



Current Requirements for Getting a Drivers License in the United States

Allan F. Williams, Karen Weinberg, Michele Fields, and Susan A. Ferguson

In the United States there are few restrictions on where, when, and with whom young people can drive once licensed, and thus the learning period prior to licensing is important. An assessment was made of the requirements for obtaining a license in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. There is substantial variation in prelicensure requirements, and many jurisdictions allow a quick and easy route through the learning phase. Only 30 jurisdictions require that a learner's permit be obtained; only 11 of these require the permit to be held for a minimum period, ranging from 14 to 90 days. Driver education prior to licensure is required in 26 states. Fourteen states have neither permit nor driver education requirements. Requiring supervised learner's permit periods of several months is one method to encourage sufficient supervised driving experience prior to licensure, and it is an essential component of a graduated licensing system.

INTRODUCTION

Allan F. Williams, PhD, is senior Vice President for Research with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. He has published more than 100 scientific papers in a wide variety of research areas including alcohol, drugs, and driving; seat belt use; and preventing motor-vehicle deaths and injuries among teenagers and children.

Karen Weinberg, B.A., is the former Legal Research Assistant for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Her research interests include comparative analysis of state laws relating to speed, alcohol-impaired driving, licensing, seat belts, child restraints, and motorcycle helmets.

Michele Fields, J.D., is Assistant General Counsel with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Her research interests include comparative analysis of state laws relating to driver licensing, speed, alcohol-impaired driving, seat belts, child restraints, and motorcycle helmets.

Susan Ferguson, PhD, is Vice President for Research with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Her research interests include teenage driving behavior, driver licensing practices, teenagers and alcohol, and alcohol-impaired driving.

In the United States, a license to drive a motor vehicle can be obtained earlier than in most of the rest of the world. In most countries, the minimum licensing age for driving a passenger vehicle is 17 or 18. In all states, teenagers can obtain licenses earlier than age 18 provided they have parental permission. Without parental permission the minimum licensing age is 18. New Jersey is the only state in which the minimum age is 17. Massachusetts allows licensure at age 16 years 6 months; Indiana allows it at age 16 years 1 month; and the remaining states license at age 16 (40 states and the District of Columbia) or earlier (six states license at age 15, one at 14).

Once licensed, many states impose greater penalties on young drivers for traffic violations

than would be the case for older drivers, and many states set a lower blood alcohol concentration threshold for driving under the influence violations for young drivers. However, there are generally no restrictions placed on where, when, and with whom unsupervised driving can be done by new license holders. Nine states have night driving curfews for young beginning drivers, but in all other states full driving privileges are bestowed with the license. The crash rate per mile driven — a measure of driving risk — is particularly high for the youngest drivers: 43 police-reported crashes per million miles for 16-year-olds in 1990; followed by 17-year-olds with 30; compared with 15 crashes per million miles for 18–19 year olds; five for 20–24; and three for drivers age 25 and older (Massie & Campbell, 1993).

With early, unrestricted licensure and the resulting high crash rate for young beginning drivers, the learning period prior to licensure assumes importance. There are wide differences among states in how the prelicense period is handled. Most studies of state differences in licensing laws have addressed the licensing age (e.g., Williams, Karpf, & Zador, 1984), or restrictions or conditions on young license holders, such as night curfews or lower blood alcohol concentration thresholds (e.g., Preusser, Williams, Zador, & Blomberg, 1984; Levy, 1988; Hingson, Heeren, & Winter, 1994). Less attention has been given to the prelicense phase, although requirements during this period are known to be a major factor in how soon people obtain a license once they are eligible (Williams, Lund, & Preusser, 1985; Ferguson, Leaf, Williams, & Preusser, 1995).

