

## NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Grant Helps Missouri Safety Center Explore New Measures to Counter Increase in Impaired Drivers**

WARRENSBURG, MO (July 21, 2020) – While the number of impaired drivers is escalating, the Missouri Safety Center at the University of Central Missouri has a new opportunity to help address this national and state issue. It is receiving grant funding that paves the way for research into new tools to help keep high-risk drivers from getting behind the wheel.

Financial support comes to Missouri Safety Center through the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org), which are awarding a total of \$245,000 in grants to seven states to help keep the nation safe from the most impaired drivers. Goals of this initiative include expanding the nearly 2,000 officers trained in drug-impaired driving detection through the first five years of this partnership, and to support enhanced identification and assessment of alcohol and drug-impaired drivers. Of the total amount, at least \$35,000 in grant funds provided by GHSA will be used to educate state highway safety offices and law enforcement agencies throughout the nation about state oral fluid test programs. Grants may help states implement key recommendations in the GHSA report on High Risk Impaired Drivers (<https://www.ghsa.org/resources/HRIDReport19>) funded by Responsibility.org.

Impairment may be the result of alcohol, drugs, or both. Between 2006 and 2016, there was a 16 percent increase in the number of impaired drivers killed in crashes who tested positive for multiple substances, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System. To help reduce this trend, the GHSA report calls on states to prevent repeat offenders and reduce the number of fatalities by taking an individualized justice approach to the problem. This is a multidisciplinary effort to identify the root cause of an offender's behavior, determine the appropriate sanctions and prevent recidivism.

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Missouri will use grant funds to explore new ways to address impaired driving through a cooperative agreement between the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and the Missouri Safety Center. This will include examining new and successful programs employed by other states.

Dr. Joanne Kurt-Hilditch, senior director of the Missouri Safety Center and Central Missouri Police Academy, said this is an 18-month project, and her office is currently working on developing a memorandum of understanding with MoDOT related to the activities that will be involved. Some efforts already began in July, and the project is expected to continue through December 2021.

Kurt-Hilditch said the Missouri Safety Center looks forward to participating in this project. She noted, “Attempts have been made to review and implement new impaired driving countermeasures activities in the past. This grant will allow us to continue the research we began in 2018 to potentially bring new programs, including a law enforcement phlebotomy program, to Missouri.”

Discussions, travel and other activities related to the potential for this program were completed previously through MoDOT funding and the Impaired Driving Countermeasures program. The new program provides an opportunity to include local and state law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in the discovery process to find out what activities are working in their communities for phlebotomy programs – whether they use local resources including hospitals, jail staff, and other trained phlebotomists – or if they have some hybrid programs, Kurt-Hilditch said. The project will also explore best practices for programs, concerns regarding legal issues, and other stakeholder concerns.

“The potential for this grant may allow for implementation of a program in the future that meets the needs of the state in terms of prevention of impaired driving, intervention, and prosecution appropriately through the use of trained phlebotomists,” Kurt-Hilditch remarked.

According to GHSA, summer is traditionally the season for the most deaths associated with impaired driving, and the risks are expected to be high this year as states reopen bars, restaurants and other hospitality establishments that were closed due to the pandemic. While traffic levels return to pre-COVID-19 levels, the potential for impaired drivers is enhanced due to the pandemic’s impact on individuals’ mental health and the economic stresses that have resulted due to furloughs and job losses. Therefore, experts believe this is a critical time to support efforts to keep impaired drivers off the road.

“Vehicle miles fell drastically during the pandemic, but that decline didn’t result in improved safety on our nation’s roadways,” said GHSA Executive Director Jonathan Adkins. “Alcohol and drug impaired driving persisted, with prevention experts warning the problem may worsen as people continue to worry about contracting the virus, recover from the economic fall-out and adhere to social distancing requirements. All are triggers for substance abuse making this program even more important.”

To learn more about the Missouri Safety Center, visit [mosafetycenter.com](https://mosafetycenter.com).

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## **About GHSA**

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is a nonprofit association representing the highway safety offices of states, territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. GHSA provides leadership and representation for the states and territories to improve traffic safety, influence national policy, enhance program management and promote best practices. Its members are appointed by their Governors to administer federal and state highway safety funds and implement state highway safety plans. Contact GHSA at 202-789-0942 or visit [www.ghsa.org](http://www.ghsa.org). Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GHSAhq](https://www.facebook.com/GHSAhq) or follow us on Twitter [@GHSAHQ](https://twitter.com/GHSAHQ).

## **About the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility**

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org) is a national not-for-profit that leads the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and is funded by the following distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory, Inc.; Brown-Forman; Constellation Brands, Inc.; DIAGEO; Edrington; Mast-Jägermeister US; Moët Hennessy USA; and Pernod Ricard USA. Recognizing 29 years of impact, Responsibility.org has transformed countless lives through programs that bring individuals, families and communities together to guide a lifetime of conversations around alcohol responsibility and offers proven strategies to stop impaired driving. To learn more, visit [www.responsibility.org](http://www.responsibility.org).

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