



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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August 2006

Mississippi's Targeted Enforcement Shows Increase in Underage Drinking Cases

Agents of the Mississippi Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) have recently participated in an effort to increase enforcement to address underage drinking problems at universities. An Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which was made possible by the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, allowed agents to target college environments during weekend sports events.

The major Southeastern Conference football teams at Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi presented the State with many issues surrounding underage drinking and other alcohol violations. With more than 42,000 students (most of whom are underage) attending Mississippi's three major universities, the field was set for dangerous play. Local law enforcement, who are often overworked just dealing with the routine problems and maintaining regular patrols, are taxed even further when a university sporting event is held. Then, they must not only deal with the student population, but also with visitors as well as with the dangers of underage drinking. With EUDL funding, the State could provide more manpower and more focused operations during high-risk times.

ABC agents conducted surveillance of retail outlets, often spotting underage persons purchasing alcohol. Further, adults were observed providing alcohol to youth. To help curb this problem of individuals younger than 21 purchasing alcohol, the ABC agents worked with local nighttime hotspots. Agents posed either as customers to check for underage alcohol buyers or

as bouncers so they could catch those using fake identification to gain entry to a bar, restaurant, or nightclub.

As expected, these focused enforcement efforts at sporting events and local hotspots for underage drinking produced excellent results during game weekends. Reports indicated an increase of 47 percent in alcohol-related arrests during home football game weekends. Almost 25% of the individuals younger than 21 arrested for an alcohol-related violation were in possession of a fake ID.

ABC agents have arrested 450 individuals while conducting operations using funding from the EUDL grant. The Mississippi ABC has demonstrated that increased enforcement results in increased safety, not only for those younger than 21, but for others in the community as well. As a result of these efforts, local police departments around Mississippi's football games have seen a decrease in arrests for driving under the influence. The increased presence of State-level law enforcement on football game days has allowed local law enforcement to provide more coverage to the local community.

Overall, the EUDL program has benefited the State of Mississippi, and EUDL will continue to work with State agencies to keep the students of the State's universities safe during sporting events and throughout the year.

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The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of Juvenile Justice for Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) or the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center (UDETC) and are solely of the author/source.



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