



U.S. Department  
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National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration

# TRAFFIC TECH

## Technology Transfer Series



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## Sharing Drug Recognition Expert Resources

Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) are law enforcement officers trained and certified through their State DRE programs and credentialed through the International Drug Evaluation and Classification Program to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs including alcohol (Talpins, Hayes, & Kimball, 2018). To become a DRE, the candidate must take 72 hours of coursework, complete an approved Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) course, and have a minimum of 12 evaluations under supervision of a trained DRE instructor (International Association of Chiefs of Police, n.d.).

This project was undertaken to identify how State and local law enforcement agencies have successfully shared DRE resources. The project included a web-based literature review, a review of a DRE Facebook group, review of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) DRE section forum, and interviews with statewide and local agency DRE coordinators. The resulting report summarizes key aspects of successfully sharing DRE resources. States and jurisdictions of all sizes and geographic localities can use this report to enhance existing DRE callout programs or implement new programs that involve sharing DREs across agencies.

DREs are important law enforcement assets, especially with the rise in drug-impaired-driving cases. Sharing DRE resources makes DREs from one agency or jurisdiction available to other nearby agencies or jurisdictions. This sharing maximizes the benefits of DRE training, reduces the hardship of lengthy drug-impaired-driving investigations on small law enforcement agencies, helps successfully prosecute drug-impaired drivers, and is beneficial in getting drug-impaired drivers off the road.

Although there are DREs in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, the number of DREs in a State often does not correlate with the number of law enforcement officers or agencies in the State. For example, as of December 2020 Virginia had 22 DREs from 12 agencies (IACP, 2020). However, the 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies (the most recent data available) report there were 22,848 sworn personnel and 340 State and local law enforcement agencies in Virginia (Reaves, 2011). Likewise, while Colorado had 179 DREs from 62 agencies as of December 2020 (IACP, 2020), this still makes up a small percentage of total sworn personnel (12,069) and State and local law enforcement agencies (246) in Colorado, based on 2008 data (Reaves, 2011).

In some cases, such as for smaller departments, lack of staffing and manpower make it difficult to send officers to DRE training. In other cases, departments do not see the value in sending one or more officers to DRE training, believing their officers are already well-trained in recognizing drug-impaired driving (Engage IACP, n.d.). Therefore, it is important that those agencies that do invest in DRE training make their DREs available to other State or local agencies and have policies and procedures in place to facilitate the sharing of DRE resources.

### Key Findings

The report is organized by the following sections.

- **Planning and Implementing DRE Resource-Sharing** – Topics related to the initial planning and then implementing DRE resource-sharing, including identifying stakeholders, building and maintaining awareness, and identifying and overcoming challenges.
- **Policies and Procedures** – Types of formal and informal policies and procedures State and local agencies use to manage DRE resource-sharing.
- **Tools and Technologies** – Types of tools and technologies used to facilitate DRE resource-sharing, from simple text-based systems to web-based emergency management systems.
- **Costs, Funding, and Officer Compensation** – Costs related to DRE resource-sharing, how DRE resource-sharing is commonly funded across multiple agencies, and how officers can be compensated for overtime work performed for agencies other than their own.
- **Case Studies** – summarizes the DRE resource-sharing effort for eight selected locations. These case studies provide information about resource-sharing at the Statewide and local level and illustrate the use of a range of technologies and both formal and informal processes and procedures.
- **Summary: Tips and Recommendations for Implementing DRE Resource-Sharing** – summarizes the key findings from each section of this report.

States and agencies that do not currently share DRE resources are encouraged to use this document as a best practice for sharing. For example, smaller local agencies may be more

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interested in using a text-based approach for callouts, while statewide programs may be more interested in web-based systems that are more robust and are accessed through central dispatch or emergency operations centers. States and agencies that currently share DRE resources are encouraged to use this document to identify opportunities for improvement or enhancement to their resource-sharing.

### **Stakeholders and Obtaining Buy-In**

- Someone must serve as the champion and spearhead the resource-sharing effort. Success starts at the top with the DRE State coordinator or regional coordinator, making sure everyone is on the same page.
- Identify all stakeholders who will be involved with resource-sharing early in the planning stages so all needs and concerns can be addressed prior to implementation. These stakeholders may include the DRE State coordinator, the State Police or Highway Patrol, the State Highway Safety Office, chiefs and sheriffs from involved agencies, dispatch, emergency operations centers, State Attorney's offices, traffic safety resource prosecutors, and others.
- A specific agency involved with the resource-sharing must be tasked with administration and maintenance of any technology used for callouts.

