

# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for young people ages 16-25 in Washington. Drivers in this age group have the highest crash rate, and the highest rates of speeding, impaired driving, and distracted driving of any driver age group in the state. According to Ferguson (2003), teenage drivers and passengers also have lower seat belt use rates than older drivers and passengers.

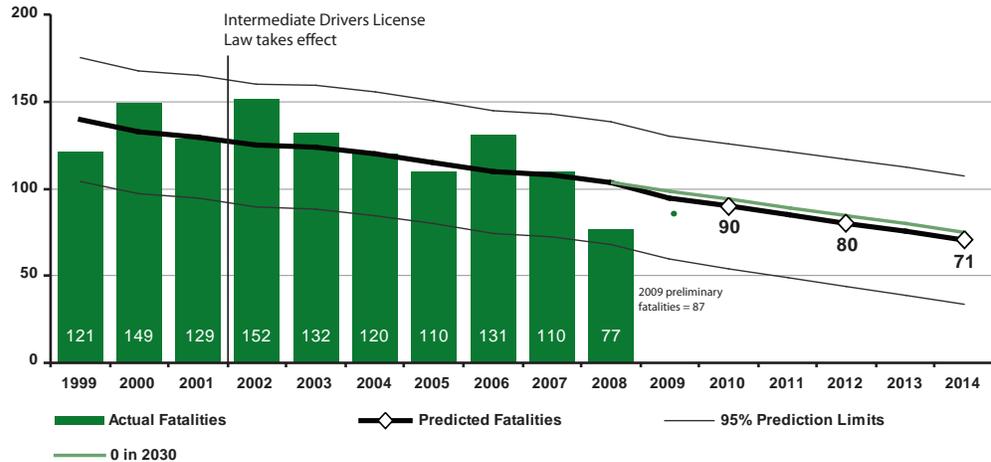
In comparison with adult drivers, young drivers are substantially over-involved in serious crashes. While young drivers made up only 15.2% percent of all licensed drivers in 2004-2008, they were involved in 37.7% percent of fatal and serious injury crashes. Compared to 26+ year-old drivers in fatal crashes, 16-25 year-old drivers in fatal collisions were about twice as likely to be speeding or passing improperly, and over one-third more likely to be impaired. Overall, they are approximately 50% more likely to commit errors identified by investigators as contributing to the collision.

## Fatalities Involving 16-20 Year Old Drivers are Decreasing More Quickly than Those Involving 21-25 Year Old Drivers

Over the past 10 years, the number of fatalities involving drivers age 16-20 have decreased substantially, while those involving age

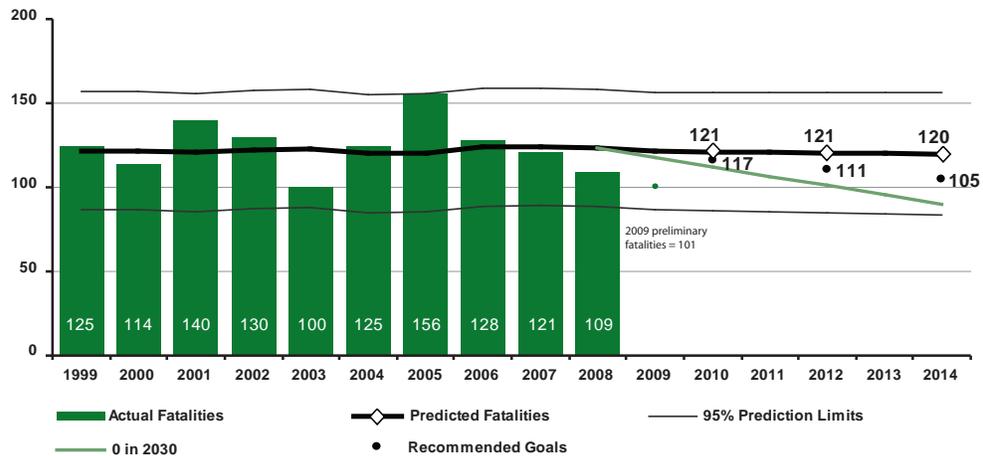
21-25 have remained unchanged. This may be due to the restrictions imposed on 16- and 17-year old drivers by Washington's current Intermediate Driver Licensing (IDL) Law. After implementing the IDL in 2001, collisions among 16-year olds decreased by 54% and among 17-year olds by 16.5%. One of the factors contributing to the decline in

