



NEWS AND NOTES FROM NEW MEXICO

THE COMPREHENSIVE IMPAIRED DRIVING PROJECT

This issue of *News and Notes from New Mexico* focuses on the roles and activities of the New Mexico DWI Czar and the DWI Leadership Team and how they are improving the State's impaired driving system.

In September 2004, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) entered into an agreement with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, Traffic Safety Bureau (TSB) to test a model that facilitates development of a comprehensive impaired driving program. This three-part model involves (1) conducting an impaired driving assessment to examine a State's current impaired driving program and identify critical gaps in that system, (2) convening a group of career government officials and other stakeholders to prioritize needs and organize resources to fill those gaps, and (3) implementing activities to close the gaps in the State's impaired driving system.

In November 2007, NHTSA and TSB published the initial *News and Notes From New Mexico: The Comprehensive Impaired Driving Project*. Issue 1 described the project background, provided details on the demonstration model, and looked at some enforcement activities that support the model. This issue examines two important components of the model, the State DWI Coordinator or "DWI Czar", as the position is known in New Mexico, and the State DWI Leadership Team, the task force convened to identify system gaps and marshal resources to address those needs.

NEW MEXICO'S DWI CZAR MAXIMIZES STATE DWI RESOURCES TO REDUCE IMPAIRED DRIVING

By Janet Dewey-Kollen
New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau

New Mexico's recent progress in reducing alcohol-involved fatalities represents a remarkable reversal for a State that has long struggled to curb impaired driving and its tragic outcomes. Such progress does not occur spontaneously, but by strong leadership, high-visibility enforcement activities, progressive public policies, maximizing and coordinating multi-agency DWI program efforts, innovation, and hard work.

The critical leadership that sparked New Mexico's recent progress in reducing DWI began at the top of State govern-

ment in 2003, when newly elected New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson included DWI reduction as one of his nine key policy priorities. State administrators, law enforcement leaders, local DWI councils, and dedicated safety advocates embraced the Governor's commitment to reducing DWI and began seeking innovative solutions to this serious public safety issue.

Nation's First DWI Czar

In early 2003, Governor Richardson convened a multi-agency DWI strategic planning team to develop a statewide plan to reduce DWI in New Mexico, *New Mexico Multi-Agency DWI Strategic Plan*. One of the key recommendations of this group was to appoint a statewide DWI coordinator to oversee execution of the plan's initiatives.



NM DWI CZAR

This critical recommendation, the careful consideration and effective selection of this coordinator and elevation of the DWI coordinator (renamed by the administration as the "DWI Czar") to cabinet-level stature attests to the priority that New Mexico now gives to DWI prevention.

The Nation's first State-level DWI Czar, Rachel O'Connor, is charged with overseeing and managing the State's efforts to reduce death and injury due to impaired driving. On a daily basis, O'Connor functions as a coordinator, motivator, innovator, media spokesperson, and occasionally as a ramrod to put into operation critical components of the State DWI Strategic Plan. The position was initially funded via an executive request for budget to support the position at the State agency level.

The DWI Czar has decision-making authority over impaired driving and alcohol abuse prevention funds available through various State departments, in particular, Transportation, Public Safety, Health, and Regulations and Licensing Departments. This level of authority has translated into greater coordination of State resources for more collaborative, focused, and effective impaired driving program outcomes. The Czar works with the Governor's office to identify and secure fund-

ing for critical programs through State budgets, via Federal grants, or through inclusion in the annual Governor's budget and public policy package.

Public Policy Changes

Tough and innovative public policy changes are some of the positive outcomes in New Mexico facilitated by coordinated DWI efforts. At the urging of the DWI Czar and backed by a coordinated network of advocacy and public safety supporters, the New Mexico Legislature enacted several important and innovative statutes, which have stimulated much of the progress to date. These statutes include creating an alcohol ignition interlock license provision, mandating alcohol ignition interlocks for all DWI-convicted offenders (including first offenders), and mandating treatment for second and subsequent DWI offenders.

At the Czar's request, the Legislature also provided funding for innovative new programs, including an interlock compliance unit at the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), funds for a Mobile Strike Unit to conduct enforcement activities and compliance checks at bars and restaurants, funds for a Drunkbusters #DWI Hotline, and money to include *Protecting You, Protecting Me*, MADD's (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) early education DWI prevention curriculum in schools around the State. Funds were also used to support additional MVD hearing officers and to provide other State resources.