Laws and regulations governing the prelicensure stage can also influence the amount and type of experience young people have acquired by the time they obtain licenses. This is an important factor in the graduated licensing systems that are used in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand and are being considered by some states. Graduated licensing systems are designed to phase in full driving privileges. They encourage the accumulation of on-the-road driving experience under conditions of low risk before progressing to more demanding driving situations. Graduated licensing systems typically include an initial learner's permit period of several months of supervised driving prior to licensure, a restricted license stage in which unsupervised driving can be done

under some circumstances but not others, and finally an unrestricted license contingent on the driver remaining free of crashes and violations during the restricted phase. Debates about graduated licensing have focused primarily on restrictions, such as night driving curfews, that would come into play once a license has been obtained. However, the conditions placed on driving in the prelicense stage are potentially important, if not so controversial. In the present paper, the paths to licensure are traced in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and an assessment is made of states in terms of the requirements that must be met in the prelicense period.

METHODS

Relevant portions of the licensing sections of the motor-vehicle codes for the 50 states and the District of Columbia were reviewed. Data were collected on the requirements for both learner's permits and drivers licenses. Telephone interviews with representatives of the various motor-vehicle departments or licensing agencies were conducted to confirm information gathered from the motor-vehicle code searches, and to ascertain information unavailable from the codes. The states' driver manuals were also reviewed as well as published literature describing the paths to licensure in the various states.

The following information was obtained: whether a learner's permit is required; if required, must it be held for a certain minimum length of time before applying for a license and if so, for how long; for what length of time the permit is valid; minimum permit age; prerequisites for obtaining a permit (vision test, knowledge test); minimum licensing age; and prerequisites for licensure (driver education, road test).

RESULTS

All states and the District of Columbia require vision and written tests to be passed prior to licensure. All prelicensure driving must be supervised, although requirements for who can accompany the learner vary in terms of age of the supervisor and/or number of years licensed, and whether parents must be involved. Generally, drivers older than the learner are specified, although six jurisdictions allow any licensed driver to supervise,

and this could include 16-year-olds. At the initial permit age, nine states limit accompanying drivers to parents or guardians.

Other requirements vary among the states for the learning phase. Permit holders (and learning drivers in Connecticut and New Hampshire, which do not issue learner's permits) are allowed to drive while supervised. In only 30 jurisdictions is a learner's permit a prerequisite for a license. In 19 jurisdictions, people who have reached the minimum licensing age can obtain a license without having had a learner's permit. However, in order to drive legally prior to obtaining a license, these people would have been required to obtain a learner's permit. In some states that do require permits prior to licensure, the permit requirement is waived for some people (e.g., if they have reached licensing age or are in a driver education program). Of the 30 states that require permits prior to licensure, 11 require the permit to be held for a minimum period, ranging from 14 to 90 days before the person can apply for a drivers license. Driver education prior to licensure is required in 26 states. In some states fulfillment of certain driver education requirements can substitute for passing a road test.

Although in most states the minimum age of licensure is 16, the age at which a learner's permit can be obtained varies. For example, among the states that license at 16, the minimum learners permit age is 14 in five states, 15 in 19 states, 15 years 6 months in five states, 15 years 9 months in two states, and 16 years in six states and the District of Columbia. In one state each, it is 15 years 3 months, 15 years 7 months, and 15 years 10 months.

Including all states, there are 13 in which the minimum driver's permit age is the same as the minimum drivers license age. In four states, it is less than 6 months younger than the licensing age; in seven states, it is 6 months younger; and in one state, it is 6–12 months younger. Twenty states set the permit age at 1 year younger, and in six it is more than a year. To the extent that young people get a permit as soon as one can be obtained, they have the opportunity for more driving experience to be gained prior to licensure, and they are likely to get licenses as soon as they reach the permissible age or shortly thereafter. If a permit cannot be obtained until licensure age in states requiring permits, this will likely mean that people acquiring their license will be older than if

they could have gotten their permit a year or more prior to licensing age. However, having the same minimum age for both permit and license may make for short stays in the learner's permit stage, unless a permit must be held for a mandatory period before a license can be obtained. There is some evidence that these relationships exist, based on a survey of parents of 17-year-olds concerning the licensing of their children (Ferguson & Williams, 1995).

