R E S E A R C H
PROJECT CAPSULE [14- 1SA]

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DOTD Support for UTC Project: Drugged Driving in Louisiana

This project is associated with the Louisiana Transportation Research Center (LTRC) partnership with the National Center for Intermodal Transportation for Economic Competiveness (NCITEC). The NCITEC is a University Transportation Center housed at Mississippi State University funded by the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

PROBLEM

Drugged driving is a serious public safety issue that affects the intermodal transportation system specifically and public health in general. To improve the safety of roads and highways in the United States, the 2010 National Drug Control Strategy released by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) aims to reduce drugged driving by 10% by 2015. Of the five strategies identified to accomplish this goal, two will be the focus of this research: (1) encourage states to adopt per se drug driving laws and (2) collect further data on drugged driving. Specifically, the goals of this research are to use Louisiana as a case study in evaluating laws and policies about drugged driving to identify obstacles to a per se, or zero tolerance (ZT) law for drugged driving and to collect data on drugged driving and analyze its frequency in Louisiana and other states where data is publically available. These two research goals are, however, intertwined with the other ONDCP strategies. For instance, the enforcement of drugged driving laws requires appropriate testing equipment and the implementation of procedures requires training. Therefore, secondary research goals include a review of best practices for drug testing of drugged drivers and the training needed to accomplish the enforcement of drugged driving laws.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this research are to evaluate laws and policies about drugged driving in Louisiana and other states, identify obstacles to a per se and ZT law for drugged driving, assess the availability of drugged driving data, collect available data, provide an analysis of the frequency of drugged driving to obtain an improved estimate of drugged driving in Louisiana and elsewhere, and develop specific recommendations for improved data collection on drugged driving.

METHODOLOGY

Task 1 Literature Review: First will be a review of the existing literature on drugged driving, current drugged driving laws in the US and abroad, and the testing technology used to detect drugs.

Task 2 Instrument Preparation to Conduct Structured Interviews: Based on the literature review, a survey instrument will be developed that assesses the legal and implementation issues relating to drugged driving.

Task 3 Conduct Interviews: Interviews will be conducted using the survey instrument. Interview instruments will be used to survey legislators, judges, district attorneys, law enforcement personnel, medical professionals, and defense attorneys.

Task 4 Data Collection: The fourth part of this research will concentrate on identifying sources for data of drug tests and the collection of this information. The data sources include, but are not limited to, FARS, arrest and conviction data, and trauma center data. Some of these data sources, such as FARS, are readily available while other data sources, such as trauma center data, are more difficult to obtain because of privacy policies. But the researchers will make every effort to obtain this information. Although the extent to which drugged driving data are available is not known at this time, one of the results will provide the best practices for improved data collection.

Task 5 Data Preparation: This task will include preparation of the data for analysis that includes an assessment of the quality, accuracy, and completeness of the data.

Task 6 Data Analysis: The data will be analyzed and conclusions about the prevalence of drugged driving will be drawn. The objective is to obtain a more accurate estimate of drug use among drivers than is currently available. This will help to develop improved public policies for drugged driving.

Task 7 Final Report: The final report will provide the state of knowledge about drugged driving based on the literature, a summary of the results of the interviews, and data collected.

IMPLEMENTATION POTENTIAL

This research is intended to provide a guide to a comprehensive approach to drugged driving in Louisiana. However, the results of this research will be applicable beyond Louisiana since many of these issues are similar across states.