

My community is not doing nearly enough to promote safer driving. When I was in high school, there were no drivers' education courses, as they were not a requirement. Instead, it was offered at the local community college for \$500. Less high schools are offering drivers' education courses, leaving the solely to parents. Instead of pushing everything onto the parents, there should be a combination of educational factors within the community to help teenagers become safe drivers.

First, drivers' education should be a required course for all teenagers who are applying for a license. In one study, only 62% of teenagers had received professional drivers' education, and almost 40% of these students received their education from a private company (Block & Walker, 2008). The belief that formal drivers' education classes are not needed is outdated. According to Reed (2015), teenagers who have not completed a drivers' education course are 24% more likely to be in a fatal or injurious accident than students who have completed the course. This is concerning, since the number one cause of death for Americans ages 15-24 is unintentional injuries, with motor vehicle related injuries causing 49.9% of these deaths (CDC, 2019). All of these facts point to the benefits of drivers' education, yet it is still an optional class. The course is expensive, as well. Not offering it in schools burdens parents with a cost they may not be able to afford.

While drivers' education is important, parents are also responsible for teaching their children to be safe drivers. Not even half of student drivers obtain 25 hours of driving with their parent, and this statistic is even stronger for families with an income lower than \$30,000 (Block & Walker, 2008). Parents are models for their children, influencing how teenagers interact with the world around them. They can also use

modeling and discussions as a way to educate their child on the importance of wearing a seatbelt when driving; never driving after they have been drinking or using any other mind-altering substance; not driving with passengers; and not driving at night. By encouraging parents to become their child's driving teachers, communities can reduce some of the risks of teenagers driving.

Finally, the entire community should be invested in promoting safety on the roads. Parents are responsible for teaching their children to drive before they receive a license and setting safety protocols once their child has a license. Teachers can advocate for a drivers' education class in their school and coaches can make sure students are not driving home when it is late or the teenager is too tired. Doctors can talk to their patients about the importance of following safety protocols when driving, giving a medical perspective that others cannot. The Department of Transportation can protect student drivers by requiring drivers' education classes, making these classes affordable, and increasing the number of required practice hours before students can take the driver's test. Promoting safer driving requires input from multiple levels of influence, not just one, as everyone in the community is affected by drivers on the road. Making sure teenagers receive the support they need from multiple aspects of the community ensures their ability to become safe drivers.

Works Cited:

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