The states are organized into six groups, on the basis of permit and driver education requirements, in Table 1. In several states there is more than one path to licensure that applicants can follow, depending on their age or exposure to driver education. Where there is more than one path, the table shows the path for the youngest applicants. Requirements applicable to other applicants are described in the notes.

In Table 1, there are six groups of states that vary in terms of permit and driver education requirements. The states with the most requirements (permit, required minimum permit period, driver education) are listed first, and those with the least requirements (no permit or driver education necessary) are listed last. However, the listing of states does not constitute a ranking in regard to the ease with which the learner's phase can be negotiated, in terms of experience gained and time spent. A required permit can mean little in terms of acquisition of experience if it need not be held for a specified minimum period, and a required holding period does not guarantee any amount or type of driving practice during that time. A requirement of driver education means that some time must be spent in taking a course that can result in acquisition of vehicle handling skills, although studies have shown that high school driver education spurs early licensure and thus greater crash involvement (Robertson & Zador, 1978; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1979; Lund, Williams, & Zador, 1986).

Within each of the six groupings, states are listed first from highest to lowest minimum licensing age. Then a priority ordering scheme is used to rank states in terms of factors that can affect time spent as a learner and experience acquired. States are ranked first on the basis of length of the mandatory permit period (longest to shortest). A second-order ranking is done on the basis of learner's permit age (lowest to highest), and within that from the longest to the shortest

TABLE 1
STATES GROUPED BY TYPES OF LICENSING AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

State	Minimum Licensing Age	Minimum Required Permit Period	Minimum Learner's Permit Age	Licensed Person Who Must Accompany Permit Holder	Permit Term
GROUP 1: Permit Required Before Licensure/Minimum Required Period/Driver Education Required					
Indiana	16, 1 mo.	60 days	15 ¹	Parent/guardian/relative 18 or older	Until 16 yrs., 3 mos.
Maine	16	90 days	15	Any 18 or older with 1 year experience	18 months
Colorado	16	90 days	15, 3 mos. ²	Parent/guardian	8 months
Michigan	16	30 days	15 ³	Parent/guardian ³	12 months ²
California	16	30 days	15 ⁴	Any 25 or older	12 months
Maryland	16 ⁵	14 days	15, 9 mos.	Any 21 or older with 3 years experience	180 days
GROUP 2: Permit Required Before Licensure/Minimum Required Period/Driver Education Not Required					
North Dakota	16	90 days	14	Any with 1 year experience	1 year
Arkansas	16	30 days	14 ⁶	Any with 1 year experience	60 days
Mississippi (effective 9/1/95)	16	30 days ⁷	15	Any 21 or older	1 year
Kentucky	16	30 days	16	Any	6 months
South Carolina	15 ⁸	15 days	15	Any 21 or older with 1 year experience	6 months
GROUP 3: Permit Required Before Licensure/No Minimum Period/Driver Education Required					
Massachusetts	16, 6 mos.	—	16 ⁹	Any 18 or older with 1 year experience	1 year
Iowa	16 ¹⁰	—	14	Parent/guardian/immediate family member 21 or older	2 years from birth date in issuance year
Vermont	16	—	15	Any 25 or older ¹¹	2 years
Illinois	16	—	15	Parent/guardian ¹²	1 year
Minnesota	16	—	15	Parent/guardian ¹³	1 year
Texas	16	—	15	Any 18 or older with 1 year experience	1 year
Washington	16	—	15 ¹⁴	Any with 5 years experience	1 year
Wisconsin	16	— ¹⁵	15, 6 mos.	Parent/guardian ¹⁵	6 months
Virginia	16	—	15	Any 18 or older	1 year
Utah	16	—	15, 9 mos. ¹⁶	Parent/guardian ¹⁶	3 months
Ohio	16	—	16	Any	6 months
Rhode Island	16	—	16	Any with 5 years experience	180 days
New Mexico	15	—	15	Any	6 months
GROUP 4: Permit Required Before Licensure/No Minimum Period/Driver Education Not Required					
New Jersey	17	—	16	Any with 3 years experience ¹⁷	Until 17, 3 mos.
West Virginia	16	—	15	Any 21 or older	Until 16, 2 mos.
New York	16 ¹⁸	—	16	See below ¹⁸	3 years
Pennsylvania	16 ¹⁹	—	16	Any 18 or older	120 days
District of Columbia	16	—	16	Any	3 months
Hawaii	15	—	15	Any	90 days

