



Implementation Report

A Peer-to-Peer Traffic Safety Campaign Program

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/safety/peer_to_peer.shtml

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this project was to implement a peer-to-peer driver-safety program designed for high school students between the ages of 15 and 18. The project built upon an effective peer-to-peer outreach effort in Texas entitled Teens in the Driver Seat (http://www.t-driver.com/), the nation's first peer-to-peer driving-safety program run by teens for teens. This program is based on the idea that teens will pay more attention to ideas that are presented by their peers than to those that come from adults.

The peer-to-peer traffic safety campaign program empowers high school students to create methods of outreach to their peers. The outreach campaign targets the most common risk factors for teen drivers utilizing delivery methods such as videos, pamphlets, posters, social media, etc. The program has shown early success in improving teens' awareness of the most dangerous risk factors for novice drivers in Texas. The

goal of this research was to determine if this peer-to-peer approach in Montana may produce similar safety benefits.

The implementation of the program followed that of the Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) high school program developed by the Texas Transportation Institute, and was assessed using a case-control experimental design across four Montana high schools. This included one case and one control school in an urban setting (Bozeman and Helena) and another case and control school from a rural setting (Manhattan and Big Timber). School selection was done using criteria developed from the research plan balanced with the feasibility of implementing the program at the schools, and as agreed upon by the research project technical panel. For comparative purposes, each case school (having similar demographics) was paired with another local high school that served as the control school. A case versus control school implementation strategy was necessary to accurately

measure the effectiveness of the education program.

The urban versus rural strategy was based on data that young drivers in rural areas are more than twice as likely to be involved in a fatal crash as their urban peers and, according to a survey conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute (2011), rural teens are more inclined to drive at night, use a cell phone and not wear seatbelts than are their urban counterparts. By assessing teen attitudes and behaviors in urban versus rural areas, safety messages could be tailored to the specific needs of those teens.

Implementation Summary

Early results from this research project indicate the program was effective in changing teen awareness of the top five teen driving dangers (driving at night, distractions, alcohol, not wearing a seatbelt, and speeding/street racing). Most significantly, the project's results indicated an overall increase in the

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rural teen awareness of driving dangers following implementation of the peer-to-peer program when compared with their urban peers. Moreover, the program was found to be effective in reaching even those teens in the schools that were not affiliated with the program.

The recommendations made by the researchers in the final report are listed in this document, along with the actions that will be taken based on these recommendations.

Implementation Recommendations

One of the most concerning issues among rural teens, and thereby further supporting implementation of the TDS program in rural areas, is their seatbelt usage rate: 77 percent of urban students reported always wearing a seatbelt compared to just 59 percent of rural students. This research also found that friends and family members were the two most influential relationships affecting the behavior of Montana's teens. Because of this finding, involvement in the peer-to-peer social network

would be advantageous in changing the safety culture.

Recommendation 1: Recommend ascertaining funding for an already established peer-to-peer program, such as the Teens in Driver Seat program, to improve the traffic safety culture among Montana teens. This funding is needed to serve as a central resource to manage, implement, and ensure sustainability of a peer-to-peer program.

MDT Response: This recommendation should proceed and MDT can be in an advisory role for the program by providing information and process information provided in the program guide book and this project's final report.

Recommendation 2: If a peer-to-peer program in Montana is to be initiated, such a program should focus on teens' low awareness of the dangers associated with speeding, driving at night, and not wearing seatbelts. Moreover, a peer-to-peer program needs to focus on changing the safety culture among Montana teens—to not only change awareness

of those driving dangers, but most importantly to change behaviors.

MDT Response: This recommendation is applicable and could be used in coordination with several already existing programs and resources. The program information will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan during its next update.

Recommendation 3: In the case that external funding is not available to support a dedicated peer-to-peer program, it is recommended that existing statewide traffic safety programs (e.g., BuckleUp Montana, Montana's Office of Public Instruction Driver's Education Program) consider collaborating and utilizing a peer-to-peer social networking approach targeting Montana's youth.

MDT Response: This is another recommendation that will be incorporated in the Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan.

References

Texas Transportation Institute. (2011). About TDS. Retrieved May 2011 from <http://www.t-driver.com/about/>.

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