

# Facts on Kids in South Dakota

## Teens & Motor Vehicle Crashes



Issue No. 1Qtr 00

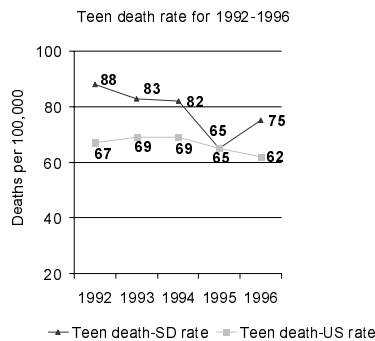
*Data in this issue are from the South Dakota Department of Transportation, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and the Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) Project. More information about the data can be found at the end of the issue.*

### Introduction

This is the first in a series of **Facts on Kids in South Dakota**. Each issue will take a look at a specific indicator of child well being. Data and state and federal legislation will be discussed to provide the reader with a broad yet in-depth view of the state of children and youth in South Dakota.

The focus of this issue is teens and motor vehicle crashes. Teen violent death is defined as the number of deaths from homicides, suicides, and crashes involving teens ages 15-19 years per 100,000 teens. The major cause of death for children and teens is motor vehicle crashes. Studies show two actions can lessen motor vehicle deaths and injuries: wearing safety belts and not drinking and driving. Wearing seat belts reduces the risk of fatal motor vehicle injuries by 45% and moderate to critical injuries by half.<sup>1</sup> Forty-one percent of fatalities occur in alcohol involved crashes; 20% of all injuries are from alcohol involved motor vehicle crashes.<sup>2</sup>

The graph below shows data from the 1999 KIDS



COUNT Data Book, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Teen death rates for South Dakota have been higher than the national rate for four of the five years.

### South Dakota's New Licensing Law<sup>3</sup>

In South Dakota, fourteen-year-olds were, until recently, able to drive under restricted hours without another licensed driver present and without the benefit of driver education or instruction. South Dakota's new "Graduated Licensing" law took effect January 1, 1999. The new laws provide for levels of licensing as described below.



**Instruction Permit:** All drivers under the age of 18, who have not held a valid drivers license for 180 consecutive days, will be required to drive under an "instruction permit" for 180 consecutive days, without any traffic violations, before they can move up to the next level of licensing. The length of time required for holding the instruction permit will be reduced to three months if the person successfully completes an approved driver education program. The instruction permit allows the person to drive only with a licensed driver who is at least 18 years of age, who has one year of driving experience, and is occupying the seat beside the driver.

**Restricted Permit:** All drivers at least 14 and less than 18 years of age, who have completed the requirements of the instruction permit, can graduate to the "Restricted Permit". The restricted permit allows the young driver to operate the motor vehicle between the hours of 6am and 8pm standard time, with permission of the driver's parents, and during the hours of 8pm and 6am if the minor's parent or guardian is in the seat beside the minor providing supervision.

**Operator's License:** Once the young driver has reached 16 years of age, they can apply for an

# Facts on Kids in South Dakota



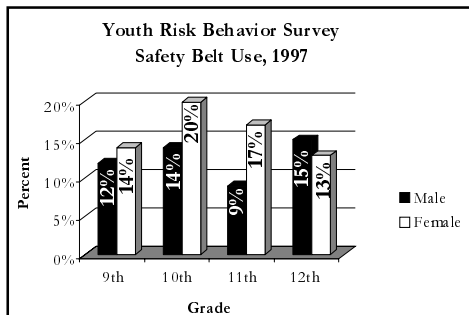
“Operator’s License” if they have met the requirements of the instruction permit and have driven violation free for the previous 180 days. Once a person reaches the age of 18, they are automatically eligible for an operator’s license.