State	Minimum Licensing Age	Minimum Required Permit Period	Minimum Learner's Permit Age	Licensed Person Who Must Accompany Permit Holder	Permit Term
GROUP 5: Permit Not Required Before Licensure*/Driver Education Required					
North Carolina	16	—	15	Parent/guardian ²⁰	18 months
New Hampshire	16	No permit available	15, 6 mos.	Parent/guardian ²¹	None
Delaware	16	—	15, 10 mos.	Parent/guardian ²²	60 days
Connecticut	16	No permit available	16	Any 18 or older with 2 years experience ²¹	None
Montana	15	—	14, 6 mos. ²³	Parent/guardian ²³	6 months
Louisiana	15 ²⁴	—	15	Any 18 or older ²⁴	4 years
Idaho	15 ²⁵	—	15 ²⁵	Any 18 or older	180 days
GROUP 6: Permit Not Required Before Licensure*/Driver Education Not Required					
Alaska	16	—	14	Any 19 or older with 1 year experience	2 years
Kansas	16	—	14	Any with 1 year experience ⁶	1 year
Florida	16	—	15 ²⁷	Any 18 or older	6 years
Alabama	16	—	15	Parent/guardian ²⁸	4 years
Oregon	16	—	15	Any 21 or older	18 months
Nebraska	16	—	15	Any 19 or older	12 months
Tennessee	16	— ²⁸	15	Parent/guardian	1 year
Wyoming	16	— ³⁰	15	Any 18 or older with 1 year experience	1 year
Georgia	16	—	15	Any 18 or older	12 months
Oklahoma	16	—	15, 6 mos.	Any 18 or older	4 years
Nevada	16	—	15, 6 mos.	Any 21 or older with 1 year experience	8 months
Missouri	16	—	15, 6 mos.	Parent/guardian ³¹	6 months
Arizona	16	—	15, 7 mos.	Any	12 months
South Dakota	14 ³²	—	14	Any 18 or older with 1 year experience	180 days

* In these states except Connecticut and New Hampshire (see footnote 21), permits can be obtained prior to licensure and must be obtained in order to drive legally prior to licensure.

¹ In Indiana, a person who has not taken driver education must be 16 to be eligible for a learner's permit. The permit must be held for 180 days and is valid for 1 year. The permit holder must be accompanied by a licensed parent/guardian/relative who is at least 18 years old. A permit holder 15 years of age may drive as indicated above upon completion of a driver education program.

² In Colorado, a person must be enrolled in driver education to be eligible for a learner's permit at 15 years, 3 months old; otherwise an applicant must be 15 years, 6 months to get a learner's permit and must be accompanied by any licensed driver 21 years old or older. This permit is valid for 8 months and must be held for 90 days. Driver education is not a requirement to be issued a permit at 15 years, 6 months or to be issued a license at age 16. Permits are required at any age.

³ In Michigan, at age 15 once a permit holder has completed a driver education program, the permit is validated, enabling the permit holder to continue practicing with a parent/guardian or with a non-licensed parent/guardian and a licensed adult. Upon validation, the permit is good for 1 year. At age 16, an applicant is eligible for a learner's permit upon completion of driver education. The permit must be held for 30 days and is valid for 150 days. This permit requires supervision by a person 18 or older.

