



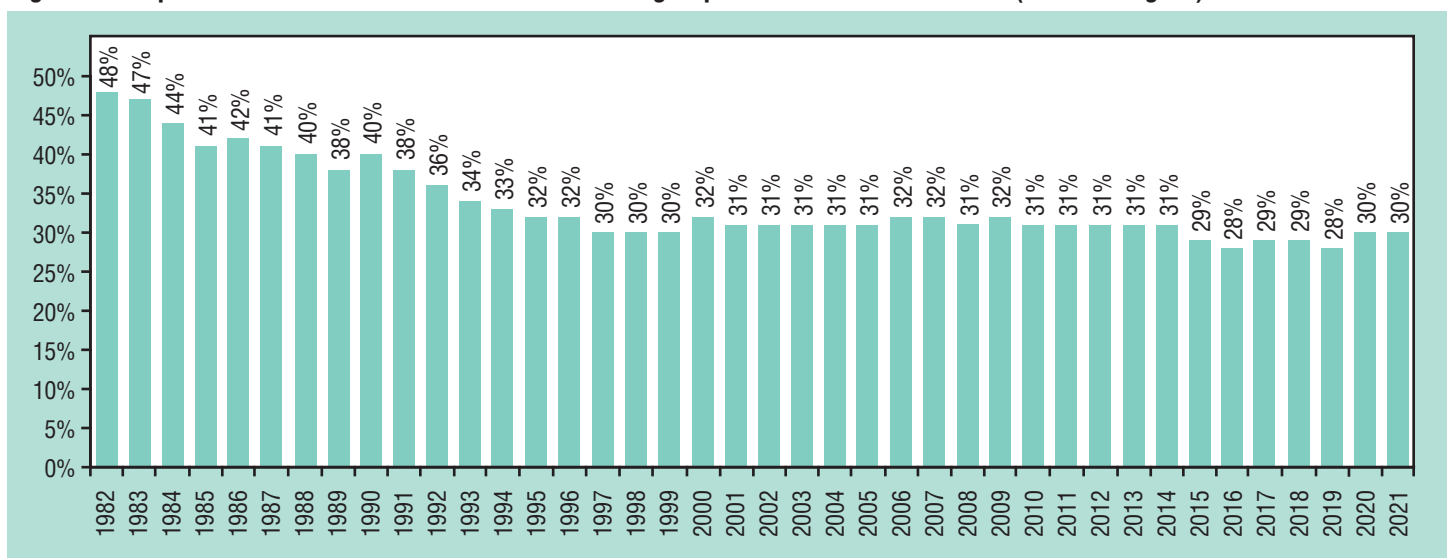
# Best Practices of Successful State Impaired-Driving Task Forces

## The Impaired-Driving Problem

Impaired driving continues to be a significant public health and public safety problem in the United States (Figure 1). In 2021 some 30 percent of the 42,915 traffic fatalities involved alcohol-impaired drivers (drivers with blood alcohol concentrations [BACs] of .08 grams per deciliter or higher).

In addition, there has been a significant increase in drug-impaired driving and especially driving with delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the active ingredient in cannabis, in drivers' systems (Kelley-Baker et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2020).

**Figure 1. Proportion of Annual Traffic Fatalities Involving Impaired Drivers: 1982-2021 (BAC ≥ .08 g/dL)**



## Impaired-Driving Task Forces

Impaired-driving task forces (or sometimes called task teams, commissions, coalitions, councils, committees, leadership teams, or advisory groups) are mechanisms to assess the impaired-driving problem in States to document the systems in place to deal with the problem and to make recommendations for improvement.

Task force efforts have addressed legislative issues, enforcement strategies, criminal justice processing changes, improvements in sentencing procedures, the treatment of DUI/DWI offenders, and initiatives to curb underage drinking, to name a few examples. Officials developing or strengthening State impaired-driving task forces can learn from the experiences of others

and use existing successful frameworks to inform their own work.

A task force can be initiated by the director of the State Highway Safety Office (SHSO), by the governor (or a cabinet member), by a State legislator, by a police chief, or by an activist group (sometimes in response to a highly publicized impaired-driving fatality).

Outreach to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and web searches in fall 2021 identified 32 State task forces. Nine were selected for further study. The nine selected State impaired-driving task forces are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. State Impaired-Driving Task Forces Selected for Interviews**

State	NHTSA Region	State	NHTSA Region
North Carolina	Region 3	Nebraska	Region 7
Florida	Region 4	Colorado	Region 8
Tennessee	Region 4	Nevada	Region 8
Minnesota	Region 5	Montana	Region 10
Texas	Region 6		

## Attributes of Successful Impaired-Driving Task Forces

Interviews with representatives from the 9 task forces helped identify best practices for the groups. Findings from the interviews are summarized below.

### Goal

The primary goals for State impaired-driving task forces are to reduce and eliminate crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities on roadways due to impaired driving. Four States—North Carolina, Florida, Minnesota, and Colorado—gave information and recommended policies to State legislatures as well as responded to legislation in circulation.

### Members

Members are selected to ensure that all stakeholder groups are represented. Task forces referred to NHTSA guidance on which stakeholder groups to include. Membership has evolved to include new areas for representation, such as oral fluid expertise for drug testing. Having membership from different organizations ensures expertise across all areas of impaired driving and diverse perspectives at meetings. North Carolina, Florida, and Colorado emphasized the importance of membership from diverse impaired-driving stakeholder groups including across State agencies, research, and enforcement. Bringing stakeholders together lets people receive and consider information about various aspects of impaired driving from different viewpoints. This approach makes the task force a stronger resource and better advocate for strategies and tactics aimed to reduce impaired driving.

### Chair/Leader/Facilitator

Appointing a strong leader as task force chair is important. The chair runs meetings, sets the agenda, and works to implement recommendations. In several task forces, the chair is the director of the SHSO or another State Department of Transportation official, giving the

task force increased authority to make and promote recommendations. A few task forces have DUI prosecutors or DUI enforcement officials as chairs. A chair who has leadership qualities, the authority to implement strategies, and the respect of task force members will help make the task force successful.

## Impaired-Driving Strategic Plan

Each State has an impaired-driving strategic plan, often part of the Triennial Highway Safety Plan and/or annual grant application. Impaired-driving task forces ensure that strategic plans are implemented and used to follow progress in each activity. Depending on progress toward reducing impaired driving, the task force helps update and revise the strategic plan as guided by the data. Impaired-driving strategic plans include mixes of long-standing practices aimed at reducing impaired driving as well as innovative measures compatible with current State approaches towards DUI. Any proposed strategies that are not proven effective usually include an evaluation activity.

## Conclusion

### *Summary of Attributes of Successful Task Forces*

The 9 task forces shared the following attributes, which they attributed to their success.

- The task force chair has strong leadership qualities.
- Members are self-motivated and engaged in solving the problem.
- A diverse group of stakeholders is selected as task force members.
- A large percentage of task force members attend meetings and participate in discussions.
- A strategic plan is developed.
- Innovative ways are formulated to overcome obstacles.
- Progress in meeting task force goals is tracked.
- Members are held accountable for certain aspects of the strategic plan.
- Diversity, racial equity, and inclusion are integral to task force membership and goals.

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