

STUDENT + WHĀNAU GUIDE: Staying Safe Around Impaired Driving - Wairarapa Road Safety Council

Why young people are more at risk

Young people are often skilled behind the wheel — but their decision-making brain is still developing until their mid-20s. This affects impulse control, planning and risk assessment.

Most harm happens **before the car even moves**:

no plan for getting home, no backup person, or feeling pressured to accept a ride.

This guide helps you and your whānau create a calm, practical plan *before* you leave home.

Ten tips students can share with their whānau

How to avoid getting into cars with drivers who've been drinking

1. **Make a shared rule:**
"If the driver has been drinking, I won't get in the car." Whānau agree to back this 100%.
2. **Decide who pays for safe transport:**
Agree in advance who will cover a taxi, ride-share or safe overnight stay.
3. **Set up a no-questions-asked pick-up plan:**
One trusted adult who will always answer — no punishment, no lecture.
4. **Carry a small emergency fund:**
Even \$10–\$20 can make a safe decision easier.
5. **Use a buddy system:**
Attend events with someone who shares your safety rule. Leave together.

6. **Practise exit scripts:**
Simple, calm lines you can use on the spot (see below).
 7. **Plan rural-area alternatives:**
Staggered pick-ups, community contacts, or a roster of available adults.
 8. **Use host responsibility:**
If you're at a house, plan for safe sleepovers rather than late-night drives.
 9. **Know the signs of impairment:**
Slurred speech, unsteady movement, smell of alcohol, poor judgement.
 10. **Agree on consequences:**
Not just punishment — real steps to improve safety next time.
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Short, calm lines you can use in the moment

- “I can't get in — I've got a rule with my whānau.”
- “Thanks, but I'll call my parent to get me.”
- “I'm staying here tonight — can you grab my bag?”
- “I'm not comfortable. I'll get a taxi — wait with me while I book it?”

These reduce conflict and protect friendships.

The realities of the law (NZ context)

Young drivers (under 20): ZERO alcohol limit

Any detectable alcohol = illegal.

Adults:

0.05% BAC limit — though impairment starts earlier.

Drug impairment:

Cannabis, other drugs and extreme tiredness increase crash risk even when alcohol is low or zero.

Serious consequences include:

- Licence loss
 - Criminal convictions
 - Fines and court costs
 - Jail time for injury-causing crashes
 - Long-term limits on work, travel and life opportunities
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Social & personal costs (non-scare facts)

These are good conversation starters:

- Impact on whānau, friends and community
 - Disrupted schooling, apprenticeships or work
 - Long-lasting trauma for survivors, drivers and witnesses
 - Financial burden of rehabilitation
 - Reputation and legal consequences that follow for years
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Questions for students and whānau to discuss

Use these to build your plan:

- What will we do if public transport isn't available?
 - Who is my no-questions-asked pick-up person?
 - How much emergency money or phone credit will I carry?
 - Where can I safely stay if I can't get home?
 - What expectations do we have when visiting friends' homes?
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Practical steps for your whānau plan

- Save trusted emergency contacts in phone + wallet
 - Keep a “safety fund” or phone credit topped up
 - Agree on check-in times and what happens if there’s no reply
 - Rotate adults for event pick-ups
 - Practise role-plays for awkward or pressured moments
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If you find yourself in danger

- Move away from immediate risk
 - Ask the driver to stop and get out where safe
 - Stay with a trusted group
 - Call your pick-up person
 - Ring **111** if you’re unsafe or threatened
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Reliable local info

- Waka Kotahi NZTA
 - NZ Police
 - Local health services
 - School health teams, year advisers, and deans
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Download more resources: www.wairsc.org.nz

Wairarapa Road Safety Council