## Adolescent Safety Belt Use

Students reported, on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the following information about their use of safety belts:

South Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey			
	1993	1995	1997
Always wore a seatbelt when riding in a car	7%	15%	14%

YRBS responses by grade for male and female respondents for 1997 showed the following:



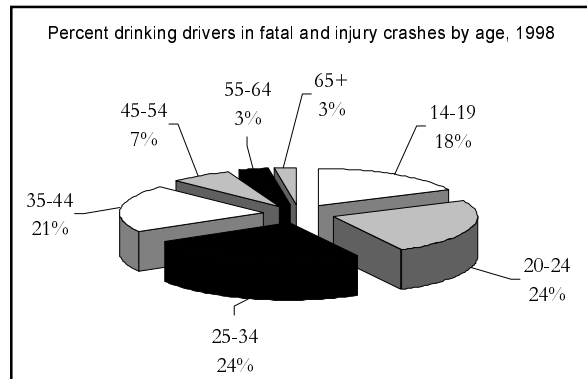
In the 1993 YRBS 6% of males and 9% of females reported always wearing a safety belt when riding in a car driven by someone else. For 1997 the percentages rose to 12% of males and 16% of females wearing safety belts.

## Legislative History - Safety belts

There is considerable history behind the current South Dakota safety belt legislation. From 1976 to 1982, no legislation was introduced to require usage for adolescents. However, from 1983 through 1994 when a secondary law was passed, fourteen different bills concerning safety belt usage were introduced. Currently, South Dakota requires seat belts be worn by all front seat passengers.

## Adolescent drinking and driving

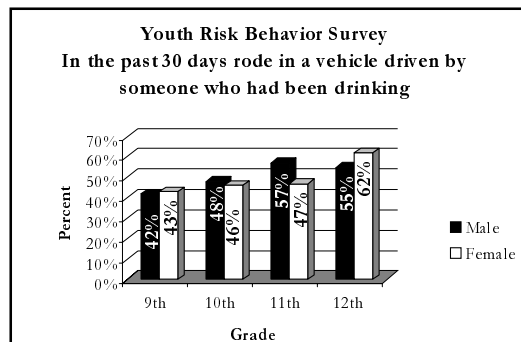
According to the 1998 South Dakota Motor Vehicle Traffic Accident Summary Report, **about 10% of licensed drivers in the state are age 14 to 19** yet they represent **18% of the drinking drivers** in fatal and injury crashes.



Students reported, on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the following information about drinking and driving:

South Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey			
	1993	1995	1997
In the past 30 days, rode in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol	51%	49%	50%
In the past 30 days, drove a car when they had been drinking	29%	30%	31%

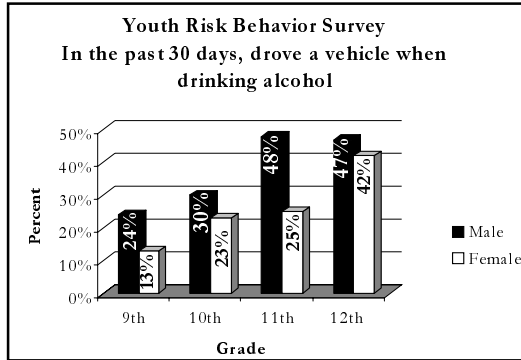
The 1997 YRBS responses by grade for riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking showed the following:



# Facts on Kids in South Dakota



The 1997 YRBS responses by grade for driving a vehicle after they had been drinking showed the following:

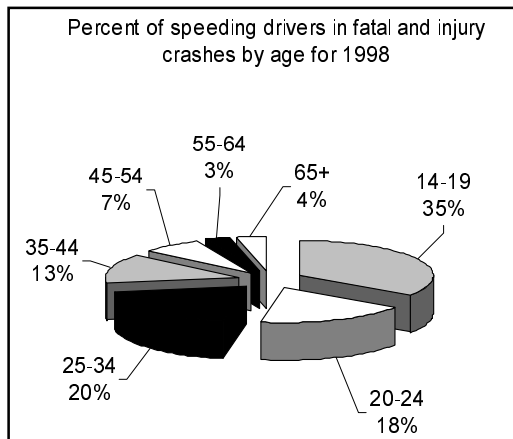


### Legislative History – Drinking and driving

South Dakota's new zero-tolerance law for underage drinking and driving became effective on July 1, 1998. Under this law, anyone under 21 who has at least .02% of alcohol in their blood while in control of a motor vehicle can lose their license for 6 months, or one year for a subsequent offense. Refusing to submit to a chemical test can result in a one-year revocation of the individual's license.

