



Success Stories

Youth Enforcement Programs



Securing the support and active participation of law enforcement agencies in all aspects of youth traffic safety is a critical element in addressing the consequences of motor vehicle crashes. Additionally, law enforcement agencies that lack community support to enforce traffic safety laws frequently fall short in attempts to reduce impaired driving, increase safety belt use, and reduce speeding. Community advocates and law enforcement agencies must recognize the need for mutual support in effectively confronting traffic safety issues.

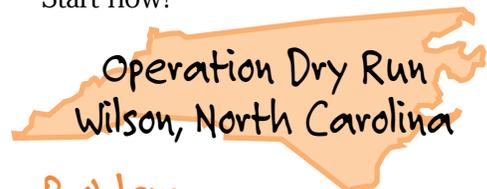
Even the most creative and comprehensive youth and other traffic safety programs fail to achieve high rates of compliance without vigorous enforcement. Law enforcement must convince the public that the risk of receiving a ticket or being arrested is real. The combination of enforcement and related publicity is the most powerful tool in increasing the public's perception of risk.

Publicity and enforcement of traffic safety laws, combined with outreach efforts by advocates, helps drivers of all ages understand that the greatest risk is not a citation or arrest, but the loss of life, health or mobility to themselves or others due to injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes.

Active enforcement of age 21 drinking laws, bicycle helmet laws, safety belt use laws, and other laws puts youth and others in the community on notice that law enforcement takes these measures seriously. Publicizing enforcement actions serves to increase the perception of risk. Thus, a proactive approach enables community advocates and law enforcement agencies to assemble the resources necessary to develop and implement an ongoing and efficient youth traffic safety enforcement strategy.

Examples That Have Worked

The community and state projects highlighted below are examples of innovative and effective youth traffic safety enforcement efforts that reflect this proactive approach. What can you do? Once you've taken a look at your community's needs and challenges, you can use the information presented here for ideas on where to start. As you will see, there are many enforcement options for different communities. Write or call the various project contacts for additional information. Start now!



Operation Dry Run Wilson, North Carolina

Problem

County survey results indicated that 90 percent of Wilson County high school juniors and seniors said alcohol is seldom difficult for them to obtain; 20 percent said

they drove after drinking; and 26 percent said they had recently ridden with a driver who had been drinking.

Goal

To curtail teenage alcohol-related incidents and increase youth awareness of alcohol use issues; to develop partnerships between enforcement and youth; and to build a community support network resulting in program self-sufficiency.

Strategies and Activities

The Wilson Police Department formed a teen panel to assist in the development of materials targeted to this age group. They solicited the support of local merchants in distributing flyers and merchandise coupons and distributed various materials and literature on the dangers of underage drinking. The Department set up sobriety check points where teenage drinking and driving occur, checked teens attending parties for alcohol consumption/possession, and secured community donations for purchase of portable breath testers.

Results

Ten teen alcohol-related traffic stops were made, and teens were checked for alcohol use at eight parties during the first three weeks of the program. This program was conducted during the summer of 1994.

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Traffic Offenders Program State of Missouri

Problem

Forty-one percent of people killed or injured in traffic crashes in the state were under the age of 26. Outcomes for violations included fines, court costs, and points on driver's licenses. However, little effort was made to educate offenders about the possible consequences of their driving behavior.

Goal

To implement an innovative program designed to change the driving behavior of young traffic offenders.

Strategies and Activities

The Missouri Division of Highway Safety and the University of Missouri developed an education program for young traffic offenders. Since 1989, young people who have been ticketed for high speed or other traffic offenses have been ordered by the court to attend the day-long Traffic Offenders Program at the University of Missouri-

Columbia Health Sciences Center. Participants follow the same path they would take if they were seriously injured in a motor vehicle crash. Physicians, nurses, therapists, social workers, and patients offer a hands-on, visual experience in a casual, non-threatening environment. The young drivers tour the Level I trauma center, neurosurgery intensive care unit, rehabilitation areas, and the morgue. Several young, former patients share what it is like to survive a crash and live with a disability. They discuss safety issues throughout the day while the program focuses on informing participants about the consequences of unsafe driving and providing a realistic and graphic view of life as a crash survivor.