Innovative Programming

O'Connor works with a variety of public agencies including the State Departments of Transportation, Regulation and Licensing, Public Safety and Health to initiate statewide DWI efforts. The State's Traffic Safety Bureau (TSB) Director, Michael Sandoval, whose agency is housed within the New Mexico Department of Transportation, works closely with the DWI Czar to fund impaired driving enforcement efforts. The TSB provides county-level *Operation DWI* funding for coordinated checkpoint and saturation patrol campaigns, and for enhanced enforcement using full-time DWI officers as part of a six-county innovative impaired driving demonstration project.

The TSB also supports a massive statewide public awareness campaign as well as non-traditional public awareness strategies in the six counties with the most severe DWI problem.

An unusual collaborative project initiated under the DWI Czar's leadership seeks to reduce DWI recidivism among first-offense DWI offenders. The pilot project funded by the TSB and administered by the Albuquerque Metropolitan Court, the largest court system in the State, offers early intervention and additional probation services (including mandatory ignition interlock use) to first-time offenders whose screening results indicate a high risk for re-offending.



Another groundbreaking public policy initiative is the development and aggressive enforcement of a tough new liquor license rule that allows only three violations within 12 months for sales to intoxicated persons and sales to minors. In 2005, the Governor's Office convened a task force to study and make recommendations for penalties regarding violations of the State's Liquor Control Act. Based on those recommendations, in 2006, the State passed the "Three Strikes" regulations that mandate the revocation of a liquor license for those establishments that chronically serve minors or intoxicated people. O'Connor worked collaboratively with both the Alcohol and Gaming Division of the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department and the Special Investigations Division of the Department of Public Safety to enforce these new rules. Currently, revocation proceedings are pending against at least six liquor licensees and more revocation announcements are expected in 2008.

The following programs and initiatives represent the range and innovation of New Mexico's impaired driving efforts coordinated by its DWI Czar:

- ✦ Supporting increased enforcement efforts including a statewide Superblitz program and funds for full-time law enforcement for counties where DWI is deadliest in New Mexico;
- ✦ Developing and implementing an intensive multimedia effort designed to reach specific ethnic and demographic groups; and funding outreach coordinators in high-incidence counties;
- ✦ Developing and securing funding for a statewide hotline so citizens can report impaired driving and working with cell phone providers to have the number preprogrammed into cell phones;
- ✦ Creating a State-Tribal DWI Task Force to develop plans for reducing alcohol-related traffic fatalities on tribal lands;
- ✦ Hiring a Tribal DWI Coordinator and developing one of the Nation's first Tribal DWI television public service announcement;
- ✦ Working cooperatively with tribes to initiate cross-commissioning and data sharing agreements on DWI; and

- ✦ Initiating a judicial summit to research and address issues related to the adjudication of DWI cases resulting in additional funding for judgeships across the State and providing funds to MADD for a court monitoring project in high-incidence counties.

New Mexico's premise that significant DWI reduction can best be achieved through a multi-agency, systems approach headed by a DWI coordinator with broad jurisdiction and responsibility appears to have merit. Perhaps more State-level "super-coordinators" who can and will force priorities, hold stakeholders accountable, and make tough decisions regarding DWI programming is an innovation that should be considered for the next frontier of DWI prevention.

DWI LEADERSHIP TEAM IN NEW MEXICO STIMULATES INNOVATION, COLLABORATION, AND PROGRESS



LEADERSHIP TEAM/NETWORKING

*By Janet Dewey-Kollen
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From 2003-2006, at a time when the national DWI problem remained essentially level, New Mexico experienced a 15-percent decrease in alcohol-involved fatalities. Without doubt, intense and high-visibility enforcement, strong media messaging, innovative programs, and critical public policy changes drove this progress, but how were these efforts conceived, coordinated, and implemented? Public and private safety stakeholders agree that leadership from several distinct sectors made this progress possible.

