

Parents' role in teen driving education making a difference outside the classroom

By Governor Rell's Office

Governor M. Jodi Rell announced today the results of a survey showing that teen drivers' parents found attending the state's new two-hour required driver training session was overwhelmingly beneficial and has led them to adopt new safety measures with their young drivers.

The federally funded survey, conducted by Preusser Research Group (PRG) in Trumbull, showed 85 of the parents reported that the training gave them more information to use with their teen driver. Additionally, 82 percent said they would recommend these classes to parents of other teen drivers.

"Parents know they cannot protect their children every minute of the day, but for these two hours they are able to participate together in issues that could ultimately save a life and make for safer roads," Governor Rell said. "I am extremely pleased that parents are finding this course both helpful and informative."

The mandatory course was among the Governor's initiatives in 2008 when revamping the state's teen driving laws. The changes included increases in training, driving restrictions and penalties for violating the new laws that followed a series of teen deaths from car crashes in 2007.

In the survey, almost half the parents also said that because of the training, they were doing things with their young drivers they would not have done otherwise, such as enforcing the laws, reminding teens about the laws and spending more time for instruction. Almost all parents were satisfied that all relevant topics were covered during the course.

All new drivers in Connecticut are required to take an eight-hour safe driving class at a driving school and parents are required to attend two of those hours in safety instruction. The Department of Motor Vehicles provides driving schools with a general list of topics that must be covered in the two-hour parent/teen session.

"These results show the commitment of parents to safety with teens behind the wheel and the commitment of driving schools to provide an interesting and engaging program for parents based on the DMV recommendations," DMV Commissioner Robert Ward said.

Connecticut was among the first states in the nation to adopt a requirement for this kind of parent training session. PRG, the pollster, said this is the first such study done in the country on a required parent information session in the training process for teen drivers.

In the survey, parents overwhelmingly agreed with statements that: training helped their role as a parent of teen driver (85 percent); their trainer was knowledgeable (97 percent); the training was informative (92 percent); they approved of the requirement (83 percent) and they would recommend the class to other parents (82 percent).

Parents were also polled on their knowledge of the new teen driving laws. The survey showed that 65 percent knew the law pertaining to passenger restrictions and that 77 percent knew of new restricted nighttime driving between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., with some exceptions for work and school.

For the full survey go to: <http://www.ct.gov/dmv/parentsession>