### Fatalities Involving Drivers Age 16-20: Trends, Forecasts, and Goals



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Reporting System

### Fatalities Involving Drivers Age 21-25: Trends, Forecasts, and Goals



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Reporting System

## Priority Level Two: Young Drivers

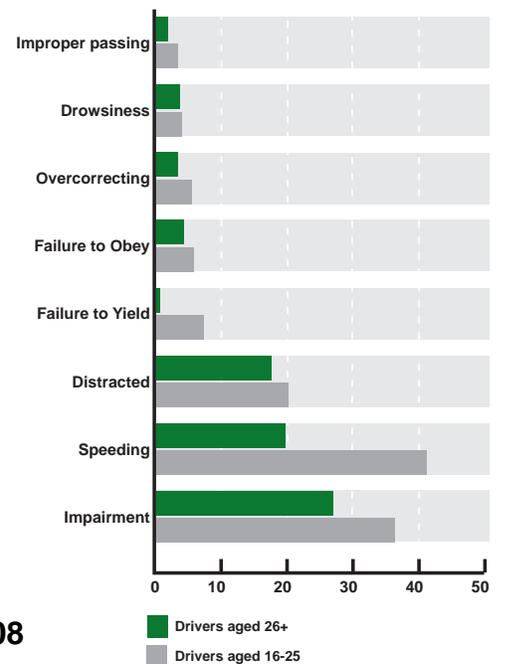
deaths involving 16-20 year-old drivers is a decrease in impairment in fatal crashes. Between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of 16-20 year-old drivers in fatal crashes who were impaired by alcohol or other drugs dropped by 8.6% compared to 2003-2005. In contrast, the percentage of 21-25 year-old drivers in fatal crashes who were impaired rose by 4.8% during the same period.

Although speeding-related fatal and serious injury crashes declined in both young driver age groups, the drop was eight times greater for 16-20 year-olds than 21-25 year olds. Nevertheless, speeding still contributes to fatal and serious crashes more often among drivers age 16-20 years old than those 21-25.

One area in which drivers age 21-25 are improving over those age 16-20 is distracted driving. Drivers age 16-20 years-old have the highest percentage of distracted driving in fatal crashes of any age group. In fact, between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of 16-20 year-olds driving distracted in fatal crashes increased by 26% compared to 2003-2005. Among 21-25 year-olds, however, the percent driving distracted in fatal crashes dropped by 9% for the same time period.

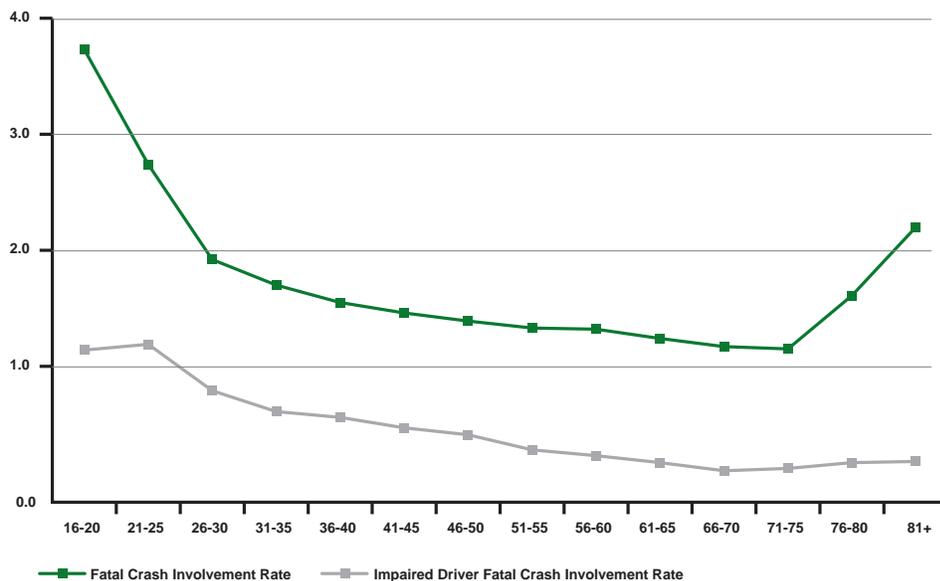
### Driver Errors In Washington Fatal Crashes, 1999-2008

By Age Group, 16-25 year-olds vs 26+ year-olds  
By percentage of age-group drivers in fatal crashes



