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**SMARTER TEEN DRIVING STARTS WITH PARENTS**  
*Parents Hold Keys to Success in AAA's new StartSmart Tool*

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., (October 21, 2013) – Parents who ensure that teens get ample practice in a wide variety of situations and transfer their safe driving wisdom to their novice drivers are more likely to help their teens develop the necessary skills to be safer drivers, according to a series of research studies from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. In step with AAA's advice that parents should spend more time with their teen drivers so they can build as much experience as possible before driving solo, these new findings provide evidence as to *how* parents can most effectively work with their teens.

While current tools on the market focus on teen education, AAA used this insight in the development of a new Drivers-Ed tool *for parents*—AAA's StartSmart Online Parent Session. Grounded in principles of adult learning, the program helps parents be more effective driving coaches as their teens learn to drive.

"Teens continue to have the highest crash rate of any age group, so it's critical that parents are involved and use evidence-based techniques that work," said Dr. Georjeane Blumling, AAA Tidewater Vice President of Traffic Safety Programs. "These recommended coaching techniques may seem rather obvious, yet research findings show that parents aren't regularly practicing these techniques.

For example, one Foundation study that surveyed parents and teens during the process of learning to drive found:

- Nearly half of parents reported they wanted their teens to get "a lot of practice," when asked about their plans for their teens' driving. Yet, only about one in four parents mentioned practicing under a variety of situations or conditions, such as in bad weather, heavy traffic, or on unfamiliar roads.
- Nearly half of parents (47 percent) reported that there was still at least one condition in which they were not comfortable allowing their teen to drive unsupervised even after they passed their driving test and got their license to drive independently.
- Few parents in the study were observed sharing more complex driving tips—such as visual scanning or anticipating other drivers' behaviors with their teen drivers.

"Parents should make sure that their teens get ample driving practice, which goes beyond getting practice on routine trips on familiar roads," said Blumling, adding, "If they do, teens will be much more likely to have the skills and mindset needed to be safer drivers."

AAA Tidewater Virginia also encourages safe driving practices in Hampton Roads high schools through a partnership with Drive Safe Hampton Roads and other traffic safety organizations in the Get It Together program. The Get It Together program's objective is to reduce injuries and fatalities by increasing seat belt use by students in Hampton Roads high schools. This program accomplishes the objective with a regional seat belt challenge that provides tools and other resources to educate as many students as possible with peer to peer education.

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Additionally, with the roll-out of the StartSmart Online Parent Session, AAA aims to give parents easy access to the most useful parenting practices for supervising and managing a teen driver. Through interactive elements and demonstrations, the two-hour program covers everything a parent needs to know, including a discussion about the situations and challenges they will most likely experience during supervised driving practice. The program is being offered at a 50 percent discount (\$9.95) in support of Teen Driver Safety Week, October 20-26.

The SmartSmart Online Parent Session is being launched in conjunction with AAA's new *How to Drive Online* novice driver education program. While parent supervision requirements do vary by state, the program is available nationwide and can be found [here](#) at TeenDriving.AAA.com. As a leader in driver education for nearly eight decades, AAA has a wide range of tools available to help parents simplify the learning-to-drive process including parent-teen driving agreements, licensing information and a free web-based parent support e-newsletter program created in partnership with the National Institutes of Health.

To encourage parents to share their wisdom with younger drivers, AAA is launching a national contest soliciting the best driving advice that parents wish to impart on teen drivers, along with a chance to challenge their own driving smarts by taking the "Are You Smarter Than Your Teen Driver?" quiz. Parents can submit entries at [Contest.TeenDriving.AAA.com](#) from October 21 through December 11 and will be eligible to win prizes including an iPad® mini and VISA® gift cards.

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