

## **NHTSA Graduated Driver Licensing Incentive Grant Program**

On October 5, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) regarding a state Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Incentive Grant Program [Docket Number NHTSA-2012-0137]. While the notice seeks public comment on the minimum qualification criteria for the State GDL grant program authorized under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21); AAMVA urges its member jurisdictions to begin discussions on how this incentive grant program can be leveraged to improve state GDL programs.

For reference, section 31105 of MAP-21 amends 23 USC 405 to create new grant programs to address national priorities for reducing highway deaths and injuries – including an incentive grant program for states that adopt and implement graduated driver’s licensing laws. The minimum requirements for state qualification of the grant program is that the state has a graduated licensing law that requires novice drivers younger than 21 to comply with a two-stage licensing process before receiving an unrestricted driver’s license. The GDL law must include:

- A learner’s permit stage that is at least 6 months in duration, prohibits the driver from using a cellular phone or communications device in a non-emergency situation and remains in effect until the driver turns 16 years old and enters the intermediate stage or reaches 18 years of age.
- An intermediate stage that commences immediately after the expiration of the learner’s permit stage, is at least 6 months in duration, prohibits the driver from using a cellular phone or any communications device in a non-emergency situation, restricts driving at night, prohibits the driver from operating a motor vehicle with more than 1 non-familial passenger younger than 21 years of age unless a licensed driver who is at least 21 years of age is in the motor vehicle; and remains in effect until the driver reaches 18 years of age.
- Any other requirement prescribed by the Secretary of Transportation (To include consideration into requirements for such things as hours in training, driver training courses, oversight of supervised accompaniment during the learner’s permit stage, and automatic delay in granting unrestricted licenses to drivers for certain violations such as DUI, reckless driving, and occupant protection violations.)

While AAMVA will not unduly raise the qualifying GDL grant criteria through involvement in the regulatory process, we note that in September 2009, AAMVA extensively studied the issue of graduated driver’s licenses and issued a final report on successful GDL programs to NHTSA. AAMVA urges its member jurisdictions to take advantage of this incentive grant program to align GDL practices with the [AAMVA Graduated Driver’s Licensing \(GDL\) Best Practices](#).

As a final note, there has been some confusion regarding the allocation of funding for the GDL grant program. Because MAP-21 was not appropriated through normal channels, all “new” programs (such as those authorized by MAP-21 as Section 405 grants) were not funded through immediate means. This is due to the fact that the federal government is operating under the auspices of a continuing resolution effective for the first six months of fiscal year 2013. As this issue is rectified and funding for the program becomes available, AAMVA will notify its membership through regular communication channels as well as a posting on the [AAMVA Grant Resources](#) section of its Web site.