### **Building and Maintaining Awareness**

- Advocate and raise awareness of the availability of DRE resource-sharing. DRE State coordinators often give presentations about the callout programs at various meetings, such as State police chiefs and sheriffs meetings.
- Advertise and let other agencies and officers know about the callout program.
- Communication among the involved agencies is key.
- Have data available to show the benefits of resource-sharing.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- DRE resource-sharing does not have to be complex. Simpler is better.
- A formal policy for resource-sharing is not necessary. In some States agency leadership sign memorandums of understanding or memorandums of agreement for their DREs, indicating that DREs are to be made available to assist other agencies when needed. In other cases mutual aid agreements between participating agencies govern DRE sharing. There are also many agencies that do not have any type of signed agreement and simply indicate by word-of-mouth that their DREs are available to assist other agencies.

- Implement standard, systematic operating procedures for resource-sharing and callouts. The procedures should meet your State or agency needs; there is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- Have a central place for officers to call or text requests for DREs. The use of a central dispatch center is more common for statewide DRE callout programs, while directly contacting DREs is more common in smaller, regional callout programs.
- Designate an on-call rank structure. For example, there may be an overall program coordinator and several regional coordinators so that someone is always available to respond.
- Set an area or boundary for agencies involved in the callout program so that when a DRE is needed, the DRE can easily get to the requesting location. Include the entire judicial circuit in the callout program. This will be especially helpful to agencies that have no or few DREs.
- Give DREs the option of how they would like to be notified, and allow officers to set "quiet hours."
- Define what constitutes a response. Are DREs always required to show up on scene or can they respond by calling the requesting officer and providing guidance?
- Aim for 100 percent response for callouts. If an officer calls for the first time and does not receive a response, the officer likely will not call again.
- Have a list of DREs who are participating in the callout program.

### **Tools and Technologies**

- DRE resource-sharing does not require expensive tools or technologies.
- Technologies typically used range from phone calls, group text messages or apps, to software such as Everbridge's critical-event management platform.

### **Costs, Funding, and Officer Compensation**

- Make it easy for all agencies to get reimbursed for callouts.
- Allow agencies to write purchase orders to receive compensation through grants as opposed to individual claims. This gives departments a sense of value in the process.
- Use a funding code to pay for callouts. If the State allows it and it can be funded and tracked, a funding code that can be used by all agencies will likely create more buy-in to the callout program.
- Give DREs the time necessary to do their reports, court appearances, and paperwork even outside of the overtime allocated for callouts.

## Case Studies

The case studies included in the report provide more details about DRE sharing and callout programs in six State agencies and three local agencies, shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Agencies Selected for Case Studies**

Agency	State
Colorado Department of Transportation	Colorado
Flagler County Sheriff's Office	Florida
Peachtree City Police Department	Georgia
New Jersey State Police and Northfield Police Department	New Jersey
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Forensic Tests for Alcohol Branch	North Carolina
Ohio State Highway Patrol	Ohio
Oklahoma City Police Department (representing OK State program)	Oklahoma
Oregon State Police	Oregon

These agencies were selected to provide varying examples of State and local programs, formal and informal policies and procedures, and the use of simple and more complex technologies. The information for each State or local agency is based on interviews with the State DRE coordinators and local agency DRE coordinators.

Each case study describes the DRE program background, policies, and procedures for resource-sharing, how DRE officer overtime is funded, and lessons learned and successes. Some case studies also include outreach to make other agencies and jurisdictions aware of the availability of DREs and challenges and how they were overcome. These two sections are not included in all case studies, as not all agencies put a focused effort on outreach or face challenges in sharing DRE resources.

## Summary

*Practices for Sharing Drug Recognition Expert Resources* provides successful strategies and practices for sharing DRE resources across agencies with the goal of initiating DRE resource-sharing or enhancing current resource-sharing procedures.

DRE resource-sharing does not have to be a complex or a formalized process and can occur on a smaller scale with a few agencies involved to a larger statewide scale. Having a champion for DRE sharing and ensuring that nearby agencies or all agencies in a State are aware of the availability of DREs across agencies are perhaps the most important components of successfully sharing DRE resources. The information in the report can assist agencies with identifying other important elements based on their needs.

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