



Berks County Intermediate Unit
An Educational Service Agency

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Allstate Foundation Awards \$25,000 Grant to BCIU Driver Education

Monies to be Used to Offset Cost of New Online Driver Training Program

READING, PA – The local chapter of the Allstate Foundation has awarded a \$25,000 grant to the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) for its driver education program. A large portion of the monies will go toward offsetting the startup cost of an online driver education program the BCIU will begin offering early next year.

The online program will be the first such course available to all Berks County high school students. Students who take the driving theory/rules of the road instruction at their high school often can't at the time they'd like to, due to long waiting lists or scheduling conflicts. The BCIU's online program will help alleviate that problem.

“This grant will help us avert some of the start-up costs for the online program, which will give students looking for driver training another convenient and economical option,” said Dr. John J. George, executive director of the BCIU. “We're grateful to the Allstate Foundation for their generous support.”

The Allstate Foundation's Encompass Mid-Atlantic Region awarded the grant to the intermediate unit.

The BCIU hopes to offer the online instruction, which does not include behind-the-wheel training, in early 2009. The BCIU also offers behind-the-wheel instruction with certified driving instructors in BCIU-provided cars to county high school students. The fee, through June 2009, is \$280 for six hours of training. The Allstate Foundation grant also may help the intermediate unit lessen or avoid a price increase for the 2009-10 school year, George said.

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“Allstate has a huge interest in helping teens learn safe driving,” said Beth Gates, an insurance adjuster with Encompass Insurance in Reading and the local chairperson for the Allstate Foundation. “We thought that by giving the grant to the BCIU we’d be able to help more students in more districts throughout the county obtain professional driver training.”

Individuals under the age of 18 but older than 16 must pass a written test to obtain a learner’s permit. The teen may then drive, but an adult older than 18 must accompany the young driver at all times. Six months must pass between receiving the permit and seeking a license, and the student driver’s parent or guardian must certify that the student has at least 50 hours of supervised driving. The student driver then must pass a behind-the-wheel road test to receive a driver’s license.

Behind-the-wheel training with a professional instructor is not required to receive a license in Pennsylvania. However, auto insurance companies, such as Allstate, often provide lower insurance rates to students who receive on-the-road training with a professional.

Most student drivers take the road test for their license at a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation testing station. However, the BCIU’s driving instructors are certified by PennDOT to give the behind-the-wheel exam for licensure and often do so immediately when one of their student drivers completes the on-the-road program.

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