### Washington Fatal Crash Involvement Rate, 1999-2008 Total and Impaired\* Drivers in Fatal Crashes

per 10,000 Licensed Drivers, by Driver Age Group



Source: FARS, DOL  
\*Drivers with either a BAC = or >.08 or a positive drug test

# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers

## More Young Drivers are Waiting Until Age 18 to Get Driver Licenses

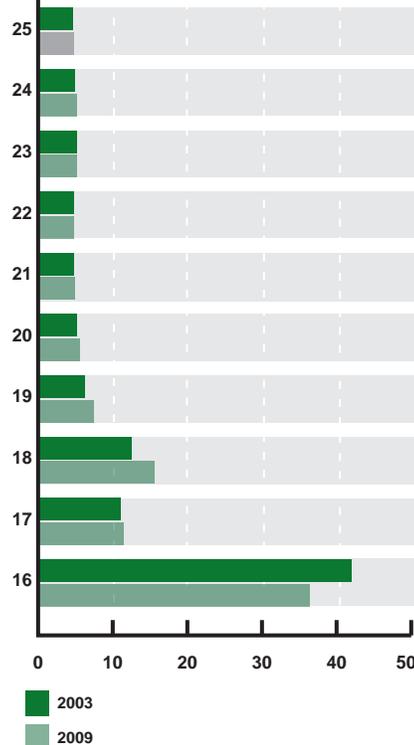
First-time drivers in Washington State who are 16 or 17 years old face license restrictions that are intended to improve their safety, as well as the safety of other drivers who share the road with them. Sixteen- and 17-year-old drivers are required to complete Driver Training School (DTS) curriculum and other prerequisites. Following licensure, these 16 and 17 year olds then have restrictions on their driving privileges (see green box on p.35), and lose graduated driving privileges if they commit violations. With a third violation, the license is suspended until age 18.

However, if a person waits until age 18 to apply for a driver license, the only licensure requirements are to pass the knowledge and driving test, the same as for all other new drivers in Washington.

Target Zero analysts have found a trend, as shown in the chart to the right, of fewer new drivers becoming licensed in the IDL period and more waiting until age 18 to become licensed. As of 2009, of the 16 and 17 year olds, about one third of the men and about one quarter of the women are waiting to become licensed until age 18.

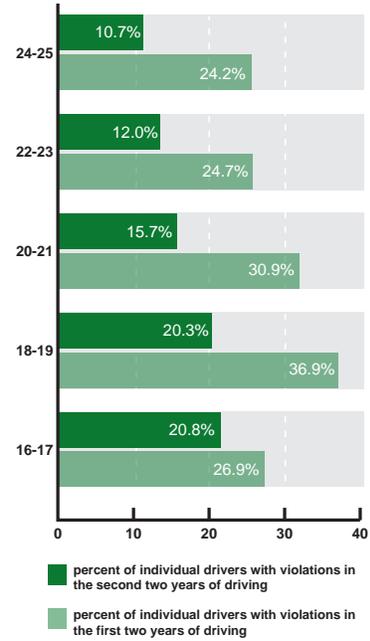
Licensing data show a larger proportion of teens are becoming licensed at 18 year old rather than 16-17 year old, potentially to avoid the IDL restrictions. All of the reasons for later licensure have not been identified, nor have all the differences between teens who are licensed under the IDL and teens who are first licensed at age 18.

**The Young Driver Population:**  
Percent of 16 through 25 Years Olds at the Age of Their First Licensure in Washington State  
2003 vs. 2009



Source: Washington State Department of Licensing  
Note: This data also includes drivers who have received their initial drivers licenses in other states, then surrendered their licenses for Washington State drivers licenses.

**Percent of Young Drivers Newly Licensed in Washington State with Violations in the first 4 years Following Licensure, 2003-2009, by age of first licensing**



Source: Washington State Department of Licensing  
Note: This reflects the percent of individual drivers who received at least one violation within the first 24 or second 24 months of driving.  
Note: This data also includes drivers who have received their initial drivers licenses in other states, then surrendered their licenses for Washington State drivers licenses.

### What is a Driving Violation?

A violation, for the purposes of the young driver data in *Target Zero*, is any driving infraction that will be placed on an individual's driving record. This would include relatively minor infractions, such as driving 5 mph over the speed limit, up to the most serious, such as vehicular homicide. It does not include the most minor infractions, such as a parking ticket.

# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers

---

A review of citation data by age at first licensure revealed distinct differences in violation rates between drivers licensed at age 16-17 and those licensed at age 18-19. As seen in the graph on the previous page, in the first two years after being licensed, 27% of drivers who obtained IDL licenses at age 16 or 17 committed violations. By comparison, 37% of drivers licensed for the first time at age 18 or 19 committed violations in their first two years of driving. Interestingly, this disparity evens out during the second two-year period of driving for both sets of drivers. Other factors than licensure under the IDL law may also contribute to this citation-rate difference, i.e., differences in miles of driving, the absence of parental oversight, and disparities in income. In any case, those who elect to wait until age 18 for a first license are clearly a higher risk set of new drivers than those who become licensed under the IDL law at 16 or 17s

### Intermediate Driver License Requirements

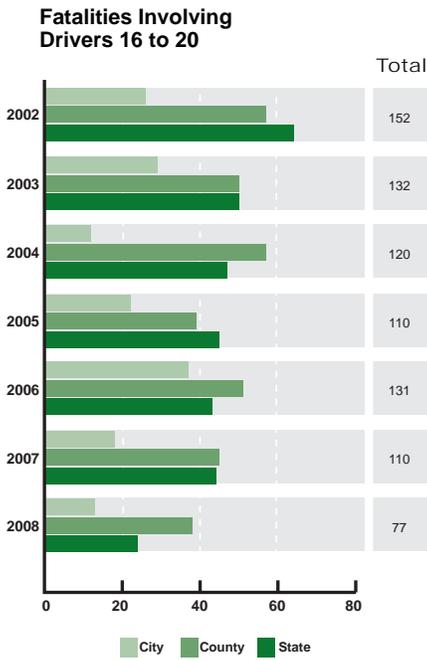
- Get the consent of a parent or guardian
- Hold an instruction permit for at least six months
- Complete a Driver Training School course
- Complete 50 hours of supervised driving, 10 of which are at night
- Commit no violations within six months of application
- Pass a knowledge test and driving test
- During the first six months of licensure, carry no passengers under 20 years old except members of the driver’s immediate family
- During the second six months of licensure, carry no more than three passengers under 20 years old except members of the driver’s immediate family
- Refrain from driving between 1:00 am and 5:00 am unless with a parent, a guardian, or a licensed driver who is at least 25 years old

### Reducing Young Driver Fatalities and Serious Injuries

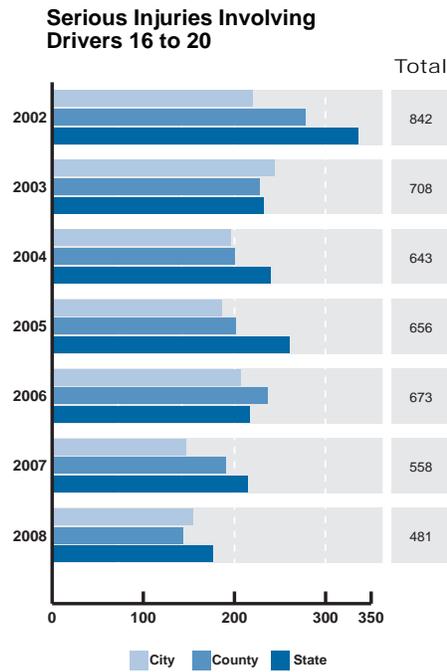
Strategies to reduce young driver fatalities and serious injuries focus on enforcing and strengthening the IDL, discouraging young driver drinking, and improving young driver education. According to recent studies, Washington’s IDL law could be strengthened by implementing a nighttime curfew that starts at 9 or 10 p.m. (versus the current 1 a.m. requirement) and by extending the young passenger restrictions beyond the first six months of licensure (Williams, 2003; Williams, Ferguson, & McCartt, 2007).

In Washington, we are working to improve young driver safety through the work of the Young Driver Task Force. This group, comprised of representatives from both public and private entities, meets at least quarterly to ensure a coherent approach to reducing fatalities and serious injuries among young drivers in Washington. The task force’s priorities include working to increase compliance with the IDL by involving parents and law enforcement, strengthening pre-licensure driver education, and encouraging improvements to the IDL.

