

TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION ASSOCIATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Report Claiming Parent-Taught Drivers At Risk is Skewed

The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) claims that its recent study suggests that Texas teen drivers taught by parents are far more likely to be involved in serious crashes. To come to that conclusion, TTI must manipulate the data of its own study and overstate the concern.

The study showed no significant statistical differences in the overall crash rates of teens, regardless of where they received their driver education. **The press release of TTI is skewed, as evidenced by the very graph it includes.** The first paragraph states, "... after supervisory and Graduated Driver License restrictions are removed, parent-taught drivers are nearly three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash ..." However, the graph provided by the release (http://tti.tamu.edu/infofor/media/archive.htm?news_id=4290) shows that, after these restrictions are removed, parent-taught drivers are only 1.58 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash, rather than the 3 times claimed by TTI.

The weakness of this research is that it does not compare the records of specific schools or programs. It assumes that each type of program or school produces the same basic result, **while other research has shown that some parent-taught driver education programs produce drivers that have crash rates that are 1/5 of the state average.** (www.teendriveamerica.com/research-study.htm) This suggests that the problem lies not with parents but with particular programs that do not give them the tools to train their children to become safe drivers.

Although data was collected and distinguished between driving schools and public schools, no data was collected to identify the differences between any of the various parent-taught programs, even though a great disparity may exist between the quality and effectiveness of approved parent-taught courses. In fact, according to the report from TTI, all but one of the parent-taught students who responded to their survey indicated that no textbook of any kind was used—only the DPS handbook. The state course was the only course name with which any of the parent-taught respondents were familiar. By some estimates, the state course accounts for over 80 % of all parent-taught driver education in Texas.

Our suggested response to this serious issue is to call upon the legislature to track the crash rates of all driver education providers: public, commercial, and parent-taught. With this data, the public—as well as policy makers—can make informed decisions as to the results that could be expected from each driver education provider. Since the study showed that the overall crash rates of all groups are virtually the same, we need to identify the collision rates of each specific driver education course provider.

Just as the state rates public schools based on student performance from low-performing to exemplary, driver education courses and schools should also be rated based on the collision-rates of their graduates. Their collision rates should be published annually for the benefit of the public and as the basis for future policy decisions for driver safety.
