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TITLE: Executive Summary of An Evaluation of Alcohol Abuse Treatment as an Alternative to Drivers License Suspension or Revocation (Final Report to the Legislature in Accord with Senate Bill (SB) 38-Gregorio)

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PROTECT OBJECTIVE:

To assess the traffic safety impact of using the alcohol abuse treatment strategy as an alternative to license suspension or revocation; to assess the impact of treatment program participation or license suspension/ revocation on a driver's life style; to develop guidelines or recommendations concerning the structure of a first-offender program based upon the results of the SB 330 evaluation and knowledge of the state-of-the-art; and to provide guidelines or recommendations concerning future program or evaluation needs.

SUMMARY:

A new judicial sentencing strategy for drivers convicted of driving-under-the-influence (DUI) offenses was created in California through passage of Senate Bill 330 (Gregorio, 1975). The legislation permitted drivers convicted of multiple DUI offenses to participate in a 12-month alcohol abuse treatment program in lieu of receiving mandatory suspension or revocation of their driving privilege. The 1975 legislation permitted a demonstration of the treatment sentencing strategy in a maximum of four California counties, beginning in January, 1976. The demonstration effort was legislatively refined and extended statewide effective January 1, 1978 (SB 38, Gregorio, 1977; SB 1458, Gregorio, 1978).

The 12-month alcohol abuse treatment program consisted of: (1) close and regular supervision of participants, including face-to-face interviews at least once every other calendar week, (2) a variety of direct treatment services for problem drinkers/ alcoholics, or the capability of referring them to such treatment, (3) an opportunity for a driver to be referred to a program only once within a four-year timeframe, and (4) the capability of monitoring and supervising participants referred to outside agencies.

The report presents evidence that license suspension or revocation has a more positive traffic safety impact than does participation in the alcohol abuse treatment program. Further, it shows that treatment program participation and the imposition of a licensing control have similar impact on a driver's life style. Finally, the implications of these findings on first-offender programs are discussed.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In 1981, the California Legislature enacted Chapter 940, amending several Vehicle Code Sections dealing with drinking drivers. The use of restrictions on the driver's license was embodied in this legislation.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A critique of the report by Griffith Edwards appeared in *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 11, 311-312, 1979. The traffic safety findings were presented by Roger Hagen at the National Alcoholism Forum, Washington, D.C., 1979.

The traffic safety findings were published as "The Traffic Safety Impact of Alcohol Treatment as an Alternative to Mandated Licensing Controls" by Hagen, Williams, and McConnell in *Accident*

Analysis and Prevention, 11, 275-291, 1979.