Results

After attending the program, participants must provide the Associate Court Judge with an essay reflecting on their personal experience and interpretation of the program. Follow-up surveys showed that, as a result of the program, 93 percent of the participants were influenced to change their driving habits, and they felt they had gained a deeper understanding of the consequences of their driving behavior. Preliminary results of studies show the recidivism rate of program participants to be less than three percent.

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Child Restraint Infraction Deterrence Site (CIDS, pronounced "kids") Program Washington, DC

Problem

The District of Columbia had a 59 percent safety belt/child safety seat compliance rate. Noncompliance with the child passenger protection law has a primary violation. The law provides that all children under the age of 16 be restrained in safety belts or child safety seats.

Goal

To promote compliance with and awareness of occupant protection laws through visible and concentrated enforcement.

Strategies and Activities

The Metropolitan Police Department-Traffic Enforcement Branch, in cooperation with the DC SAFE KIDS Coalition and Project Safe Child, identified enforcement sites and distributed news releases on locations and times of enforcement. Vehicles were stopped at these sites between 10 a.m. and

1 p.m. Monday through Friday. During the enforcement effort, an officer would spot a vehicle, broadcast the violation, and direct the violator out of the traffic flow to an enforcement officer. The enforcement officer would issue a citation, and an information officer would distribute literature.

Results

In 1993, 7,708 vehicles passed through 9 CIDS locations. A total of 980 citations were issued -- 140 for child restraint violations, 459 for seat belt violations and 381 for other violations. There were 15 traffic arrests, and three vehicles were impounded. CIDS received television coverage on five of the nine days the program was conducted.

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Underage Enforcement Program Colonie, New York

Problem

Underage persons were using fake or altered identification to purchase alcoholic beverages.

Goal

To identify and arrest underage individuals displaying fake or altered identification to purchase alcohol.

Strategies and Activities

The Town of Colonie Police Department, Albany County, New York, implemented a point-of-purchase, or "Cops in Shops," program through placement of plain clothes law enforcement officers posing as store clerks in alcohol-selling businesses. A group of officers received specific training guidelines for this operation and the laws that apply. Officers met with local businesses, educated them about the problem, and obtained their voluntary support for the program. Posing as a store clerk, an officer would observe an underage person entering the store, taking possession of alcohol, and attempting to purchase the alcohol. When a fake or altered ID was presented to the clerk, the officer took appropriate enforcement action.

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False Identification Enforcement Pierre, South Dakota

Problem

The Vermillion Police Department discovered a large number of individuals under the age of 21 who were obtaining fraudulent duplicate driver licenses in order to purchase alcohol.

Goal

To develop a tool for use by driver licensing agencies to identify those individuals who attempt to obtain fraudulent driver licenses using social security cards or birth certificates belonging to others and to investigate and take enforcement action against those with fraudulent driver licenses.

Strategies and Activities

In January 1994, a new software program was installed at driver license stations, allowing the driving examiner to store photos on a personal computer, retrieve a previously taken photo from the

state mainframe computer and compare the stored photo to the applicant attempting to obtain a license. A two week grace period was given for people who had obtained a fraudulent license to go to the driver exam station and return the fraudulent license without any conviction.

Results

By June 1994, the driver licensing program had investigated 781 driver license cases; 111 of those cases were fraudulent. Twenty-five additional cases were forwarded to local law enforcement agencies throughout the state for investigation. This process has resulted in 24 arrests to date.

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Bike Safety Team Fairfax County, Virginia

Problem

More than 700 people were killed nationwide in 1992 as a result of bicycle crashes. During 1990-1992, Fairfax County rescue personnel responded to 185 bicycle crash calls. Because the head is one of the

most vulnerable parts of the body, bicyclists involved in collisions need their heads to be protected.

Goal

To enforce a new county bicycle helmet law, educate the community about the law, and promote safe bicycling.

