

Driving and expected courtesies

Our seventeen-year old son is about to buy a car. Well, really, someone is giving him a car but he has agreed to pay for most related expenses.

As with most teenagers, he has gone to great lengths to prove that the additional car makes economic sense and can only benefit our family. He has also laid out a careful plan as to how he will pay for the commitments he has made to us for the car.

There are several initial reactions. What could happen if he was to cause a serious accident? What amount of insurance is enough? Would our house be at risk? How do we protect ourselves as parents and protect our teens, but allow them the privilege of driving a car, which is a necessary step towards independence and maturity?

One way that has proven effective is to come up with a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement, which controls the risk of teen driving and clarifies expectations for your son or daughter that provide a road to responsibility. Here are some examples of items you might want to include in an agreement.

These agreements may



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set down non-negotiable rules where violation results in the indefinite suspension of driving privileges. These rules typically include talking on a cell phone, driving under the influence, allowing someone else to drive the car, and racing or thrill seeking.

Violating any of these serious rules revokes the driving privilege of your teen indefinitely.

The agreement could also include more general rules setting curfew and restrictions on the number of passengers in the car if your son or daughter is

legally able to transport passengers. The agreement specifies the number of days that driving privileges will be suspended.

The agreement may also contain courtesies and considerations for others who may use the car. The failure to take basic responsibility may result in a suspension of driving privileges.

Examples of expected courtesies could include promising not to eat, drink or smoke in the car, keeping parents up to date with destinations, and avoiding unnecessary side trips. Then, if someone in the parent network reports that she saw your son at West Farms Mall and your son told you he was at Friendly's, this would result in a loss of driving privileges.

The agreement can also outline how expenses will be paid, or may link grades or effort at school to the number of times per week that a teen is allowed

to drive. The agreement may outline the penalties should your child get pulled over for a traffic violation. It may also spell out who is responsible for damage to the car.

You might ask why go through the trouble of making this written agreement when a parent can simply revoke driving privileges at any time. The answer is that the rules are set in stone and beyond a teen's favorite past time: debate.

As important, it conveys to the teen the responsibility that he has to himself and others. We hope that this will lead our teenagers down a path towards maturity and independence. For an excellent download of a typical Parent-Teen Agreement, go to www.aaaexchange.com.

Attorney Sheffy is a lawyer in Southington. This column is not intended as a substitute for legal advice.

Letters

An apology is needed

To the Editor,

Last night I watched the telecast of the Southington Town Council meeting of Monday, Feb. 13. During that meeting Councilman Art Secondo made a comment referencing our newly elected President, stating, "And everybody loves this Obama guy...I think we should check the back of his head to see if he has 666 tattooed there..."

I believe that Mr. Secondo is a registered member of the Democratic Party, but more importantly, he is an elected official for the Town of Southington.

I find this comment concerning the President of the United States, the highest elected official in our country, to be in incredible poor taste, shameful and disgraceful when made in that forum.

I feel that Mr. Secondo owes an apology to the citizens of Southington for his aforementioned conduct.

In addition, another member of the Council, the vice-chairman Anthony D'Angelo was observed and overheard laughing at the comment immediately thereafter.

I fail to see the humor in that comment and believe that the rest of the council was so shocked, that was why non one made any objection to Councilman Secondo's comment.

Later in that same evening, Mr. Secondo singled out an individual who had spoken during the public comment portion of the meeting and addressed that individual in an extremely arrogant and condescending manner.

This is not the first time that Councilman Secondo has addressed a member of the public or a town employee in a pompous, overbearing manner.

Perhaps he should be reminded that he was elected by those same people and that respect is an earned attribute.

It is not something that automatically comes with a position, regardless of what the position is.

I fervently hope that the next Council meeting begins with an apology from Mr. Secondo to the town for his dreadful demeanor at that meeting of Feb. 9.

Domenic Lombardo
Plantsville

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