

MISSOURI

Jefferson County Sheriff's Department Underage Drinking Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

▶ AT-A-GLANCE

▶ Project Characteristics

Underage Drinking Education, Enforcement, and Deterrence

▶ Program Areas

Alcohol and Other Drugs Youth Programs

▶ Targeted Populations

Underage Drinkers

▶ Type of Jurisdiction

Rural

▶ Jurisdiction Size

171,380

▶ Funding

Section 154: \$64,641

▶ Contact

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Problem Identification

According to the Missouri State Highway Patrol Statistical Analysis Center, there were 8,417 drinking-related crashes in the State of Missouri during 2000. Of those crashes, 1,178 involved drivers who were under the legal drinking age of 21. Of the total number of traffic crashes in Missouri during 2000, 31.6 percent involved a young driver. Of all fatal traffic crashes, 25.8 percent involved a young driver. In 14.6 percent of the fatal crashes, the young driver's drinking condition contributed to the cause of the crash. In Missouri, 311 people were killed and 25,313 were injured in traffic crashes involving young drivers.

Jefferson County ranks fifth in traffic crashes involving young drinking drivers. From 1997 through 1999 there were 101 young drivers involved in alcohol-related traffic crashes within Jefferson County. From January through May, 2000 there were 14 persons under the age of 21 who were arrested for Driving While Intoxicated (DWI). The Sheriff's Department is the primary law enforcement agency within the county that is responsible for nearly 90 percent of all juvenile enforcement and deterrence campaigns to curb the problems associated with underage drinking.

Goals and Objectives

The Jefferson County Underage Drinking Task Force's goal is to deter persons under 21 years old from consuming alcohol through a combination of education and enforcement.

The project's objectives are to:

- Reduce the number of alcohol related juvenile fatalities by 10 percent;
- Increase alcohol related charges for DWI by 100 percent; and
- Increase juvenile alcohol-related arrests for violations while operating a motor vehicle by 100 percent.

Strategies and Activities

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department implemented the following strategies and related activities to achieve its goals and objectives:

- Created a multi-jurisdictional task force to combat underage drinking. This task force meets between two to four times per month to enforce violations associated with underage drinking. Agencies within Jefferson County joined the efforts of the Sheriff's Department with local law enforcement, Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Missouri Division of

Liquor Control. Supporting agencies were the Jefferson County Health Department, Jefferson County Juvenile Courts, and the St. Louis County Division of Youth Services.

- Provided training and education to students, parents, and sales clerks on the hazards and liability of selling to minors. For example, the Task Force sent letters about the dangers of underage drinking and Task Force enforcement efforts.
- Worked with the Division of Liquor and Tobacco Control to provide training to liquor licensees within the county.
- Patrolled frequent hangouts such as parking lots, caves, and roadways, where underage drinkers assemble.
- Dispatched plain clothes officers in unmarked vehicles to identify underage drinkers and issue citations at the large parties and typical gatherings that frequently occur on weekends and around the holidays.
- Used the controlled dispersal method to minimize the potential for disaster when responding to large parties and to ensure party attendees are provided a safe ride home.

Results

Through a combination of education and enforcement of underage drinking laws, the Jefferson County Underage Task Force achieved the following results:

- Achieved a record high number of arrests and charges for Minors in Possession (MIP) and DWI offenses involving underage persons.
- Reduced the size of large parties hosting 300-500 drinkers, allowing more effective controlled dispersal in which only sober drivers operate vehicles while leaving.
- Increased enforcement activity by responding to a total of 759 violations, including Minor DWI (21), Adult DWI (95), MIP (395), Open Container (7), Zero Tolerance (7), Fake ID (7), Attempt to Purchase (10), Selling/Supplying Intoxicating Liquor to Minors (10), Other Liquor Law Violations (2), Drug Violations (126), and Other Violations (84).
- Increased response to "Service Calls" (122), including Vandalism (6), Loud Parties (53), Careless Driving (35), and Disturbance (28).
- Became aware of prosecutor's lack of understanding of the costs associated with underage drinking. The task force identified the need for greater cooperation from prosecutors to make the enforcement effort even more effective.