocent child. The best example for them to set for that child is to buckle up each and every time they get into the vehicle. This teaches the child that whenever I ride in the car, I need to be properly restrained. Consistency is the key for developing a strong and safe habit. Being late is no excuse</p>

	<p>for failing to buckle up or making sure that the child is buckled and secure in his or her carseat, booster seat or seatbelt. Never make the mistake of thinking it won't happen to me, I'm a careful driver. You may possibly be a careful driver, but failing to realize that others do not think the same way, is what makes for deadly and simple mistakes. If parents would reinforce the fact that buckling up saves lives, teenagers will realize that no one rides unrestrained in their vehicle and they themselves will inform their friends, that if they don't want to buckle up, they don't ride. Parents have the responsibility before their child begins to drive to reinforce good driving habits by setting good examples themselves, not making negative comments or displaying road rage and by also pointing out dangerous situations to the teen. Reinforcement education really works.</p>
8	<p>A newly licensed teen faced with the awesome responsibility of transporting both themselves safely and their sibling should be reminded that driving is part of becoming a responsible adult. As a responsible adult, they must also insure the safety of their sibling and present a responsible image: they are a unique role model to their sibling second only to the parent. By buckling up safely, securely, and obeying traffic rules with caution and attention they will do more for the continued safety of their brother or sister than any coloring book, sticker, or plastic toy ever could.</p>
9	<p>Restrictions on the number and age of passengers teen drivers can transport is an essential component of graduated licensing laws. The number and age of passengers in vehicles with teen drivers has been associated with greater risk of crashes and crash fatalities. That risk is even greater when newer teen drivers are behind the wheel. To reduce risks to teens drivers and young children, parents should not rely on a new teen driver to transport a young child or infant.</p>
10	<p>When relying on a teenager to transport a young child it is very important that the parent convey how important it is to transport them properly. the parent should provide the appropriate restraint and "train" the teenager how to install it. Things to review with the teenager should include but not be limited to: importance of every passenger in the vehicle to buckle up, not transporting more people than the vehicle can properly restrain, never transport a child in the back of a pickup truck, never transport a child unrestrained or one that shares a seat belt with another occupant, remember safe driving techniques that are taught in drivers education classes. The parent should also review the importance of a young child not sitting in front of an airbag.</p> <p>Above all, parents should practice what they preach and make sure that they are always transporting children safely.</p>
11	<p>You have a power similar to god. The power to protect or destroy. The life of the child is in your hands. Protect the child and accept the responsibility that goes with the trust of the parent gave you to act in their stead.</p>
12	<p>My daughter is a new teen driver, and she does clearly understand that I expect all occupants to be properly restrained, regardless of age. More than anything, I stress that as the driver she is ultimately responsible. Peer pressure and adult pressure has to stop at the door, before you start the engine. This is just one of the many responsibilities she will assume as</p>

	<p>a forming adult, and it is an absolute privilege that her parents allow her the use of the car. I was able to get my other children to their activities before she earned a license, so the keys really are a privilege for her, not a necessity.</p> <p>She knows that if I can't trust her to operate the vehicle appropriately, then I can't trust her to do anything. And, she has my trust until she breaks it.</p> <p>This is how I handled it in my home, and so far so good. However, it is hindsight that will ultimately give me the 20/20 vision I'm seeking.</p>
13	<p>I have a friend of many years, a terrific person but she just seems to believe nothing bad is likely to happen to her.</p> <p>I once sat her down, told her I needed to give her to whole schpeil (spelling?) to ease my conscience, and would not nag her any more after she listened. She did better for a little while....</p> <p>One night, when my son was 17, he was babysitting at her house. She suggested that he take the kids out for pizza. There were 6 people, and my son's car was a 5 passenger. My friend told him 'oh, it's so close- just double buckle two of the kids'.</p> <p>My son did not tell me this story. My friend did, a few nights later. She said that my son looked at her as if she'd just suggested taking the kids 'into the bowels of hell', and then responded that he couldn't do that. She did a double take, apologized, and offered her 7-passenger van for the trip.</p> <p>So I guess my advice is to teach them safe practices from the very beginning, with NO EXCEPTIONS.</p>
14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure you as the adult/parent knows and understands the proper and safest way to transport the younger child. National studies indicate child safety seats have an 85% misuse rate. Community studies indicate higher misuse rates. In order to instruct your teen driver you yourself must first understand the proper way to transport the child. The easiest way to ensure you have the correct knowledge and skills is to seek out a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician in your community and schedule an appointment for you and your teen to learn about the proper way to transport that younger child/infant. Be sure to take both vehicles, the child/ children and the child safety seat(s). Plan for at least a minimum of 45 minutes to an hour. If more than one child, the appointment may take longer. 2. Should a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician not be available in your community, seek information from reputable web sites and educational brochures. Consult your vehicle Owner's Manual and the instructions that came with your child's safety seat. These two pieces are invaluable when installing a child safety seat. Some reputable web sites include www.nhtsa.dot.gov, www.safekids.org,