First, Governor Bill Richardson has made reducing DWI in New Mexico one of nine policy priorities for his administration. The Governor demonstrates his ongoing commitment to reducing impaired driving through his program, fiscal, and legislative agendas; his presence at DWI events including sobriety checkpoints and other venues; and by initiating public policy and budget efforts to support anti-DWI measures.

The New Mexico DWI Leadership Team is a key factor in the State's progress in reducing impaired-driving. The Leadership

Team provides a forum for vital interaction by career representatives of State agencies and non-governmental groups. Since 2004, group members have met monthly to make decisions on DWI priorities and programs, work to solve ongoing challenges, initiate innovative programs, and evaluate progress.

Another critical factor in the State's progress is collaboration among law enforcement leaders; New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau Director Michael Sandoval; and other New Mexico government department, agency, bureau, and division-level leaders. The cooperation among these officials, and their leadership within their own organizations, has transformed DWI prevention work in the State from an individual agency responsibility to a true statewide commitment and teamwork approach.

Strategic Planning Process

While many States have used statewide DWI strategic plans, this approach has been especially important to New Mexico's rejuvenated and successful anti-DWI efforts over the past five years. New Mexico developed a far-reaching, multi-agency plan and followed up by executing the majority of the plan's objectives as well as implementing complementary initiatives.

Upon taking office in 2003, Governor Richardson charged three Cabinet Secretaries from the Departments of Health, Public Safety, and Corrections to develop a statewide DWI strategic plan based on a multi-agency, systems approach. Approximately 70 stakeholders representing public and private organizations contributed to the planning sessions.

Participants included representatives from the State Departments of Corrections; Health; Finance and Administration; Public Safety; Regulation and Licensing; Children, Youth and Families; Motor Vehicles Division; New Mexico Administrative Offices of the Courts and of the District Attorney; the Attorney General's and Public Defender's Offices; and the University of New Mexico's Public Law Institute and Division of Governmental Research. Representatives from county-level government, Native American tribes, and anti-DWI advocacy groups actively participated in the nine-month planning process as well.

Completed in December 2003, the *New Mexico Multi-Agency DWI Strategic Plan* identified 23 initiatives divided among core strategic areas: Prevention, Law Enforcement, Adjudication, Treatment and Rehabilitation, and an overall category that would strengthen all core areas.

Key strategic priorities of New Mexico's plan are:

- ✦ Develop a comprehensive DWI data system;
- ✦ Create the position of a statewide DWI Czar;
- ✦ Balance funding for all State agencies in DWI process;

- ✦ Fund the cost of mandatory sentencing to the criminal justice system;
- ✦ Develop a statewide vehicle forfeiture initiative;
- ✦ Increase funding for law enforcement equipment and personnel;
- ✦ Increase DWI checkpoint operations;
- ✦ Establish performance criteria for treatment and other DWI interventions;
- ✦ Develop an electronic scheduling process to streamline DWI adjudication;
- ✦ Create a statewide DWI prevention media campaign; and
- ✦ Expand DWI/Drug Courts.

New Mexico's DWI Leadership Team

The New Mexico DWI Leadership Team has proven to be an essential resource in the State's DWI reduction efforts. The Leadership Team works to coordinate programs within various State agencies to maximize enforcement, adjudication, treatment, public awareness, and other DWI prevention efforts statewide. Special emphasis is placed in the six New Mexico counties with the highest number of alcohol-involved fatalities.

Led by DWI Czar Rachel O'Connor and Traffic Safety Bureau Director Michael Sandoval, the Leadership Team meets monthly and attendance is consistently high (more than 40 attendees). Rather than seeking the formality of an executive order to establish the Leadership Team, O'Connor and Sandoval believe that the informal and flexible nature of the group provides for stability and sustainability, and allows the team to function on a collaborative basis. Further, since a majority of current Leadership Team members served on the 2003 *Multi-Agency DWI Strategic Planning Team*, the group functions with an impressive level of institutional memory and continuity.

Members tend to be from the career, operational level of State agencies and local government. Participation by bureau chiefs and division directors instead of cabinet-level or political appointees assures that management from various State agencies are involved in critical discussions and are empowered to take specific ideas and issues back to their agencies for action. In addition, representatives from non-governmental and advocacy organizations provide valuable perspective.

