



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

TODD SPITZER

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Kimberly Edds
Director of Public Affairs
Office: 714-347-8405, Cell: 714-504-1917
media@ocdapa.org

Orange County District Attorney's Office Receives \$2.8 Million in Grants to Combat Drugged and Drunk Driving

SANTA ANA, Calif. – The Orange County District Attorney's Office (OCDA) announced today that it has received \$2.8 million in grants from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to serve as the statewide traffic safety training agency as part of an ongoing effort to reduce drugged and drunk driving across California. The grant programs run through September 2024.

This year, OCDA was awarded \$1,303,250 for the Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Program and \$1,539,354 for the California Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) Training Network. OCDA has been the leader in California by training law enforcement and prosecutors through the TSRP program, which focuses on providing resources and education statewide to law enforcement, prosecutors and toxicologists to effectively keep communities safe with innovative training for personnel involved with DUID cases. More than 1,300 people received training last year on how to effectively prosecute driving under the influence of drugs (DUID) cases.

In total, OTS awarded more than \$127 million encompassing 442 grants to make roads safer in California, the largest amount ever given out by the agency.

"Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs continues to be a major problem here on our Orange County roads and across California," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "With all of the resources currently available for drivers – ride shares, designated drivers, public transportation – there are some who still want to risk their own lives and that of others while being under the influence. The OTS funding represent an unwavering commitment to safeguarding our community and giving law enforcement and prosecutors the tools they need to aggressively hold drugged and drunk drivers accountable. Enforcement and education are needed to ensure our roads are safe for everyone."

In 2011, OCDA developed a multi-agency collaborative DUID prosecution, investigation and toxicology model which has served as the innovative foundation to develop a statewide program.

In October 2016, OCDA expanded its traffic safety training role to the Southern California region, serving as the lead agency in prosecution and law enforcement training. This includes the delivery of live training, roundtables, training videos, and legal updates.

In 2017, OCDA began to develop a statewide training program through its administration of the TSRP network. As part of this process, OCDA has aligned law enforcement and prosecution agencies throughout the state to create a massive statewide training, resource and education network. This responsibility offers agencies throughout the state the opportunity to share expertise in traffic safety as the OCDA works in partnership to proactively investigate and prosecute traffic-related crimes, increasing public safety in all jurisdictions throughout California.

As part of these OTS grants, OCDA maintains eight vertical DUID prosecutors assigned to handle cases from beginning to end throughout Orange County. These deputy district attorneys review, file and prosecute nearly all drug-impaired driving cases filed in Orange County. Additionally, OTS has provided funds for a full-time drug recognition expert who will be available to the Orange County DUID vertical prosecutors for training, consultation and courtroom testimony.

OCDA prosecutors filed charges on more than 550 DUID and combination cases submitted by police agencies and secured more than 540 convictions in DUID and combination cases during the prior grant year. The eight vertical prosecutors currently assigned to the program are Deputy District Attorneys Meghan O'Sullivan and Kaitlin Radvansky of Central Justice Center; Marlene Isied and Brian Perk of West Justice Center; Maddison Boyer and Tatiana Nicola of Harbor Justice Center; and Jossie Gutierrez and Danielle Vicino of North Justice Center.

The vertical prosecution program is aimed at creating subject matter experts within the office to be able to hold more people accountable who are alcohol and/or drug-impaired drivers. This program additionally gathers data to track impaired driving trends and provide information to other law enforcement agencies and toxicologists to effectively prosecute offenders. The Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Program grant is overseen by Senior Assistant District Attorney Suzie Price and Assistant District Attorney Brock Zimmon. The TSRP grant is under the supervision of Senior Assistant District Attorney Robert Mestman and ADA Zimmon. The TSRP team is comprised of three deputy district attorneys and two drug recognition expert investigators.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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