

MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT: David Tovar
OTS Grant Coordinator
(805) 981-6830
David.Tovar@Ventura.org

Ventura County Ramps up against Drug-impaired Driving California Office of Traffic Safety backs Local Media Campaign

(OXNARD, Calif.) – Ventura County Behavioral Health Department announces enhanced collaboration with the California Office of Traffic Safety through a new grant of \$299,677 aimed at preventing drug-impaired driving. Behavioral Health's new "Call to Action" grant is a continuation of its effort to reduce DUIs due to marijuana, prescription, and over-the-counter drugs by using targeted messaging and outreach efforts.

Developed with local data that show an increasing trend in drug impaired driving, Ventura County Behavioral Health will collaborate with other County agencies, prevention advocates, and the Office of Traffic Safety to build upon the momentum gained in the previous "Risks and Realities Campaign" grant.

"I am excited to continue our drugged driving prevention efforts because we want to see this drugged driving trend end. From 2009 to 2014 respondents to our surveys have shown a consistent increase in the use of drugs when driving," said Patrick Zarate, Division Manager for Ventura County's Drug and Alcohol Programs. "We are excited about continuing our efforts and the ability to reach a wider audience than ever before."

Following the success of the WEEDUI Drugged Driving Summit held on September 17, 2015. The "Call to Action" grant is designed to empower everyone to start conversations about drug impaired driving. Driving impaired by drugs is just as deadly and dangerous as drinking and driving. In fact, local data suggests that the combination of both alcohol and drugs is particularly dangerous; surveys of DUI offenders confirm drugs and alcohol combinations double the chance of crashing when compared to only alcohol. The "Call to Action" grant will fund advertising that will include; TV, online, and radio commercials, billboards, as well as posters and postcards.

"Our goal is to inform the community about this growing issue and support safe and legal driving. A few seconds could mean the difference between life and death, so take a minute to talk with your doctor and pharmacist about your medications to see if they could impair your ability to drive," said David Tovar, the grant's manager. "Now is the time to start conversations about these issues, with changing laws in California and around the nation, there can be confusion about what is legal. We are standing firm – if you drive high, you can get a WEEDUI."

Ventura County's 2014 Place of Last Drink Survey found that respondents who indicated using drugs other than alcohol on the day of their arrest were using prescription drugs and marijuana nearly 50% of the time. These findings underscore the need to change the perception in Ventura County when it comes to the use of drugs and driving.

For more information about the grant, contact David Tovar at (805) 981-9115 or at David.Tovar@Ventura.org. Funding for the grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information, go to www.venturacountylimits.com/WEEDUI

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