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Sobering Data Drives Home Need to Expand Teen DUI Prevention Program

Program will educate both teenagers and parents on life-saving prevention measures

In an effort to put the brakes on sobering statistics related to teenagers driving under the influence, researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine will join forces with the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) to reduce alcohol-impaired driving among San Diego youth ages 15 to 20.

With funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the UC San Diego Training, Research and Education for Driving Safety Program (TREDS) will contribute to SDPD's Teen Alcohol Awareness Program (TAAP) by implementing an evaluation component and delivering sessions to parents about how to most effectively communicate with their kids about drinking and driving. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), 74 percent of youth under age 18 identify their parents as the leading influence in their decisions about drinking.

"In a recent survey, one out of ten high school students admitted to driving after drinking and one in four had been a passenger with a driver who had been drinking. Parental involvement can help guide teens away from substance use while driving," said Linda Hill, MD, MPH, program director of TREDS and professor of family medicine and public health at UC San Diego School of Medicine.

TAPP classes, hosted at the SDPD headquarters, educate teenagers and parents about the dangers and consequences of driving under the influence, as well as the responsibilities of social hosting and the penalties for violating current local ordinances.

To further support teens in making the right choice about drinking and driving, SDPD and Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) San Diego will collaborate with UC San Diego School of Medicine to deliver sober driving education at local high schools and implement a social media campaign focusing on prevention and intervention strategies.

“Alcohol-involved crash fatalities increased nearly 8 percent just last year and drug involved crash fatalities have increased nearly 14 percent in the past decade, according to the California DUI-MIS 2015 report,” said Nancy Gannon Hornberger, CEO of SAY San Diego. “We are honored to work collaboratively with UC San Diego TREDs and the SDPD on this new Sober Driving campaign. Together, we will involve parents and community members to reverse these trends and prevent such tragedy in the lives of young people and their families.”

“Working with TREDs will provide a broader reach for TAAP to provide expertise on substance abuse trends and related laws to our target demographics,” said Lieutenant Scott Bender of the SDPD Traffic Division.

October 16-22 is National Teen Driver Safety Week, an opportunity to learn more about the life-threatening issues facing youth behind the wheel and what can be done to resolve them.

TREDs also recently received funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety to extend the following programs.

Just Drive – Take Action Against Distraction

This program targets the general adult population about the dangers of distracted and drowsy driving and provides practical strategies to reduce those risks. Classes will soon be available in both English and Spanish, as well as job specific curricula to meet the needs of commercial drivers and first responders. TREDs continues to assist companies with the development of worksite cell phone policies to keep employees safe while driving — both on and off the job.

Senior Driver Safety

This program educates health professionals, law enforcement and social service providers, who all play a role in the identification and referral of older adults with impairments that affect driving. The program’s activities include both in-person and online training to promote safe driving and mobility with older roadway users. The program information is also disseminated through professional societies, conferences and publications.

To learn about TREDs, visit treds.ucsd.edu

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