

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **WEEDUI Drugged Driving Summit Ventura County's Call to Action**

**(OXNARD, Calif.)** – While there have been fewer alcohol-impaired drivers on the roadways in recent years, the number of drug-impaired drivers is on the rise. Drugged driving is the act of operating a vehicle while impaired by any drug – including marijuana, prescription and over-the-counter drugs – where the driver's cognitive or physical abilities to drive are reduced. Recent studies have shown marijuana and drugs, alone or in combination with alcohol, may severely diminish a person's ability to drive.

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) will present the 2015 WEEDUI Drugged Driving Summit, Thursday, September 17, from 8:00 AM to noon at the Ventura Beach Marriott. Supported by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) the WEEDUI Summit is a *Call to Action* for Ventura County to reduce DUIs by providing information needed to change attitudes, behaviors, and social norms around driving under the influence of drugs.

The WEEDUI Summit will feature state and local officials, leading experts in drug-impaired driving prevention, tools for attendees, and a *Call to Action* for Ventura County. The abuse of marijuana, prescription, and illicit drugs while driving is on the rise due to a lowered perceived risk of danger and changing laws around the nation. An estimated one in five weekend nighttime drivers tested positive for at least one legal or illegal drug, according to a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report.

"Throughout California, drugged driving is becoming a more critical issue. In Ventura County we are working to get out in front by providing a framework for people to understand the problem," Patrick Zarate, Division Manager, Alcohol and Drug Programs, stated. "The WEEDUI Summit will unite stakeholders in our community to talk about the issues and provide them with the tools to engage with the public about the risks and impacts of drug impaired driving."

"Our goal is to ignite conversations within the community of Ventura County. Everyone should know about the dangerous, damaging effects of drugs, even if you have a prescription or recommendation," acknowledged David Tovar, OTS Grant Coordinator. "We believe that prevention and education are the best ways to change minds and influence behavior. We are working to educate people about the dangers of driving under the influence so they do not hurt themselves, others, or end up in our criminal justice system. Our main goals are safety – and saving lives."

For more information or to RSVP for the free event, contact David Tovar at (805) 981-9115 or at [David.Tovar@Ventura.org](mailto: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](http://www.venturacountylimits.com/WEEDUI)

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