



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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DA's OFFICE EXPANDS DRUG DUI PROSECUTION PROGRAM WITH RENEWED GRANT FUNDS APPROVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

RIVERSIDE – Today, Jan. 7, 2014, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors approved the renewal of a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety that will expand efforts to aggressively prosecute those who choose to drive under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

The \$484,939 grant to the Riverside County District Attorney's Office will fund the expansion of the DUI Vertical Prosecution Team that works DUI cases from arrest through sentencing. The grant will enable Riverside County District Attorney Paul Zellerbach to assign three specially-trained deputy district attorneys to prosecute drug-impaired drivers in all regions of Riverside County.

To combat recent increases in drug-impaired driving, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office implemented the DUI Vertical Prosecution Team last year after successfully applying to the California Office of Traffic Safety for funding to enable one specially-trained prosecutor to focus exclusively on drug-impaired driving cases. The goal of the DUI Vertical Prosecution team is to prevent drug-impaired driving and reduce drug-impaired traffic fatalities and injuries by holding drug-impaired drivers accountable.

During the first year of grant operation, the unit obtained almost 300 convictions in drug-impaired driving cases. The program was so successful the California Office of Traffic Safety increased the grant award this year by providing funding for two additional prosecutors in order to expand the program countywide.

Prosecutors now assigned to the team are Deputy District Attorneys Julie Ching in the Western Division, Jeff Mendoza in the Eastern Division, and Rosie Semnar in the Southwest Division.

Prosecution team members will work with the Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Program of the California District Attorneys Association to increase the capabilities of the team by obtaining and delivering specialized training, including training in the emerging problem of drug-impaired driving. Team members will share information with peers and law enforcement personnel throughout the county and across the state.

The grant period extends from Oct. 1, 2013, through September 30, 2014. Funding for this program comes from a grant by the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.