

New Report Shows Success of Michigan's DWI/Sobriety Court Ignition Interlock Program

Use of devices increases participants' success rate, reduces recidivism

LANSING, Mich. – A new research report evaluating Michigan's program to prevent repeat drunk driving by chronic offenders through the use of ignition interlocks concludes that the devices, when used in conjunction with a Sobriety Court program, contribute to significantly better success rates among participants.

Offenders participating in the state's DWI/Sobriety Courts without the use of interlocks were found to have three times greater odds of failing out of Sobriety Court than those ordered by the court to use the devices.

An ignition interlock device connects with a motor vehicle's ignition and other control systems. The interlock device measures the driver's bodily alcohol content through their breath and keeps the vehicle from starting if the Blood Alcohol Content is 0.025 or higher. The device also will ask for random retests while the person is driving.

The report, commissioned by the Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals (MATCP) to evaluate the first five years of the DWI/Sobriety Court Ignition Interlock Program, was announced by Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, judges and legislators at a news conference as part of Alcohol Awareness Month in Lansing today. A program graduate was also in attendance to share his success story.

District Judge Harvey Hoffman implemented Michigan's first DWI/Sobriety Court in Eaton County in 2009 and is a state and national leader in the development of this kind of problem-solving court, which combines judicial supervision with testing, treatment, punitive sanctions and positive incentives for participants.

"The marriage of DWI/Sobriety Courts with ignition interlocks when dealing with repeat DWI Offenders has helped to make Michigan's roads and highways safer and has improved the lives of alcoholic drivers," Hoffman said. "The partnership between Michigan's courts and the Secretary of State, in allowing program participants to lawfully drive to and from court, treatment, school, testing and employment, has been crucial in spreading DWI/Sobriety Courts across the state."

Statistics for the group of DWI/Sobriety Court participants using interlocks were compared to a similar group that did not use the devices. Among the report's findings:

- 97 percent of Sobriety Court participants ordered to install interlock devices on their vehicles complied with the court.
- Of the participants using an interlock, only 11.4 percent failed to graduate from the program—a rate nearly three times better than the number of participants not using an interlock who did not graduate.
- Alcohol and drug use among Sobriety Court participants using an interlock was substantially lower compared to the offenders not under interlock supervision.
- Sobriety Court participants using an interlock were more likely to improve their levels of education during their time in the program.
- Sobriety Court participants using an interlock spent less time in jail, had fewer warrants issued against them and had a higher number of overall sobriety days.

The Michigan Department of State (MDOS) administers the Breath Alcohol Ignition Interlock Detection (BAIID) Program and currently has more than 9,700 individuals who are required to use an interlock device under the vehicle code for High BAC convictions, ordered by an MDOS hearing officer or through the DWI/Sobriety Court. DWI/Sobriety Courts account for 3,700 of those devices, Johnson said.

"The data clearly shows that the ignition interlock devices and Sobriety Courts are effective tools for controlling drunk driving recidivism," she said. "More people are now required to use these devices because of changes in drunk driving laws and Sobriety Court programs. It's making our roads safer and we believe it is saving lives."

Johnson thanked MATCP, Hoffman and his colleagues from other treatment courts for their efforts, and Gov. Rick Snyder and legislators including Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker and Sen. Rick Jones for recent changes to the law that closed loopholes and strengthened the regulation of ignition interlock devices in Michigan.

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Stroke Warning Signs

Stroke is a medical emergency. Every second counts, because time lost is brain lost! Know these stroke warning signs and teach them to others.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

If you or someone with you has one or more of these signs, don't delay! Immediately call 9-1-1 or the emergency medical services (EMS) number so an ambulance - ideally with advanced life support - can be sent for you. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

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Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** This feeling often comes along with chest discomfort. But it can occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs.** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

If you or someone you're with has one or more of these signs, call 9-1-1...Get to the hospital right away.

If you're the one having symptoms, and you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. Don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

For more information, contact your nearest American Heart Association office or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or online at www.americanheart.org.

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