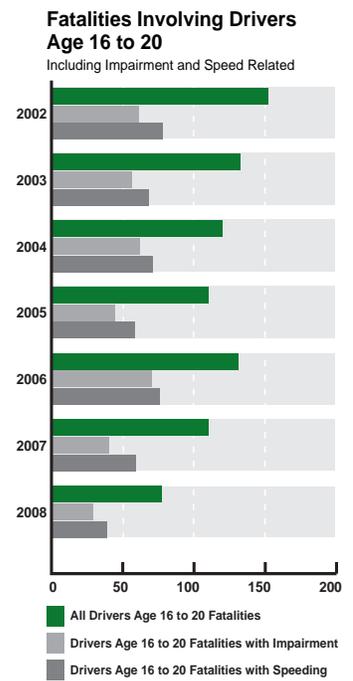
# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System

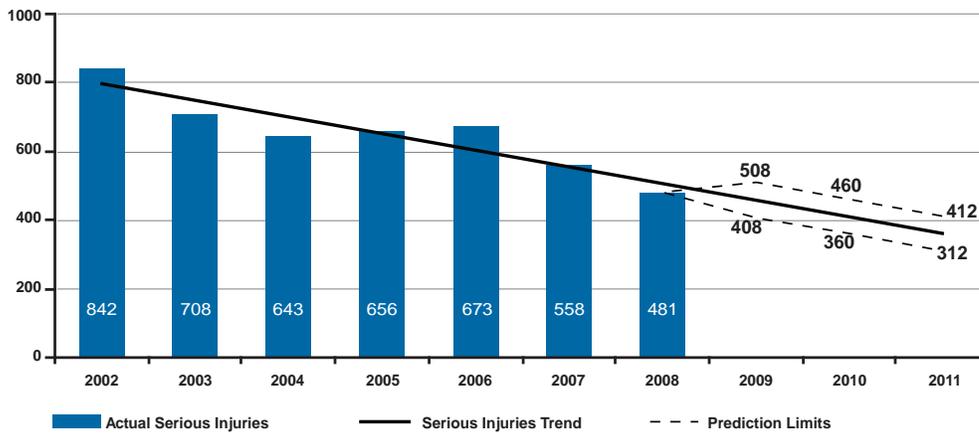


Source: WSDOT Collision Database



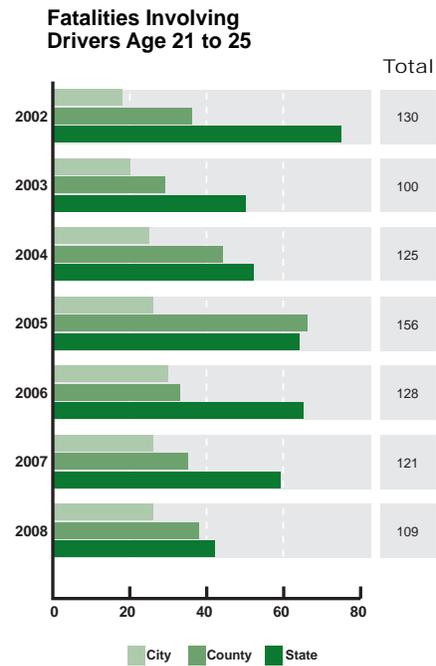
Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System (FARS)

