



Background:

In 2005 the Georgia State Senate passed *Joshua's Law* (Senate Bill 226) requiring all teens wishing to obtain a Class D (provisional) driver's license after January 1, 2007 to complete an approved driver training course. In accordance with this legislation the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) developed the Georgia Driver Education Commission (GDEC) Grant Program in 2007 to address the need for free or low-cost teen driver training. Under this program GOHS provided grant funding to both public high schools and libraries.

Objective: To examine expenditures of GDEC programs and evaluate effectiveness based on crashes, injuries, and fatalities of teen drivers after the implementation of *Joshua's Law* and the creation of the GDEC Grant Program.

Results: During the two years that the GDEC grant program was implemented, a total of 23,200 teens received driver's education in 85 high school and library programs in 68 counties. During SFY2008, GDEC funded 30 library system start-up programs. A majority of funding went to 13 high school start-up programs and 22 expansions of existing programs. A majority (70%) of schools used grant funds to add 46 instructional personnel, and 63% acquired a total of 183 simulator systems. Nearly half (45.7%) of schools purchased computers and a majority (51%) of schools bought a total of 23 training vehicles. During SFY2009, the driver's education grants enabled 7 start-up programs, the continuation of 11 2008 start-up programs and the expansion of 28 existing programs. GDEC funds were used by 72% of schools to add 58 instructional personnel, and 52% acquired a total of 177 simulator systems. In addition, 36% of schools purchased computers and over 30% bought a total of 23 training vehicles. Nearly 20% of schools offered driver training scholarships to 1,044 free and reduced lunch students to offset the cost of their programs. After the implementation of *Joshua's Law* and the establishment of GDEC, crashes involving drivers aged 15-19 fell significantly in 2007 and 2008. The crash rate for Georgia's teen drivers fell 22.7% from 435.6 crashes per 10,000 licensed drivers in 2006 to 336.7 in 2008. The injury crash rate for Georgia's teen drivers fell 24.5% from 125.9 injury crashes per 10,000 licensed drivers in 2006 to 95.1 in 2008. In addition, the fatal crash rate for Georgia's teen drivers fell 25.9% from 1.58 fatal crashes per 10,000 licensed drivers in 2006 to 1.17 in 2008.

Table 1: GDEC Program Review

	2008	2009	Total
Students Served	10,200	13,000	23,200
Schools Served	35	46	71
Libraries Served	30	0	30
Simulators Purchased	183	177	360
Cars Purchased	23	23	46
Personnel Hired	46	58	104
Amount Awarded	\$3,829,300	\$3,471, 830	\$7.3 Million
Total Spent	\$3,104,984	\$2,954,452	\$6.1 Million

Methods: Grant applications from libraries and high schools were chosen based on their efforts to enable driver education learning opportunities. Methods included training instructors, providing simulation and behind the wheel range instruction, purchasing and prioritizing computers with internet capabilities, providing signage and publicity to assigned locations, and maintaining technical support for equipment. The high schools and library system grant applicants were funded with awards totaling \$7.3 million. Library system grants were discontinued after SFY2008.

Table 3: GDEC Budget Expenditures

Simulators	62%
Motor Vehicles	15%
Computers and Educational Materials	10%
Other	13%

Table 2: Teen Driver Crashes, Injuries, and Fatalities

	2006	2007	2008
Total Teen Driver Crashes	63,298	56,652	48,859
Teen Driver Crashes per 10,000 Licensed Driver	435.6	384	336.7
Total Teen Driver Injury Crashes	18,300	16,146	13,803
Teen Driver Injury Crashes per 10,000 Licensed Driver	125.9	109.4	95.1
Total Teen Driver Fatal Crashes	230	211	170
Teen Driver Fatal Crashes per 10,000 Licensed Driver	1.58	1.43	1.17

Conclusion: Due to state budgetary shortfalls, GOHS was unable to continue funding driver education programs, and the GDEC program was suspended. Statewide morbidity and mortality data shows significant improvement in teen driver safety since the implementation of *Joshua's Law* and the creation of the GDEC Grant Program; however, it remains to be seen whether these trends will continue in the absence of a state funded teen driver's education program.



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