

# THE SLG ADVISOR

JAN/FEB  
2026

## As a Lawyer and a Father, I've Seen Too Much *Keeping Our Teens Safe Behind the Wheel*

This statistic is chilling: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teen drivers ages 16–19 have a fatal crash rate almost three times as high as drivers aged 20 and older per mile driven.

January is Teen Driving Awareness Month, and this issue of The SLG Advisor is one of the most important I've ever written. I've decided to devote the entire newsletter to one topic: keeping our teens safe on the road, because few things matter more to me, both as a lawyer and a father.

As a dad of two young adult children, I'll never forget the first time each of them drove off alone. You smile, you wave, and then your heart skips a beat. You know that out there, beyond your control, are all the dangers that come with inexperience and distraction. As parents, we hope we've taught them enough ... but sometimes, hope isn't enough.

In my nearly 32 years as a personal injury lawyer, I've seen more heartbreak from teen driving crashes than I'd ever wish on anyone: promising young lives cut short, others forever changed by devastating injuries, and families left shattered by something as ordinary as a drive to school or a quick trip to the store. Those cases stay with me. They remind me how fragile life can be and how critical it is that we, as parents and as a community, do everything possible to keep our kids safe.

Right now, the need has never been greater. 2025 was one of the deadliest years for young drivers in Massachusetts in nearly a decade. In the first eight months of the year, 22 people under 21 lost their lives, an 80% increase from the year before. Nearly 60% of teen-involved crashes involve distraction, most often from cellphones. About 70% of teen drivers admit to glancing at their phones while driving, and more than half of those killed weren't wearing seatbelts.

These aren't just statistics; they're stories that could belong to any of us. They're a reminder that experience matters, distractions kill, and even small lapses, like a text, a missed seatbelt, or a few seconds of inattention, can change lives forever.

So, this month, I invite you to read this issue carefully. Inside, you'll find practical advice, up-to-date research, and actionable steps we can take to help our teens build safer driving habits. If this information prevents even one crash or saves one young life, then it's worth every word.

Teen Driving Awareness Month is about education, empathy, and action, and I hope this issue inspires all three. Our teens deserve every chance to grow up safe, strong, and full of promise. Let's make sure they do.

*-Len Spada*

# The Hardest Conversation

## SETTING RULES FOR YOUR TEEN DRIVER

If you've ever handed your teen the car keys for the first time, you know the mix of pride and anxiety that follows. You want to trust them, but you also know how quickly a simple mistake can turn into a tragedy. I've seen it too many times in my career. That's why setting clear, non-negotiable driving rules isn't about control. It's about love.



In Massachusetts, nearly 60% of crashes involving teen drivers are caused by distraction, most often due to the use of a phone. About 70% of teens admit to glancing at their phones while driving. Those numbers alone should be enough to start a serious family conversation.

Here's my advice: Treat driving privileges like any other major responsibility. Create a written agreement with your teen that spells out expectations: seatbelts ALWAYS, phone off, no passengers for the first six months, and no driving late at night. Ensure they understand that these rules are in place to protect them, not to punish them.

When my own kids started driving, I told them the truth: *"I don't care if your friends think I'm strict. I care that you come home alive."*

Rules save lives. Enforce them. Revisit them. And remind your teen every chance you get that these are more than "parent rules." They're survival skills.

*-Len Spada*



## REVIEW OF THE MONTH

*"The service was amazing and sensational. I don't want to be injured again, but if I ever am, I would definitely want to continue with Spada Law Group."*

*"Thanks for the great job, Tony, Spada Law Group, and the entire team!"*

*-Alan Adelson*

# Modeling Matters

## THE MIRROR EFFECT BEHIND THE WHEEL

Our kids may not always listen to what we say, but they almost always imitate what we do. The way we drive becomes their template. Every glance at a phone, every rolling stop, every moment of frustration behind the wheel ... they see it, absorb it, and later, they repeat it.

I've seen the consequences firsthand. More than half of the Massachusetts teens killed in crashes weren't wearing seatbelts. Many of them likely grew up watching adults skip that same simple step. And when 70% of teens admit to checking their phones while driving, it's hard not to wonder where they learned that habit.

So, here's the challenge: Be the driver you want your teen to be. Buckle up every time. Silence your phone. Drive patiently, even when traffic tests your limits. When they're in the passenger seat, you're giving them a masterclass, whether you realize it or not.

I tell every parent I meet: Teaching safe driving doesn't end when your teen gets a license. It begins long before that, and it continues every time you pull out of the driveway.

Teens don't need lectures as much as they need examples. Let them see what responsible looks like. It's one of the most powerful lessons you'll ever give them.

*-Len Spada*



## No-Bake Oatmeal Energy Bites

*Eating while driving is a huge distraction, but skipping breakfast isn't the answer! Here's a smart, safe solution: Oatmeal Protein Balls. These bite-size, grab-and-go snacks are packed with energy, fiber, and flavor. Perfect for busy mornings!*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- 2/3 cup toasted shredded coconut (sweetened or unsweetened)
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup ground flaxseed
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (optional)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large mixing bowl, stir all ingredients together until thoroughly combined.
2. Cover and refrigerate for 1–2 hours, or until the mixture is chilled. (This will help the mixture stick together more easily.)
3. Roll mixture into 1-inch balls.
4. Enjoy immediately, or refrigerate in a sealed container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 3 months.

*Inspired by GimmeSomeOven.com*

# INSIDE

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2. When You Hand Over the Keys, Hand Over the Rules, Too
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# *Don't Let the Fire Die*

## Make Winter Bonfires Your New Tradition

Many Americans invite their friends and family for a bonfire throughout the summer and fall. Nothing beats making s'mores, sharing stories, and enjoying the flickering flame under the moonlight. As temperatures drop and winter weather appears on the radar, some cover and ignore their bonfire area until after the cold and rainy seasons. However, you can still create an awe-inspiring bonfire during winter if you put together a plan.

Winter bonfires can quickly become a regular part of your seasonal traditions, and these strategies will help ensure your bonfire is a hit with everyone who attends.

### HELP PEOPLE STAY WARM.

Nobody wants to sit outside in the dark and freezing cold. Encourage everyone

attending to dress in warm clothes appropriate for the frigid temperatures, but be prepared to help out if someone starts to feel chilly. Have extra blankets and coats within reach so you can easily pass them to anyone in need.

### PROVIDE TOASTY TREATS.

Sometimes, clothes alone are not enough to protect us from winter's chill. During these moments, it can help to eat or drink something that fills your whole body with warmth. Thankfully, you'll have a bonfire to help you toast and warm some delicious treats. S'mores are usually the go-to, but you can also warm up hot dogs, sausages, or even corn on the cob. And don't forget the drinks! Hot chocolate, warm apple cider, or even tea can help everyone stay comfortable and in good spirits.



### ADD GAMES OR FUN ACTIVITIES.

Some may grow bored with traditional bonfire activities, which is why you should have an extra activity or game up your sleeve. Depending on the lighting, you could play a card or board game. If the lighting is too dim, you can incorporate other activities requiring more movement and adventure. Kids and adults alike will have fun playing a game of flashlight tag or participating in a scavenger hunt. Plus, the extra movement will help everyone stay warm!