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Community Traffic Safety Programs: Case Studies of Ten State Initiatives - 1989-90

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) awarded a grant to the National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives (NAGHSR) to establish a Community Traffic Safety Program Clearinghouse for assisting State and community leaders with planning and programming issues. One task of the grant agreement was to develop a publication that would provide safety officials and the general public with an understanding of successful community traffic safety program initiatives from ten 10 States. The NHTSA and NAGHSR define a Community Traffic Safety Program (CTSP) as a program administered by an established unit in the community, sustained over time, with public and private input and participation in an action plan to solve one or more of a community's traffic safety problems.

Study Design

A State was identified in each of the ten NHTSA Regions which appeared to have significant interest in promoting the CTSP concept. The selected States - California, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Washington - represent a mixture of rural/urban, centralized/decentralized technical assistance, and large/small grants. State officials were interviewed and in most cases State officials also served as contributing writers. The data that were acquired describe the State Highway Safety Agencies (SHSA) rationales for establishing the CTSPs, the processes used, and the means of support. The case study presentation is organized similarly in each description for quick reference and comparison. At the conclusion of each case study, a contact person who can provide more detail is identified.

Major Findings:

The SHSAs have different approaches to their CTSP initiatives, however, some common aspects can be identified.

- o Most of the CTSPs evolved from State strategies for anti-drunk driving or occupant protection. The exceptions are New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia which established multi-countermeasure CTSPs at the onset.

- o The SHSAs have encouraged the local CTSPs to use volunteers, and this recommendation has been followed extensively.
- o The SHSAs have recognized the difficulty of performing rigorous problem identification and have given CTSPs latitude in identifying local traffic safety problems.
- o The SHSAs have recognized the interest of local CTSPs in prevention, particularly in substance abuse, and have given their support to this emphasis.
- o The SHSAs have recognized that achieving self-sustaining status is the greatest challenge the local CTSPs face and continuously are exploring strategies to help the locals achieve this end.

Conclusions:

Based on the findings of the study, it appears that the Federal 402 dollars awarded by NHTSA and managed by the SHSAs provide a useful process for initiating improvements in local traffic safety and related programs. These community-based programs represent a network of committed governments and concerned citizens working on traffic safety throughout the country. While the challenge is for local CTSPs to achieve self-sustaining status, the networks established may offer opportunities to reach this goal. The issue of achieving self-sustaining status remains very difficult. Many local CTSPs have found that conducting an effective and popular program does not necessarily result in the financial support to become self-sustaining. Ideally, the strategy to reach this goal should be developed in advance of program implementation with the involvement of the State. As documented by the case studies, these 10 States are playing an active role in influencing policies and seeking resources at the State and local levels to continue the CTSPs. It is believed that traffic safety will benefit if the Federal, State, and local governments continue to seek innovative ways to sustain the CTSPs.

Reference: Community Traffic Safety Programs: Case Studies of Ten State Initiatives - 1989-90. National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives under grant DTNH22-89-Z-05203 with the U S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1990.

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