



Successful Innovations

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

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California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Develops an Innovative Liquor Law Enforcement Program—TRACE—to Enforce Underage Drinking Laws

For the last several years, investigators at the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) have noticed an increase in alcohol-related incidents involving minors. Consequently, they developed a program for the immediate investigations of collisions, assaults, and other incidents where underage alcohol use is suspected.

The Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies (TRACE) protocol represents a unique partnership with local law enforcement and the California Highway Patrol to address underage drinking. It provides these agencies with ABC officers to help determine where and how the alcohol was obtained. It also may result in legal consequences for persons who sold or furnished alcoholic beverages to minors and administrative sanctions for liquor establishments involved in the selling/furnishing of the alcohol. When commenting on the strength of the program, ABC director Jerry Jolly noted that the program "...will further efforts to hold liquor licensees and others accountable when selling or serving alcohol to minors who are later involved in serious crashes or other tragic incidents." Other incidents include alcohol poisonings, alcohol overdoses, and assaults perpetrated by intoxicated minors, as well as intoxicated minors who are the victims of assault.

TRACE was developed by a task force convened by Attorney General Bill Lockyer after meeting with Lynne Goodwin, the mother of Casey Goodwin—a young woman killed in March 2003 by an 18-year-old drunk driver. Members of the task force included Lynne Goodwin and representatives of the Attorney General's Office, the ABC, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), the California Highway Patrol, the California Police Chiefs Association, the California State Sheriffs' Association, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). At the 4-day "Teenwork 2004" annual youth conference on April 9, Lockyer joined other State law enforcement agencies unveiling the new investigative protocol aimed at reducing deaths and injuries caused by underage drinking. This

protocol focuses on liquor stores, restaurants, and bars that serve alcohol to individuals younger than age 21. This collaborative effort was introduced to ensure that law enforcement agencies investigating alcohol-related deaths and injuries will take steps to determine the source of the alcohol and that businesses providing liquor to underage drinkers face swift prosecution and harsh penalties, including the loss of their liquor licenses.

The protocol requires law enforcement officers to determine where youths obtained or consumed alcohol before the event and to notify the ABC if the alcohol was purchased or consumed at an ABC-licensed business establishment. If the incident involving underage drinkers results in death or injury, the ABC will be notified immediately to take the appropriate enforcement action.

The California ABC has sent TRACE reference cards to all Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs, and Highway Patrol Officers. More than 20,000 "wallet cards" have been printed for officers to use in the field. Additionally, the California ABC is working with officers to produce two videos: one for law enforcement training and one to inform community groups about the protocol.

Thinking "outside the box" to address underage drinking through enforcement and environmental change.

As of December 2004, ABC was conducting 41 active TRACE investigations involving 25 deaths and 30 serious injuries. Eight arrest/warrants have been issued, and eight administrative actions have been filed against ABC licensees. The department supports new legislation that would strengthen criminal sanctions when deaths or serious injuries result from selling or furnishing alcoholic beverages to minors. The work of the TRACE program has received recognition from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association. Clearly, this innovative approach for addressing underage drinking problems is a model worth adapting for other States.

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