Meetings typically include special presentations on best practice or innovative enforcement, health, treatment, screening, or other program areas by local, national, or even international experts. Monthly reports on current projects and upcoming media activities close out every meeting. Communication among DWI Leadership Team members occurs outside of meetings as well as through frequent blast e-mails sent by the DWI Czar's office. These messages help keep

members up-to-date on schedules for important hearings, relevant court findings, earned media opportunities, etc.

Currently, the DWI Leadership Team is conducting an extensive review of the status of the original 23 recommendations from the 2003 *New Mexico Multi-Agency DWI Strategic Plan*. A subcommittee will then analyze this review and bring back to the team new recommendations for ongoing efforts.

DWI Leadership Team in Action

A decision in 2007 about how to divide unallocated State DWI resources totaling \$600,000 reflects the Leadership Team's ability to collectively make decisions on priorities. When challenged to decide what needs should be addressed with these funds, the team divided the money among three initiatives – additional equipment for DWI enforcement, overtime funds for officers working with the newly formed Special Investigations Division of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety (who investigate liquor licensees suspected of serving intoxicated or underage patrons), and an evaluation of best practices and cost effectiveness of DWI/Drug Courts.

One particularly beneficial activity at the beginning of each meeting is the Agency Update when attendees report activities by their respective agencies and organizations. This dialogue not only serves to inform members, but also provides an opportunity for all State agencies to bring impaired-driving-related issues to an Executive Level, and for participants to give input to the Governor's Legislative package from both policy and budget perspectives.

Sharing information on individual agency programs and plans often stimulates direct and sidebar discussions leading to even more collaborative outcomes. Examples of joint efforts include:

- ✦ During a review of progress on law enforcement tasks in the strategic plan, the team discussed new ways to assist enforcement agencies in rounding up DWI offenders with outstanding bench warrants. A representative of the State's county-level impaired driving programs suggested that county programs could help by conducting local warrant roundups. A subsequent e-mail sent by the team's Division of Finance and Administration representative to county impaired driving program administrators authorizing this activity and requesting a quick response resulted in numerous local warrant roundups.
- ✦ The Leadership Team recently sponsored a Law Enforcement Leaders Summit in an effort to better understand the challenges agencies and officers face relative to impaired driving enforcement, and to determine what additional State resources might assist agencies in mitigating these challenges.

- ✦ A subcommittee is meeting to review and update procedures and guidelines for county-level impaired driving programs (funded through alcohol taxes and offender fees). Objectives of this review are to standardize and maximize efficiency of local initiatives and to coordinate local efforts with overall State goals and priorities.
- ✦ Various Leadership Team discussions pointed out a need to “clean up” several provisions in the State’s impaired driving statute, an objective current being addressed through a team subcommittee.
- ✦ After a presentation on Tru Touch Technology’s new transdermal alcohol testing units, the team agreed to pilot test the technology, and decided to include a court-based, enhanced supervision program for DWI first offenders and a county-based treatment program as initial test sites.
- ✦ In an attempt to diversify and expand New Mexico’s current DWI strategic portfolio in ways that all key partners endorse and support, a subcommittee compiled an extensive summary of existing DWI treatment and prevention activities in the State. The New Mexico DWI epidemiologist (who sits on the Leadership Team) then compared this inventory against a matrix of accepted, evidence-based impaired driving prevention strategies and developed recommendations for future critical and cutting edge initiatives.
- ✦ The New Mexico Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor and the Department of Health’s underage drinking prevention specialist combined their efforts to present underage drinking issues to district attorneys and police departments.

After more than three years of monthly meetings, the New Mexico DWI Leadership Team shows no sign of slowing down in its commitment to reduce impaired driving by prioritizing, coordinating, and maximizing resources; by implementing effective and innovative programs; and by simply working together.

The importance of high-visibility enforcement efforts and leadership both at the political level and at the career level have been highlighted in the first two issues of this newsletter. This activity is a key factor in New Mexico’s 15-percent decline in alcohol-involved fatalities from 2003-2006. The next issue, scheduled for publication in early June 2008, will detail the activities of the program manager within the Traffic Safety Bureau and the improved communication and marketing efforts supporting efforts to address impaired driving and alcohol-related issues in New Mexico.

NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

If you need additional information regarding the New Mexico impaired driving demonstration project, contact one of the following:

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