Strategies and Activities

Fairfax County's bicycle helmet law went into effect July 12, 1993, for children 14 years of age or younger. To help promote the law, the Fairfax County Police Department decided to undertake the following strategies: develop an education and awareness campaign on the new helmet law; organize a bicycle team of eight law enforcement officers to encourage safe and correct bicycling through programs and promotions which include bike rodeos and bicycle rides with the team; issue special bicycle-specific warning tickets to offenders; and issue coupons that can be redeemed for a free bicycle helmet to the first 1,000 offenders under age 14.

Results

Bicycle helmet use for children went from 59 percent in May of 1993 to 69 percent in May of 1995; 262 citations were issued between April of 1994 and May of 1995; the bike team's presence, especially with children, was very effective in promoting and educating both parents and children about the helmet law.

Results

During the period from October 1, 1994, to June 30, 1995, point-of-purchase operations were conducted in 66 alcohol outlets. Citations for false identification dropped from 22 to five; alcohol-related crashes went from 12 to six; and fatal crashes went from two to zero.

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Cruising Program Tempe, Arizona

Problem

Because of the close proximity to Arizona State University, youth were repeatedly driving through the restaurant and bar area of downtown Tempe. The city was experiencing problems with young people driving while impaired, speeding, not wearing safety belts, and creating noise disturbances with their car stereos.

Goal

To curtail the repeated driving or "cruising" of youth through the downtown area surrounding Arizona State University.

Strategies and Activities

The City of Tempe enacted two ordinances to maintain order in this downtown area. By having these ordinances, the Tempe Police Department was able to improve enforcement of both the impaired driving laws for those under 21 years of age and the safety belt laws. One ordinance prohibits vehicles from passing through specified zones more than two times within two hours (emergency vehicles and business vehicles are exempt), and the second ordinance prohibits the operation of any amplification system in or on a vehicle that can be heard outside the vehicle from fifty or more feet.

Since November 1991, when these ordinances were put into effect, the Tempe Police Department has set up a post twice a week in the "cruising area" with a civilian typist. A law enforcement officer identifies license numbers to the typist, and the typist enters them into a computer. If a number appears three times, the computer alerts the typist, who relays the license number and vehicle to a motorcycle officer for enforcement action. Once the identified vehicle is stopped, the officer looks for additional violations, such as drinking, use of other drugs, non-use of safety belts, and criminal offenses. In addition to this enforcement effort, seven off-duty sworn law enforcement officers patrol the large crowds in the downtown area.

Results

On a typical evening 1,700 to 2,000 entries are made and 65 to 75 people are identified as cruising; typically one-third or one-half of those identified (25 to 35 vehicles) are issued citations for cruising. The ordinance violation citations result in fines of \$65 each. The citations for other traffic violations are not included in these figures.

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Sting Program Fairfax County, Virginia

Problem

Underage persons are able to purchase alcohol from retail alcohol businesses, bars, and restaurants.

Goal

To encourage the business community to comply voluntarily with the prohibition of alcohol beverage sales to underage individuals.

Strategies and Activities

The Fairfax County Police Department formed sting teams consisting of an underage cadet, a uniformed officer, a plain clothes officer, and an officer to monitor audio transmissions. The Department held pre-operation briefings during which the roles and responsibilities of the team members were described, pictures of the cadet were taken, money was provided to the cadet, and the targeted establishments were identified.

During the stings, a uniformed officer drove a marked unit to the establishment, and the remainder of the team rode in an unmarked vehicle. The plain clothes officer followed the cadet, wearing a microphone, into the establishment to observe the cadet attempting to purchase alcohol.

If the establishment served or sold to the cadet, the cadet made a coded comment over the audio transmission to signal the uniformed officer who was waiting outside to enter and make the arrest. When the uniformed officer entered the establishment, the plain clothes and uniformed officers took custody of the alcohol. The cadet confirmed the identity of the seller and returned to the unmarked vehicle to document the incident for court purposes. The officers informed the manager of the incident. The officers took the manager and seller to an office in the establishment to issue a citation and explain the court proceedings and possible sanctions. The teams made attempts to buy alcohol in every alcohol selling business in the identified area so that no single type of business was targeted.

Results

Cadets attempting to purchase alcohol were successful 32 percent of the time in 1993; by 1995 this figure dropped to 22 percent.

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