⁴ In California, at age 15 an applicant must be enrolled in driver education and taking driver training to be eligible for a permit. At age 15 years, 6 months an applicant must have completed driver education and driver training or have completed driver education and be taking driver training to be eligible for a permit. The required permit holding period is 30 days.

(Continued)

TABLE 1, con't

- ⁵ In Maryland, provisional licenses are issued to persons between 16-18. Provisional licensees must be accompanied between the hours of 12:01 - 5:00 a.m. by a person at least 21 years of age.
- ⁶ In Arkansas, 14 year-olds may take the road test after the 30-day minimum permit holding period has elapsed. If successful, they will receive a "restricted license" that requires supervision by a licensed driver 18 or older. At age 16, this restriction is lifted.
- ⁷ In Mississippi, the required 30-day permit holding period is waived for applicants who have completed driver education.
- ⁸ In South Carolina, until age 16, 15 year old license holders must be accompanied by a person 21 or older during the hours between 6:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m. and, during daylight savings time, between 8:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m.
- ⁹ In Massachusetts, permit holders must be accompanied between the hours of 1:00 a.m. - 5:00 a.m. by a parent/guardian with at least one year of experience; a license holder under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian between the hours of 1:00 a.m. - 4:00 a.m.
- ¹⁰ In Iowa, driver education is not required for a restricted license for 16-18 years olds not enrolled in school or where it is not available. Permit holders under age 16 may also be accompanied by a driver 25 or older who has been given parental permission; permit holders age 16 and older must be accompanied by a driver age 18 or older.
- ¹¹ In Vermont, permit holders age 16 and older must be accompanied by a licensed driver 18 years or older.
- ¹² In Illinois, permit holders who have completed a driver education program, may be accompanied by any driver who has had one year of experience. Licensees younger than 17 are prohibited from driving between the hours of 11:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m. Sun. - Thurs., and midnight - 6:00 a.m. Fri. - Sat.
- ¹³ In Minnesota, upon completion of the first driver education session, a permit holder must be accompanied as indicated or by an adult driver authorized by the parent/guardian. At age 16 a permit holder must be accompanied by a licensed driver.
- ¹⁴ In Washington, a permit is available for persons 15 years, 6 months who have not taken driver education, however, applicants must show proof of successful completion of a driver education program to be licensed at age 16.
- ¹⁵ In Wisconsin, a permit holder may also be accompanied by a driver with 2 years of experience who has been authorized by a parent/guardian. No other passengers are permitted. During the hours of darkness, a permit holder must be accompanied by a licensed driver 25 years or older with 2 years of experience. At age 16, a person obtaining a learner's permit for the first time must hold the permit for 7 days.
- ¹⁶ In Utah, an "instruction permit" is issued to persons 15 years, 9 months old allowing them to drive only with a driving instructor. It is valid for one year. A "practice permit" may be issued by the instructor to allow the holder to drive with a parent/guardian only, but carry no other passengers. The practice permit is valid for 90 days and is optional. A person 16 may receive a "learner's permit" and may operate with any licensed driver. It is valid for 6 months. All license applicants must have completed driver education.
- ¹⁷ In New Jersey, 16 year olds are eligible for a permit if they are enrolled in driver education. They must be accompanied by a driver education instructor until the completion of the class. Permit holders then may drive as indicated above but may not drive between 12:01 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Those who wait until age 17 to apply for a permit must be accompanied by a licensed driver with 3 years experience and the permit must be held for 20 days. Permits issued to applicants age 17 and older and valid for 90 days.

