The RADD California Coalition: The “Figure It Out!” Campaign

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Impaired driving is the leading alcohol-related cause of death among college students in the U.S. (Hingson et al., 2005). One popular impaired-driving prevention approach is to highlight the use of designated drivers. The designated driver concept is widely recognized and popular, but often poorly implemented (Fell et al., 1997). Ideally, interventions would encourage pre-drinking driver selection and driver sobriety since those are critical points for many who fail to use designated drivers appropriately (Lange et al., 1998).

RADD, the entertainment industry’s voice for traffic safety, has spearheaded a new campaign to prevent impaired driving among Californians ages 21-34. The campaign uses an evidence-based strategy that expands an individual-level social cognitive approach to a population-level message. With funding from the CA OTS, RADD has formed a coalition of government, university, business, media, and community stakeholders. The RADD California Coalition launched its first media campaign during the 2005 winter holiday season. Another campaign built upon the lessons learned was launched during the 2006 winter holiday season. This paper describes the RADD California Coalition’s formation and the most recent campaign. It reports on evaluation efforts and the research basis that formed the content of the statewide campaign.

The “Figure It Out” campaign was built upon research demonstrating that the designated driver concept is already widely recognized and popular. However, failures in its implementation may explain at least some instances of drunk driving. Thus the campaign seeks to correct misunderstandings about the designated driver concept, and cue the proper use at the point when it is needed most.

The campaign employed multiple material deployment strategies including: Point of Sale, “RADD Crew”, on campus, mass media, and news. The paper will discuss all of these techniques. Evaluation of the campaign includes process and outcome measurement. Tracking of the placement of media messages, including on air and through print materials indicates that both localized and broad strategies successfully deployed the message. However, some methods of distribution, including those within bars were less successful. Outcome evaluation was done within a confined geographic location and subpopulation to allow for more in-depth measurement. A web survey both before and after the campaign was administered to a random sample of students at SDSU. Breath test surveys were also conducted at a small sample of bars participating in the campaign. Patrons were surveyed on entry and exit of those bars, and their breath test results and driving plans were compared to a similar survey at those bars conducted prior to the campaign period.

Results indicate that the campaign has developed some momentum by developing relationships with businesses in known hotspots for drink/driving within selected communities. The media campaign successfully built on these relationships by allowing bars to show their good side to the public, while maximizing campaign materials. However, there is also good evidence that the use of point-of-sale partners for deployment of materials was problematic even after receiving assurances from owners of cooperation. It is possible that such deployment problems will be resolved with continued partnering; or conversely alternative methods for deploying materials should be explored. The “RADD Crew” was a successful method of spreading the campaign materials within drinking locales.

Keywords: