

## Creating and Implementing Designated Drive and Safe Ride Programs

**O**rganizing safe transportation alternatives is one way to reduce the number of impaired drivers on the road. The information provided in this section explains the types of alternative transportation programs that students can implement and what to consider before developing a program.

### Designated Driver Programs

There are two types of designated driver programs:

**INFORMAL PROGRAM:** Friends take turns being the designated non-drinking driver, agreeing to remain sober and making sure all the people who came as a group get home safely.

**FORMAL PROGRAM:** Designated driver programs are cooperative agreements with bars and restaurants to recognize those people who choose to be the designated driver for the group. These drivers usually receive a perk from the bar or restaurant, such as free or discounted non-alcoholic drinks, food, or giveaways.

### Safe Ride Programs

Safe ride programs are designed to make safe rides available to anyone who may be in need and vary by campus.

- The safe ride program may utilize a bus or van that makes trips back to campus from a popular bar or restaurant area.
- The safe ride program may be run through the campus switchboard. A student calls the switchboard operator and requests a safe ride home.
- The program can also be designed as a special arrangement between a local cab company and the campus. Students who show their student ID receive a discounted ride home.

### Things to Consider Before You Start

Before you undertake either a designated driver or safe ride program for your campus, there are some things you should consider.

- *Find out if anything is already in place.* If there is a program in place, see how you can lend your support. If a program existed in the past, find out why it is no longer running.
- *Decide if you have the support, time, energy, and resources.* Fundraising for this type of program is a necessity and a time commitment is required. A variety of financial resources include bars, restaurants, alcohol distributors, the Chamber of Commerce, and various campus offices. In addition, make sure you have the backing and support of your campus administration to conduct the program.
- *Discuss the ethics of harm reduction.* There are two sides to every issue. Some individuals believe that designated driver/safe ride programs encourage irresponsible behavior by eliminating consequences. Others argue that these programs can save lives. You will want to discuss these issues with your group. Approach your campus administration with your ideas and be willing to discuss their concerns as well.
- *Train your safe ride drivers.* The safety of both the drivers and the people needing a ride must be addressed. Consider having two safe ride volunteers, a male and a female, in each vehicle and educate drivers about alcohol poisoning and how to handle inappropriate behavior. Standard procedures need to be approved by your campus administration.

- *Investigate the need for insurance.* To protect your program and the volunteer drivers, find out what type of insurance is needed. The university attorney or risk management office will be able to help you find and purchase the proper policy.

### **Implementing Your Designated Driver Program**

- *Gain support from on-campus and community organizations and leaders.* Gather letters of support from various campus and community groups such as Student Government, Residence Hall Association, Minority Student Groups, Greek Life, Athletic Department, and Alumni Association. You may want to approach the mayor's office, Chamber of Commerce, and civic clubs.
- *Involve and identify yourself to the bars and restaurants.* Prepare a letter of request for the manager/owner of the designated bars and restaurants. Explain what you would like to do, who supports the program, and why it is a good idea to get involved. Provide a contact number and express your hope to set up a personal meeting. Follow up the letter with a phone call.
- *Schedule personal meetings.* When meeting in person, explain that it is in the establishment's best interest to get involved.
  - A designated driver program may reduce legal liability and lower liability insurance.
  - Promotional materials will be provided for the establishment to hand out to patrons.
  - Their business will be included in marketing on campus and in the community.
  - By providing a perk to designated sober drivers, their business will help reinforce responsible decision-making.
- *Hold a high visibility kickoff.* Plan a lunch with the business managers and invite representatives from your college president's office, the mayor's office, and local media. Following the lunch, have a high visibility event. Provide media kits to newspapers, radio, and television stations.
- *Publicize your campaign.* Publicize your program both on and off campus and remember to list the names of sponsors and participating establishments.
- *Make the businesses feel special.* Return regularly to the participating establishments to make sure the program is working. Also, every six months, do something to recognize those people who have been helpful. Schedule a get-together for the business managers to discuss what each has done to promote the program.
- *Evaluate.* Successful designated driver programs adapt and evolve over time. Changes will need to be made to reflect concerns and suggestions from students, the community, and the participating businesses. Take special care to ensure that the program continues over the summer and other academic breaks.