

## **OVERVIEW**

Attention to preparing young drivers has been within the purview of many departments of motor vehicles, safety administrators, school personnel, and parents for many years. Attention to a wide range of education, preparation, training, licensing, and monitoring activities has been designed to promote safety among these new drivers.

Virginia's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), in an effort to identify ways of improving the state's efforts with this population, asked George Mason University's Center for the Advancement of Public Health (GMU) to prepare a detailed study and analysis, complete with recommendations, for consideration by DMV. The ultimate purpose of this study was to examine current approaches designed to best prepare and oversee young drivers in Virginia, to glean what seems to be working and where adjustments and improvements appear to be warranted for consideration. As part of this process, a review of other states and their work with young drivers was incorporated.

The rationale for engaging in a project such as this was primarily the differential involvement of young drivers in automobile crashes. As evidenced by the data both from a national and state perspective, young drivers are disproportionately over-represented in these crashes. Thus, Virginia's Department of Motor Vehicles sought to identify ways that it could improve its existing services as well as identifying that could be implemented to better deal with young drivers.

Throughout this report, which focuses on the young driver, the focus is upon the novice driver. In fact, the term "young driver" may not be fully precise for a complete understanding of relevant strategies determined by efforts undertaken in this initiative. The focus is specifically on the driver who has just obtained his/her learner's permit or driver's license, typically, a young person of the age 15, 16, or 17 years. While some of the attention through this analysis and report addresses other drivers under the age of 21, distinctions are made and are appropriate among drivers in different age groupings.