## Serious Injuries from Involving Drivers 16 to 20: Trends and Forecasts

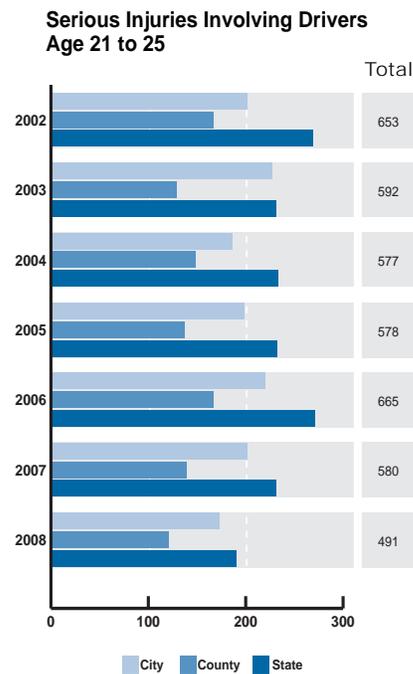


Source: WSDOT Collision Database

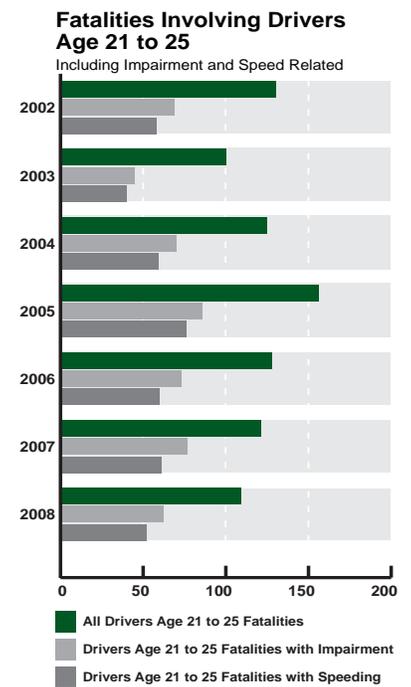
# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System

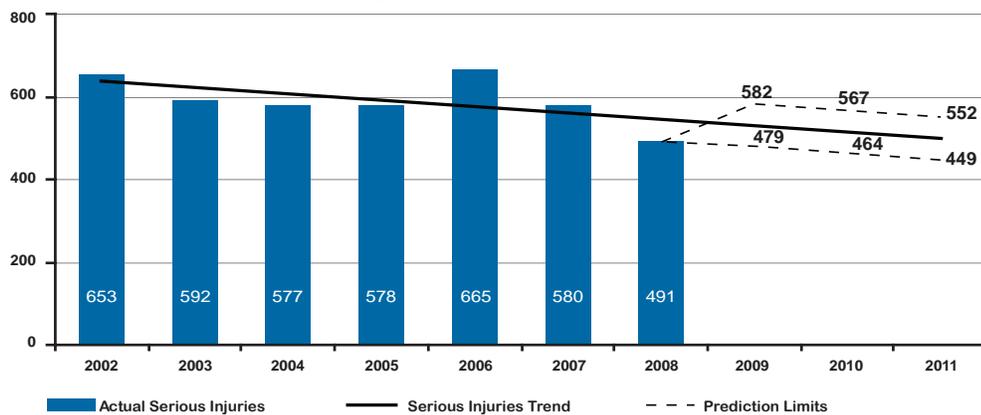


Source: WSDOT Collision Database



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System (FARS)

## Serious Injuries Involving Drivers Age 21 to 25: Trends and Forecasts



Source: WSDOT Collision Database

# Priority Level Two: Young Drivers

## 2.1 Strategies to Reduce Collisions Involving Young Drivers

### 2.1.A Emphasize compliance with the State's Intermediate Driver's License law

- 2.1.A1 Provide education and training. (T)
- Educate teen drivers and their parents about intermediate license restrictions and penalties.
  - Educate law enforcement officers about intermediate license laws.
  - Encourage Tribes to pass intermediate driver license laws for young drivers. (P)
- 2.1.A2 Continue statewide high-visibility enforcement and media campaigns to maximize enforcement of intermediate driver's licensing law. (T)
- Provide overtime funding for law enforcement agencies to enforce the intermediate license law.
  - Allow parents to opt-in to marking vehicles of IDL license holders. (E)
- 2.1.A3 Encourage changes to State intermediate license laws that will bring them into alignment with the model proposed by NHTSA and the Governors' Highway Safety Association. (P)
- Adjust curfew to avoid hours when young driver serious injury and fatality crashes are highest.
- 2.1.A4 Continue to build partnerships to ensure the intermediate driver's license law is as effective as possible. (T)
- Support the activities of the Young Driver Task Force.
  - Use Target Zero safety task forces to implement programs to reduce collisions involving young drivers.
  - Collaborate with BIA, Indian Health Services, and NAETO to support Tribal Nations seeking to reduce collisions involving young drivers. (E)

### 2.1.B Enforce compliance with the State's underage drinking law

- 2.1.B1 Track the results of Pierce County's Party Intervention Patrol model, and consider expanding the program.

### 2.1.C Improve young driver education and intervention.

- 2.1.C1 Continue updating model traffic safety education curriculum to match new NHTSA standards. (P)
- 2.1.C2 Expand the warning letter program as an early intervention to more young drivers at their earliest stage of increasing risk. (E)
- 2.1.C3 Consider expanding new driver restrictions. (E)

### 2.1.D Support the new state law banning wireless devices

- 2.1.D1 Provide education and enforcement to implement the state law prohibiting Learner's Permit and Intermediate Driver License holders from driving while communicating with any wireless device, including a hands-free cell phone. (T)