### Teen speeding while driving

According to the 1998 South Dakota Motor Vehicle Traffic Accident Summary Report, **about 10% of licensed drivers in the state are age 14 to 19** yet they represent **35% of the speeding drivers** in fatal and injury crashes. The chart below shows, for 1998, speeding drivers in fatal and injury crashes by age groups.



### Contributing circumstances to crashes

The data clearly indicate that teens are overrepresented in drinking and driving and speeding crashes as compared to their percent of licensed drivers. An added factor is lack of experience. The CODES data indicate that the top five contributing circumstances for crashes were:

1. Failure to yield
2. Exceeding safe speed but not limit  
(e.g. conditions warranted slower speeds than posted)
3. Following too closely
4. Exceeding speed limit
5. Distracted by object/person



### Advocacy Information from the South Dakota Coalition for Children

South Dakotans can take further steps to reduce the teen violent death rate and provide support to teen drivers. The South Dakota Coalition for Children, a statewide member-based organization dedicated to shaping policies and programs that ensure the well-being of all South Dakota children, recommends:

- ❶ requiring all passengers to wear safety belts when riding in passenger vehicles.
- ❷ requiring high schools to offer drivers education at no or very low cost (currently drivers education is not required; a patchwork of availability exists with some districts not offering it at all; costs range from free in some districts to as much as \$195 in other districts).
- ❸ requiring driver's education as a condition for getting a driver's license.
- ❹ encouraging parents to instruct youth in the top contributing circumstances for motor vehicle crashes.

These advocacy measures and the graduated licensing law passed in the 1999 Legislative session should be monitored for effectiveness in reducing teen motor vehicle fatalities and injuries. If these measures do not prove successful in reducing fatalities and injuries, the beginning age for driving should be reviewed by policy makers.

## Facts on Kids in South Dakota



### Data sources and information

**The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)** is a questionnaire that assesses six priority health risk behaviors, which result in the greatest amount of morbidity, mortality, and social problems among youth. A sample of all public, private and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools in South Dakota containing students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 are eligible to be selected for inclusion. **Contact: Laurie Jensen-Wunder, Program Coordinator, HIV/AIDS Prevention Education.**

[www.state.sd.us/state/executive/deca/COMSER/index.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/state/executive/deca/COMSER/index.htm)

**Youth related traffic crashes** data is from the **Department of Transportation, Accident Records Office**. 1998 South Dakota Motor Vehicle Traffic Accident Summary.

[www.state.sd.us/dot/Accident](http://www.state.sd.us/dot/Accident)

**The Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES)** project links South Dakota accident records with other databases to get a clearer picture of crash data in the state. Through data linkage, a more complete picture of crash data can be seen.

[www.usd.edu/brbinfo](http://www.usd.edu/brbinfo)

**The South Dakota Coalition for Children (SDCC)** mission is to strive to shape policies and programs to ensure the well-being of all children in South Dakota. [www.dakota.net/~sdcc](http://www.dakota.net/~sdcc)

**The South Dakota KIDS COUNT Project** is a national and state-by-state effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to track the status of children in the United States. A major goal of KIDS COUNT is to foster a nationwide commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. Data indicators measure the education, social, economic, and physical well-being of children. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for children and families. Additional funding for the state project comes from the South Dakota Departments of: Education and Cultural Affairs, Health, Human Services and Social Services.

[www.usd.edu/brbinfo/brb/kc](http://www.usd.edu/brbinfo/brb/kc)

### Special Thanks to:

Pat Goebel and Amy Blad for proofing & editing.  
Briana Nelson for assisting with disseminating this edition.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Final Regulatory Impact Analysis: Amendment of FMVSS No. 208 - Passenger Car Front Seat Occupant Protection. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1984.

<sup>2</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The Economic Costs of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 1994. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1995.

<sup>3</sup>South Dakota Office of Highway Safety website. [www.state.sd.us/dcr/hs/newlaws.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/dcr/hs/newlaws.htm)



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