Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 14-18 year olds in the US. In fact, in 2013, there were 2,614 teen (15-19 year old) passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes and an estimated 130,000 were injured. Yet, a recent survey shows that only 25% of parents have had a serious talk with their kids about the key components of driving. Parents need to take the time to talk with their kids about the many dangers of driving. Those dangers include alcohol, seat belts, texting, speeding, and extra passengers.

Even if you think they don't hear you, they do. Remember, the "5 to Drive" – Set the Rules Before They Hit the Road.

"Novice drivers rarely crash while they are being supervised by adults, but have the highest crash rates of all age groups during the first six months of unsupervised driving once they become fully licensed."

**Teen Crash Stats – Get the Facts**

- In 2013, 2,614 drivers, ages 15 to 19 years old, were involved in fatal crashes.
- In 2013, 6 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes and an estimated 9 percent of all drivers injured in crashes were teen drivers.
- In 2013, 55 percent of all 15- to 19-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained.
- In 2013, 19 percent of the teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were drinking.
- In 2013, of the young (15- to 19-year-old) passenger vehicle drivers killed in crashes who had been drinking, 64 percent were not wearing their seat belts; of the non-drinking young drivers killed, 44 percent were not wearing their seat belts.
- Five percent of the people killed in 2013 teen driving crashes died when the teen driver was distracted at the time of the crash.
- Among teen drivers, 367 drivers were killed at the age of 19 in 2013 – highest among teen drivers aged 15-19 years old; 35 percent of these drivers were drinking.
- In 2013, there were an estimated 130,000 teen passenger vehicle drivers, ages 15-19, injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes.
- In 2013, there were 2,927 motor vehicle traffic fatalities in passenger vehicle crashes that involved teen drivers ages 15-19 years old.
**Rule 1: No Cell Phones**
No matter how experienced you are as a driver, talking on a cell phone while driving reduces your reaction time similar to that of a 70-year-old. Distracted driving does not just happen – it is a choice. Texting especially poses threats for teen drivers because they choose to take their eyes off the road and at least one hand off the steering wheel. Texting simultaneously involves manual, visual, and cognitive distraction and is among the worst of all driver distractions. Unfortunately, electronic devices are as tempting as they are dangerous for novice drivers. In fact, 43 percent of teens admit to texting while driving. Talk to your teenager about the risks of distractions in and outside the vehicle, setting clear expectations about safe driving habits.

**Rule 2: No Extra Passengers**
The more the scarier. Most teens are susceptible to peer pressure, which can lead to risk-taking. In a study analyzed by NHTSA, teen drivers were two-and-a-half times more likely to engage in one or more potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage peer compared to when driving alone. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of teenagers in the car. Again, the law is not enough. As a parent, you need to establish and enforce ground rules: No more than one passenger in the car at all times, and preferably none.

**Rule 3: No Speeding**
Speeding was a factor for 29 percent of teen drivers in fatal crashes in 2013. Talk to your teen about the dangers of speeding and of not staying in control of the vehicle. Remind them to always follow the posted speed limit, and set consequences if it is not followed.

**Rule 4: No Alcohol**
In 2013, 2614 teen drivers (15 to 19) died in crashes. Almost 1 in 5 had alcohol in their systems even though they were not of legal drinking age. Young drivers 15 to 20 years old are at far greater risk of death in crashes involving alcohol than the rest of us, even though they cannot legally purchase or possess it. If lucky enough to survive a crash, your teenager will have to face the consequences of breaking the law. That includes a trip to jail, the loss of a driver's license, and dozens of other expenses including attorney fees, court costs, other fines, and insurance consequences. Your teen will also stand to lose academic eligibility, college acceptance, and scholarship awards.

**Rule 5: Always Buckle Up**
Of all the Teen drivers (15 - 19) killed in vehicle traffic crashes in 2013, more than half (55%) were not wearing a seatbelt. When your teenagers are ready to drive, remind them that whether they are driving across town or just around the neighborhood, wearing seat belts is the absolute best way to protect themselves and their passengers in the event of a crash. By keeping drivers in a secure position, seat belts help all drivers maintain control of the vehicle in emergency situations. Don't let your teen become a statistic. Set the right example by buckling yourself up every time you get in the car.