- ¹⁶ In New York, the permit is only valid in New York City between 5:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. when accompanied by a driver education instructor; in Nassau and Suffolk counties between 5:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. when accompanied by a parent/guardian or driver education/training instructor; in all other places in the state between 5:00 a.m.- 9:00 p.m. when accompanied by a driver age 18 or older and between 9:00 p.m. - 5:00 a.m. when accompanied by a parent/guardian or driver education/training instructor. New licensees are prohibited from driving in New York City until age 18. They are permitted to drive unaccompanied in Nassau and Suffolk counties to/from work-study, post-secondary institution, evening school, for farm employment, or to/from driver education and between 5:00- a.m.- 9:00 p.m., and to/from work or when accompanied parent/guardian or driver education/training instructor. In all other areas of the state a new licensee may drive unaccompanied between 5:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. or from 9:00 p.m.-5:00 a.m. to/from school/work. They must be accompanied by a parent/guardian at all other times between 9:00 p.m.-5:00 a.m.
- ¹⁹ In Pennsylvania, licenses issued to 16 year olds do not permit them to drive between midnight - 5:00 a.m. unless they are accompanied by a spouse age 18 or older or by a parent/guardian.
- ²⁰ In North Carolina, permit holders 16 years old may be accompanied by any licensed driver.
- ²¹ Connecticut and New Hampshire do not issue learner's permits. In Connecticut, persons 16 years old and older may drive when accompanied by any licensed driver 18 or older who has been licensed for at least two years. In New Hampshire, anyone who is at least 15 years and 6 months old may drive while accompanied by a driving instructor, parent, guardian, or other licensed driver age 25 or older.
- ²² In Delaware, a permit holder may not carry more than two passengers who must be immediate family members and if there are no parents/guardians, he must be accompanied by a driver 25 or older.
- ²³ In Montana, permit applicants who have not taken driver education must be 16 years of age. A permit holder, 15 and older, may drive when accompanied by any licensed driver.
- ²⁴ In Louisiana, licensees under 17 are prohibited from driving between the hours of 11:00 p.m. - 5:00 a.m. Mon. - Thurs., and midnight - 5:00 a.m. Fri. - Sat.; permit holders may not carry any other passengers.
- ²⁵ In Idaho, permit holders and licensees under 16 may only operate during daylight hours.
- ²⁶ In Kansas, permit holders at least 14 years old who have enrolled in driver education may operate with a parent/guardian only after the driver education instructor has endorsed the permit.
- ²⁷ In Florida, permit holders younger than 15 years, 6 months may only operate during daylight hours.
- ²⁸ In Alabama, permit holders age 16 and older may operate with any licensed driver.
- ²⁹ As of January 1, 1996, Tennessee's law will require applicants for a license to have a permit and to have held the permit for 3 months. However, the requirement to get the permit and to hold it is waived for applicants who have successfully completed an approved driver education program.
- ³⁰ In Wyoming, although a permit is not required to be licensed at age 16, if it has been requested, it must be held for 10 days before an applicant is eligible to take a road test.
- ³¹ In Missouri, a permit holder age 16 and older may drive with any licensed driver.
- ³² In South Dakota, licensees younger than 16 are prohibited from operating a vehicle between the hours of 8:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent /guardian. They must also have parental permission to drive at all other times.

permit term. A lower permit age relative to the licensing age means more time can be spent in the learner's phase; a long permit term can mean more time spent in the learning stage on the assumption that a terminating permit forces licensure. Information on requirements for who must accompany the permit holder, in terms of age, years of licensure, and relationship to the learner, is also provided.

There are six states that require permits and have required permit holding periods, plus driver education requirements prior to licensure. The largest group consists of 14 states with no permit and no driver education requirements, and the next largest is the group of 13 states that require a permit and driver education but have no required permit holding period.

