PREVENTION FIRST

December is Impaired Driving Prevention Month

The holidays bring more gatherings, more travel, and more cars on the road. Last year, the American Automobile Association (AAA) projected that roughly 5.7 million Illinoisans traveled by car over the year-end holidays. And that increase in traffic comes at a time when impaired driving is at its peak.

In December 2024 alone, 934 people lost their lives in alcohol-impaired driving crashes nationwide, and across the Decembers of 2020 through 2024, that number reached 4,994 (NHTSA - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). Alcohol isn't the only concern, either: in NHTSA's multi-year study of seriously injured drivers at trauma centers, about one in four had active THC in their system.

Behind every one of those numbers is a crash that could have been prevented. Planning a sober ride, speaking up when someone shouldn't be driving, and taking guests' keys when you're hosting are simple choices that save lives. During **National Impaired Driving Prevention Month**, NHTSA's *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign puts that message front and center. At Prevention First, that work continues year-round through our Traffic Safety Programs.

Traffic Safety Programming Has Expanded at Prevention First

Our Traffic Safety Program's current efforts work to reduce impaired driving among Illinois youth by raising awareness, building partnerships with school personnel, and providing evidence-based educational resources. The program engages school staff, driver's education instructors, and community stakeholders so that young people receive accurate, consistent traffic safety education. This year, our traffic safety work grew in two important ways: a recently awarded Injury Prevention grant and a new Youth Impaired Driving Training Series.

The Injury Prevention grant aims to build the capacity of community coalitions to address traffic safety across Illinois. With Kathy Murphy joining the Resource Centers as Injury Prevention Grant Administrator, the program will:

- Coordinate a statewide Traffic Safety Task Force
- Provide training and technical assistance to coalitions, professionals, parents, caregivers, and other stakeholders
- Lead training and education on the Illinois Graduated Driver Licensing Program for parents and caregivers
- Offer virtual Child Passenger Safety education and car seat safety checks, and support Illinois Child Passenger Safety Resource Centers and efforts to strengthen the Child Passenger Safety workforce

The Youth Impaired Driving Training Series

While the Injury Prevention grant reaches families and communities directly, Traffic Safety's new Youth Impaired Driving Training Series is designed for the individuals coaching Illinois' next generation of drivers. The four-course, self-paced series is now available for driver's education teachers, health educators, and prevention advocates across the state.

The series starts by addressing the scope of youth impaired driving and its risk factors, then moving into the science of impairment and the misconceptions youth often hold. From there, it covers evidence-based strategies for building effective driver's ed lessons and how to create school-community partnerships that support prevention. Together, these courses give educators a strong foundation for helping young drivers make safe choices long after December ends.

The Prevention First Traffic Safety Program is funded in part or in whole by the Illinois Department of Transportation. Learn more at prevention.org/traffic-safety.