



TRAFFIC SAFETY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR
LAW ENFORCEMENT

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury-related death in the United States; however, budgetary and staffing constraints can limit law enforcement's ability to educate motorists and enforce traffic safety regulations. The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), in partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), has compiled this brochure, as well as a traffic safety program model policy and other documents, to help sheriffs maximize available resources needed to improve public safety.



Follow the steps below to jumpstart a new traffic safety campaign or revamp an existing program.

For more detailed, issue-specific online toolkits, and templates, visit NSA (www.sheriffs.org/traffic-safety) and NHTSA (www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety).



STEP ONE.

IDENTIFY PROBLEMS, SET GOALS



“Traffic enforcement” is an umbrella term used to describe activities that target a wide range of unlawful motorist practices. The first step in traffic safety program development is to identify which behaviors (speeding, distracted driving, DUIs, etc.) pose the greatest threat to your community. Begin by analyzing local crash and citation statistics. Also review quality-of-life complaints your agency has received from residents to help pinpoint where infractions occur most often. Surveys taken before and after your event will prove helpful in measuring success.



Next, draft a mission statement that answers the five W's—who will do what, when and where events will take place, and why the program is needed.

Remember: improved safety and quality of life should be the main objectives. Enforcement is simply a strategy for achieving these goals.

STEP TWO.

BUILD SUPPORT

Every key player must be committed to program success. Ensure all personnel—from the sheriff to the patrol deputies, unit dispatchers, and administrative support staff—understand the mission and their assigned roles. Also be sure to notify appropriate city and county government agencies (e.g., municipal courts) well in advance of your projected program launch date.

Partner with local television, radio, and print media to disseminate traffic safety program information to the public. Using your mission statement as a template, media messages should tell constituents when and where events will take place and explain program goals. Also consider placing public service announcements to share safe driving reminders and tips.

Don't limit outreach efforts to the media announcements. Consider partnering with concerned citizens and civic leaders, and/or with schools, nonprofits, and businesses, to spread the word. Safety presentations and exhibits at public gatherings such as football games, community fairs or National Night Out parties are another good way to reach large segments of the community.



STEP THREE.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In collaboration with your partners, plan public outreach, awareness, enforcement, and deployment activities. Next, determine what data you will need to collect during these activities in order to evaluate program effectiveness.

- Fill out a media calendar with days and times advertisements will air.
- Set media conference dates,
- Draft press releases, and compile contact/invite lists.
- Try to schedule media and public relations communications to precede enforcement activities (e.g., an Obey The Sign or Pay The Fine newspaper ad three days prior to a saturation checkpoint).
- Also decide when and where to place road signs and decoy vehicles (and inspect equipment in advance).

STEP FOUR.

REVIEW TRAINING NEEDS

Assess personnel who will conduct enforcement activities to make sure they have necessary skills and understand pertinent policies and procedures. Schedule training and refresher courses, as needed.

STEP FIVE.

PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Reconfirm launch date and dates for press events leading up to kickoff and send invitations. Ensure staff training is complete. Order signage, literature, promotional materials, and other necessary equipment.

STEP SIX.

LAUNCH PROGRAM

Traffic safety program components vary based on issue of focus, community size and composition, staffing constraints, and many other factors. Below are some general best practices to help you maximize available resources.

- Target higher traffic areas and interstates, where vehicles can reach high speeds. Work in pairs—one deputy to operate radar and another to stop violators.
- Low visibility can complicate nighttime enforcement. If possible, schedule enforcement activities during daytime shifts or well lit nighttime areas.
- Avoid keeping deputies in one place too long by using saturation patrols, but maintain that saturation patrols have an appropriately sized enforcement area. Find the balance that works best for your community and office.
- Avoid scheduling conflicts. Limited manpower may make it difficult to fill posted shifts if your office is conducting multiple programs simultaneously. Allow deputies to work normal eight-hour shifts to participate in activities rather than attempting longer shifts.
- Don't focus solely on issuing citations. Instead, change perceptions by letting the public know that your actions are designed to improve safety, not increase revenue. One idea could be to hold educational sessions for speed violators and dismiss ticket costs for attendees. Some law enforcement agencies also partner with local businesses to distribute free meal coupons and other incentives as rewards for safe driving.



STEP SEVEN.

A W A R D A C H I E V E M E N T

Program success takes a team effort. Acknowledge hard work at a special employee luncheon or similar social event. Award top-performing deputies (and other staffers) with medals or certificates of achievement. Write letters thanking law enforcement, other government, nonprofit, and business partners for their support, and recognize their efforts publicly via your website or social media.

Above all, do not neglect to thank your constituents for their cooperation. Send letters to the editor of local media outlets or write social media posts to express your appreciation to the community you serve.

STEP EIGHT.

E V A L U A T E

Post-program evaluation will help you perfect future traffic safety initiatives. Assessments should include quantitative data (e.g., numbers and types of stops, citations, and arrests made; pre- and post-program crash injury and fatality statistics; observational study results). Equally valuable are qualitative data gleaned by answering questions such as:

Did we fully implement the program? Did we follow our strategic plan? How fully did our partners participate? and How much earned media coverage did we receive?

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Keep these important points in mind to ensure program success:

1. Clearly define program goals and strategies.
2. Do not focus solely on enforcement. Instead, strive to change public perception by improving traffic safety awareness.
3. Build community support through frequent communication and information-sharing.
4. Focus efforts. Participating in simultaneous projects or multiple issue-specific traffic safety campaigns can strain resources and decrease effectiveness.



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