The length of time a permit is valid varies from 60 days to indefinite. Several states have permit terms of 3 months or less, for example, Hawaii, Delaware, and Utah. In contrast, there are 27 states where a permit is valid for 1 year or more.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of permissible paths to licensure in the 50 states and the District of Columbia indicates that many states allow a quick and easy route through the learning phase. Some have virtually no requirements other than passing vision, knowledge, and road tests. This does not necessarily mean that young people in these states do not spend several months in a learning stage acquiring extensive driving experience under supervision. Except in Connecticut and New Hampshire, which do not provide for permits, learner's permits can still be obtained in states where they are not required. And in states in which driver education is not required, high school or private driver education courses are available. The licensing laws and regulations that are the focus of this paper tell what young people have to do in order to get a license, not what they actually do in the period prior to licensure, which is a separate and important question. Basically, states leave it up to parents to control the amount and type of driving experience gained in the learning phase, and the length of time their son or daughter spends in a supervised learning to drive period. There is evidence from the national survey of parents of 17-year-olds that many parents do require more than their

state does. For example, more than 90% of the parents of licensed 17-year-olds said their son or daughter had obtained a learner's permit, and reported that the permit was held for an average of about 8 months (Ferguson & Williams, 1996).

Because in the United States there are few restrictions on where, when, and with whom young people can drive once licensed, the learning period prior to licensing is important. In the four graduated licensing systems now in existence, there are required minimum periods for learner's permits: 6 months in New Zealand and Nova Scotia, Canada (or 3 months with driver education); 12 months in Victoria, Australia; and 12 months in Ontario, Canada (or 8 months with driver education). Only 11 states have a required period for a learner's permit, and only 3 have a period as long as 3 months. Parents of 17-year-olds in the United States strongly favor a minimum holding period for a learner's permit. When asked, "Do you think there should be a minimum period of supervised driving prior to getting a driver's license, 90% said "yes," and of this group, 79% would prefer a holding period of at least 3 months; 60% would prefer 6 months or more (Ferguson & Williams, 1996). Such a requirement would ensure that all beginning drivers spend some time in a learning phase, with the opportunity to gain driving skills under supervision.

In some states, it appears that very minor changes would result in young people spending more time in a learning stage. For example, states with very short permit periods force quick and early licensing, because, although permits can be renewed, this often requires a trip to the issuing agency and/or a fee. In Delaware, the minimum permit age of 15 years and 10 months combined with a 2-month permit term, results in nearly half of the young people in that state obtaining their license within the first month after turning 16 (Ferguson et al., 1995). Extending short permit terms in states where they now exist is likely to be noncontroversial and to yield some benefits in states that do not adopt graduated licensing systems.

REFERENCES

- Ferguson, S. F., & Williams, A. F. (1996). Parents views of licensing practices in the United States. *Journal of Safety Research*, 27(2), 73-81.

- Ferguson, S. A., Leaf, W. A., Williams, A. F., & Preusser, D. F. (1995). *Differences in young driver crash involvement in states with varying licensure practices*. Arlington, VA: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- Hingson, R., Heeren, T., & Winter, M. (1994). Lower legal blood alcohol limits for young drivers. *Public Health Reports*, 109, 738–744.
- Levy, D. (1988). The effects of driver age, driver education and curfew laws on traffic fatalities of 15–17 year olds. *Risk Analysis*, 8, 565–570.
- Lund, A. K., Williams A. F., & Zador, P. (1986). High school driver education: Further evaluation of the Dekalb county study. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 18, 349–357.
- Massie, D. L., & Campbell, K. L. (1993). *Analysis of accident rates by age, gender, and time of day based on the 1990 nationwide personal transportation survey*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (1979). *An analysis of the impact of driver education on the licensing of 16 and 17 year olds*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Transportation.
- Preusser, D. F., Williams A. F., Zador P. L., & Blomberg, R. D. (1984). The effect of curfew laws on motor vehicle crashes. *Law and Policy*, 6, 116–128.
- Robertson, L. S., & Zador, P. L. (1978). Driver education and fatal crash involvement of teenage drivers. *American Journal of Public Health*, 68, 959–965.
- Williams, A. F., Karpf, R. S., & Zador, P. L. (1984). Variation in minimum licensing age and fatal motor vehicle crashes. *American Journal of Public Health*, 73, 1401–1404.
- Williams, A. F., Lund, A. K., & Preusser, D. F. (1985). Teenage driver licensing in relation to state laws. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 17, 135–145.