

Recommendations to the Minor Driver's License Interim Study Committee

Summary of Comments Provided to the committee on October 13th

- All 50 states have adopted Graduated Driver Licensing laws. The Minor School License (aka Special Minor License) is a departure from the traditional Graduated Driver License model.
- Iowa is only one of six states to offer an instruction permit at age 14 (most states offer an instruction permit at age 15 and some require the teen to wait until age 16).
- Iowa is only one of three states that allow a minor to drive unaccompanied at age 14 ½ (the other two states are Nebraska and Kansas). Only five other states allow 15-year-olds to drive unaccompanied for school or work purposes.
- National research suggests that increasing a teen's experience behind the wheel with an adult prior to allowing them to drive on their own decreases the likelihood they will cause a crash.
- The CDC has shared motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has shared teen drivers are four times as likely to crash per mile driven as drivers age 20 or older.
- NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis shared that Iowa had the second highest percentage of traffic fatalities in crashes involving young drivers in the nation in 2020.
Link to NHTSA findings:
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813313>
- The current allowable driving locations include the school or place designated for extracurricular activities within the student's district or contiguous school district (public school students), up to a 50-mile driving distance for farm-related work, or up to a 50-mile driving distance for students attending private school. We have received feedback from parents that the current driving distances and locations are unfair for public school students and difficult to keep straight.

Relevant Statistics

- # of 14-year olds with a Special Minor License (Minor School License) = 3,700
- # of 15-year olds with a Special Minor License (Minor School License) = 15,300
- # of 16-year olds with some type of instruction permit or driver's license = 35,000
- # of 17-year olds with some type of instruction permit or driver's license = 37,000

- # of crashes involving 14–17-year-old drivers YTD CY2023 = **4,204**
 - **17 fatalities**
 - **94 serious injuries**
 - *14-year-olds = 179*
 - *15-year-olds = 580*
 - *16-year-olds = 1,681*
 - *17-year-olds = 1,764*

- # of crashes involving 14-17 year-olds CY2022 = **5,800**
 - **30 fatalities**
 - **138 serious injuries**
 - *14-year-olds = 257*

- 15-year-olds = 850
- 16-year-olds = 2,312
- 17-year-olds = 2,381
- Crash reports show 92% of 14–17-year-old drivers involved in crashes were in “apparently normal” condition as compared to only 85% of all other drivers involved in crashes (i.e. inexperience was a factor, as they were not impaired or suffering a medical condition)
- See below for number of suspensions – MSL suspensions are specific to violating the conditions of the Special Minor License (Minor School License) or receiving a citation or contributing to a crash. The GDL suspension means the driver violated a restriction of their Graduated Driver License or received a second or subsequent citation, or contributed to a crash.

Suspension	YTD 2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
MSL Suspension (SUS83)	684	868	873	289	799	627
GDL Suspension (SUS138)	2109	1588	691	571	260	188

- Additional restriction letters are sent to teen drivers with an Intermediate License after receiving one citation.

Additional Restriction letter	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
	5885	6075	5154	6258	6323

Recommendations

- 1. Increase the length of time a teen is required to hold their instruction permit before they are able to obtain a Special Minor License/Minor School License from the current six months to one year.**

Rationale: Research and statistics show that longer permit holding significantly reduces teen crash rates. A teen would be eligible to obtain their Minor School License at age 15 at the earliest (rather than 14 ½), provided they have held their Instruction Permit for one year and have completed driver education.

This change would result in the ages changing to the following:

	Eligibility age under current law	Eligibility age under recommendation 1a
Instruction permit	14	14
Special minor’s license (school permit)	14 ½	15
Intermediate license	16	16

1a. Increase the age that a minor becomes eligible for an Instruction Permit by six months to age 14 ½ AND increase the length of time a teen is required to hold their instruction permit before they are able to obtain a Special Minor License/Minor School License from six months to one year.

In scenario 1a the ages through the GDL process would become:

	Eligibility age under current law	Eligibility age under recommendation 1a
Instruction permit	14	14 ½
Special minor’s license (school permit)	14 ½	15 ½
Intermediate license	16	16

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Rationale: This would bring Iowa slightly closer to the national recommended best practice of waiting until age 16 to offer an Instruction Permit and would still allow a minor to obtain an Intermediate License at age 16.

2. Standardize the distance that teens with a Special Minor License/Minor School Permit are able to travel by limiting the distance to 25 miles for any approved activity (school, farm, or work if work is added as an approved activity).

Rationale: Consistent standards will make it easier for parents, law enforcement, and students to understand and follow and will eliminate the perceived unfairness to public school students in urban areas with more geographically condensed school districts.

3. Require a teen to carry a form with them in the car that includes signatures and addresses of the approved locations they are allowed to drive to and from as part of the Special Minor License/Minor School Permit along with contact information for the parent, school administrator, or employer.

Rationale: This provides law enforcement a simpler way to determine whether the teen is on the most direct route and whether they are driving to an approved location. This will help keep track of frequent teen job changes or seasonal extracurricular activities. This also reduces administrative burden on DOT and county treasurer locations, who should not be responsible for tracking these types of changes.

4. Implement a zero-tolerance policy for any violation of the Special Minor License/Minor School License. A violation will result in the revocation of the Special Minor License/Minor School License and an automatic downgrade back to an Instruction Permit.

Rationale: A stronger punishment for violations will disincentivize teens from misusing the license or making poor driving choices.