	<p>www.tdh.state.tx.us/injury/safe. Talk by telephone to a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.. A technician could possibly talk a person through steps to proper installation on the telephone. The technician may ask you to read portions of the vehicle's owner's manual and the child safety seat instructions to him/her over the telephone.</p>
15	<p>I would advise them to take their teenage child to a Car Seat Check event, regardless of whether or not the younger child is in a child safety seat or booster seat. They may speak with a technician about children as passengers and have the technician explain the seriousness of having children not ride in the front seat, air bag or not, and of being responsible for another person's life. I know parents would tell their teenage children these things but to hear it from someone else, someone trained in this area, makes a much bigger impact on most teens. If they can't locate a seat check event they can contact the local fire department or police dept for help.</p>
16	<p>I believe it is the parent's responsibility to teach the new teen driver their responsibility to continue to transport the child and all vehicle passengers correctly and safely according to NHTSA guidelines. Thank you for the opportunity to reply.</p>
17	<p>Parents need to learn the proper method for transporting children safely and it is their responsibility to instill the importance and knowledge to their children. Parents have to lead by example. A child who has always used a child safety seat and whose parents always buckle up is the best teacher we have.</p>
18	<p>I would say to parents of teen who are going to be transporting young children to buy a car seat that is going to be easy to use correctly. One with harness straps that adjust by a simple pull or a chest clip that snaps together rather than feeding around is going to get used correctly more often than something that is going to require more work...I asked my teenagers this question and they agree...keep it simple. Also have the teen demonstrate correct use.</p>
19	<p>His life is in your hands. Read the directions that come with the car seat and the seat belt section in the owner's manual. If you don't understand either one or have difficulty putting the two together, get help from a Child Passenger Safety Technician - you can locate one by checking at www.nhtsa.dot.gov, click on Find a Technician listed under Child Passenger Safety.</p>
20	<p>If it is necessary for transport to be done by a teenager, it should be done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preferably during the daylight hours and definitely before 10PM. - with the children transported safely secured in the rear seat <p>It is advisable that the teen receive some child restraint training to make sure the child is secured safely in the vehicle/safety seat.</p>
21	<p>Be prepared. This means be sure the teen knows how to properly buckle up all kids in the vehicle. If they do not know, they should get the training needed. If possible, the teen AND parents should attend a safety seat check up event and get the hands-on teaching they need to be sure the small child is riding as safely as possible.</p> <p>The teen should also be given some tools to help keep kids buckled, like putting the child on seat belt patrol, or pulling over if they unbuckle.</p>

22	I would suggest the teenager take the car and car seats to a technician to get first hand (one on one) advise on how to properly install a child safety seat.
24	One of the biggest concerns as a parent of young children is a teen who transports young children AND another teen in the car. Our baby-sitter once took my small children and her boyfriend somewhere. While I had full confidence in her alone, research shows that the risk increases dramatically when there are additional teens in the vehicle.
24	<p>Ensuring that everyone in the vehicle is properly buckled up is the driver's responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buckling up correctly is the single most effective way to avoid injury or death in a crash - Friends, adult passengers and older children can usually do that for themselves - Younger children cannot always buckle up right, so it is an even greater responsibility for the driver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Children 12 and under should ride in the back seat o Children should ride in rear-facing safety seats as long as possible, until they are at least 1-year-old and weigh at least 20 pounds o Children who are at least 1 year old, weigh 20-40 pounds, and can no longer ride rear facing should ride in forward facing child safety seats o Children who weigh over 40 pounds should ride in belt-positioning booster seats until the adult seat belts fit (around age 8) o Once the adult belts fit, both the lap and shoulder belts should be correctly used o Any safety seat must be installed and used according to its manufacturer's instructions and the vehicle owner's manual
25	<p>I would ask my teen "What is the most responsible action that you have been given in your entire life?" I would advise my teenager that driving a young child or infant will likely be the most dangerous activity which they would be accepting responsibility.</p> <p>Further, there is "best" and "foolish" practice in doing so. Therefore, they have the duty to the child, the child's parents and to our family to do everything they can to transport them safely. I would then proceed with educating them on the method to safely transport their precious cargo.</p> <p>I would use my experience as a pediatric trauma nurse coordinator to explain how a crash can shatter lives in seconds. I would follow up by saying the house rule is that they follow "best practice" if they are asked to transport a child or their driving privileges would be revoked.</p>
26	<p>Have the passenger airbag permanently disconnected.</p> <p>Put the infant or young child in a rearward facing CRS in the front passenger seat where you have eye contact.</p> <p>Let the child be belted in the CRS all the time regardless if he/she cries.</p> <p>Never try to feed the child when you are driving.</p> <p>Never use the mobile phone while you are driving.</p> <p>If you have passengers you may use the CRS in the rear seat where the</p>

	<p>passenger can supervise the child. Never leave the child in the car when you visit the mall. Keep the speed limits.</p>
27	<p>My best advise to parents who do this is make sure there are enough seats for everyone, make sure all occupants were there seat belts, and no horseplay out of the occupants that my distract the driver in any way. Never under any circumstances allow anyone to ride in the back of a pickup, fire departments do not even ride on the tail boards any more do to the danger. My best friends 16 year old killed a 12 year old boy by taking his eyes off the road for just an instat and ran into a telephone pole, no speed, no alcohol or drugs involved, just lack of seat belt and proper seating</p>
28	<p>Just wanted to remind you that in California we have Graduated licensing for new drivers due to the problems teens have controlling their behavior when driving resulting in injury, death and unbelievable tragedies. No parent should have a new driver transporting their children without being absolutely sure that they understand the incredible responsibility that they have to the safety of that child. If there is any doubt that the driver can be accountable and responsible means that the parent should live up to their responsibilities and transport the child themselves.</p>
29	<p>When transporting a young child/infant, it is imperative that the teen driver understands how to use the appropriate child safety seat for that child. This includes being able to properly install the child safety seat in the vehicle and to properly secure the child in the safety seat. Additionally, the teen driver needs to understand that the child must be properly secured in the safety seat on every trip in the vehicle regardless of the length of the trip. Finally, distractions should be minimized at all times so that the teen driver can focus on safely transporting the child.</p>