LETTER TO PARENTS

*This letter is designed to provide high schools with a starting point when communicating with parents about distracted driving among teens and what their school is doing about it. It is recommended that this letter be included in newsletters or other parent-communication.*

Dear Parent of (name of h.s.) Student,

Teenagers driving. It’s a scary thought. They’re out on the road commanding a vehicle, and they need our support. Here at (name of h.s.), we want to encourage their independence and empower them to be safe drivers.

Did you know that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States? More than homicide and suicide combined. It’s our children (drivers under 20 years-old) that have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes. It’s an alarming statistic, and it’s why we need to take action. Here’s a more positive statistic. Teens who say their parents set rules and pay attention to their activities in a helpful, supportive way are half as likely to crash1.

As a parent, you can educate yourself and your child about laws for teen drivers. It’s against the law for drivers under age 18 to text or talk while driving. You know how connected your teen is to their phone. Make a deal with them that you’ll both turn off your phones when you’re in the car. It’s distracting for new drivers to have passengers in the car, and there are also restrictions that you and your child should be aware of. For the first six months of getting their license, only passengers over 21 can be in the car with a new driver, and for the second six months only one passenger under 21 can be in the car.

Another way to take action is to open the lines of communication and set clear house rules for safe driving is by using a Driving Contract. A contract enables parents and teens to work together to establish driving rules and consequences. Contracts cover a range of driving safety issues, such as passenger restrictions, seat belts, traffic laws, and more.

Driving is a privilege. Let’s help our teens understand and appreciate this. Set an example for your child by not texting and driving, and recognizing when they strive to be a responsible driver. Together we can keep them safe on the road.

For more information, tips and a sample Driving Contract, visit coteendriver.com and click on “Parents” link.