
Recommendation for Use of Mass Media Campaigns to Reduce Alcohol-Impaired Driving

Task Force on Community Preventive Services

Motor vehicle-related injuries kill more children and young adults than any other single cause in the United States, and are the leading overall cause of injury deaths for all ages.¹ In 2002, alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes resulted in 17,419 deaths and more than 300,000 injuries.² Each year, these crashes result in more than \$50 billion in economic costs.³

The accompanying systematic review⁴ found strong evidence that mass media campaigns are effective in reducing alcohol-impaired driving and alcohol-related crashes (i.e., those in which the driver had a blood alcohol concentration [BAC] of at least 0.01 g/dL) if they are carefully planned, well-executed, and attain adequate audience exposure, and if they are implemented in conjunction with other ongoing prevention activities, such as enforcement of laws against alcohol-impaired driving. Based on this evidence, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services (the Task Force) recommends that mass media campaigns that meet these criteria be implemented to reduce alcohol-impaired driving and its consequences. Such campaigns can be effective whether they focus on publicizing existing laws and enforcement activities or on the health and social consequences of alcohol-impaired driving.

In addition to recommending mass media campaigns, the Task Force has previously recommended five other approaches to preventing alcohol-impaired driving: sobriety checkpoints, 0.08 blood alcohol concentration laws, minimum legal drinking age laws,

lower blood alcohol concentration laws for young or inexperienced drivers, and intervention training programs for servers of alcoholic beverages.⁵ Although these recommendations are based on evaluations of each intervention as a distinct activity, it is important to remember that optimal prevention of alcohol-impaired driving requires a comprehensive and systematic approach to changing drinking and driving behavior.⁶⁻⁸ Because of the strong potential for a synergistic effect between well-planned mass media campaigns and other interventions with demonstrated effectiveness, communities should consider including such mass media campaigns in their multifaceted programs to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.

References

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