



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 \$3.4 Million in Grants to Combat Driving Under the Influence

SANTA ANA, Calif. – The Orange County District Attorney's Office (OCDA) is proud to announce that it has been once again chosen by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to serve as the statewide traffic safety training agency in an ongoing effort to combat drugged and drunk driving across California. This year's \$3.4 million in OTS grants will allow the OCDA to continue its multi-day impaired driving course that will provide law enforcement officers across California with cutting edge training to recognized drugged impaired drivers.

The number of drug-impaired driving cases investigated and prosecuted across California significantly increased in the wake of the state's 2016 decriminalization of marijuana.

OTS has awarded the OCDA two grants totaling \$3.4 million to fund the office's Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Program, which dedicates eight prosecutors and one investigator to prosecuting drugged and drunk driving cases, as well as continue the California Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) Training Network, which trains California law enforcement and prosecutors on how to effectively investigate and prosecute driving under the influence of drugs cases.

"Drugged and drunk driving has reached crisis levels here in Orange County and throughout California – and innocent people are dying," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "I'm incredibly proud of the innovation and dedication my prosecutors, investigators, and support staff demonstrate every day in helping to curb this deadly epidemic and save lives. By taking the statewide lead in providing police officers and prosecutors with cutting edge training, we are holding drugged and drunk drivers accountable and make California streets safer.

This year, OCDA was awarded \$1,568,500 for the Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driver Vertical Prosecution Program and \$1,800,000 for the California Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Training Network.

The TSRP Training Network 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.

In 2011, OCDA developed a multi-agency collaborative driving under the influence of drugs (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 Training Network. As part of this process, OCDA has begun to align 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 750 DUID and combination cases submitted by police agencies and secured more than 600 convictions in DUID and combination cases during 2024.

The eight vertical DUID prosecutors currently assigned to the program are Deputy District Attorneys Anahi Millot and Brennan Zoellner of Central Justice Center, Blake Cushing and Kelli Pribble of West Justice Center, Mason Barlett and Michelle Tucker of Harbor Justice Center, and Robert Armendariz and Francisco Navarro of North Justice Center. The vertical DUID prosecutors' program is aimed to create 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 to 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 Training Network grant is under the supervision of Senior Assistant District Attorney Robert Mestman and ADA Zimmon. The TSRP team consists 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. The grant programs run through September 2026.

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