



IMPAIRED DRIVING

Task Force Newsletter



Save a Life™
Texas Department of Transportation

At the [March 26, 2026](#), meeting of the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force, members discussed the following topics:

2026 TEXAS IMPAIRED DRIVING FORUM



Aspen Blessing

The Texas Impaired Driving Forum was held on March 25, 2026, at the Embassy Suites in San Marcos. Thank you to all who joined us. The Forum opened with a heartfelt Pause for Purpose delivered by Jennifer and Drew Blessing of Abilene. They shared the powerful and deeply personal story of their beautiful daughter, Aspen, who was taken far too soon.

Motivated by their loss, the Blessings founded the nonprofit organization [One Choice](#), whose mission is to save lives by opening hearts and minds to the real consequences of impaired driving through powerful storytelling, honest conversations, and the reminder that every choice matters. Their moving message resonated strongly with attendees and set a meaningful and reflective tone for the day—one focused on learning, collaboration, and identifying new strategies to save lives in communities across Texas.



Jennifer Blessing (right) shared a deeply personal and tragic story with Forum attendees (left). She spoke about the loss of her daughter, who was killed instantly when a drunk driver traveling the wrong way on I-20 crashed head-on into her vehicle. Her account highlights the devastating consequences of impaired driving and the lasting impact such tragedies have on families.

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- Statewide Impaired Driving Task Force Administrators Visit Texas
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- Upcoming Events & Training Opportunities

Newsletter Additions

Have an initiative, new resource, event, or accomplishment to highlight?

Send your updates to Courtney Hrnrcir (c-hrnrcir@tti.tamu.edu) for consideration in the next TxIDTF newsletter.





The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force and the Texas Department of Transportation would like to congratulate the 2026 honorees who go above and beyond the call of duty in support of the mission to eliminate impaired driving in Texas.

2026 Impaired Driving Safety Award Recipients can be found [here](#).

Presentations and speaker bios can be found on the [2026 Forum webpage](#).

Congratulations to the 2026 Impaired Driving Safety Award Winners!



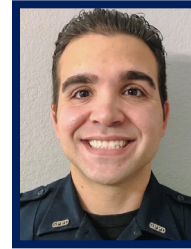
MATTHEW FOYE

Travis County District Attorney's Office



SERGEANT THOMAS BERRETTINI

Grand Prairie Police Department



DETECTIVE HANSELT PALAU

Grand Prairie Police Department



OFFICER ERIC SCHWAUSCH

Baytown Police Department



SERGEANT SALVADOR CORRAL

Houston Police Department



SHERRIFF WESLEY DOOLITTLE

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

Honorable Mentions

- ★ **DEPUTY DEVON KANG**
Travis County Sheriff's Department
- ★ **CORPORAL TORI MURPHY**
Clute Police Department
- ★ **OFFICER ALEC ROUNDS**
Grapevine Police Department
- ★ **OFFICER CHRISTOPHER SUPAK**
Bryan Police Department
- ★ **SERGEANT MICHAEL ZAJAC**
Giddings Police Department
- ★ **JUVENILE CASE MANAGER BRIAN LEIJA**
Friendswood Municipal Court



Statewide Impaired Driving Task Force Administrators Visit Texas



Left to Right: Christine Adams (Texas), Meg Matta (Nevada), Kyle Clark (Florida), Amity Jeffries (Missouri), and David Bernstein (Minnesota)

David Berstein, Minnesota DWI Task Force, Kyle Clark, Florida Impaired Driving Coalition, **Amity Jeffries**, Missouri Department of Transportation, and **Meg Matta**, Nevada Office of Traffic Safety, conducted a Forum panel discussion, moderated by Christine Adams, Texas Impaired Driving Task Force, on *Statewide Responses to Drug and Polysubstance Impaired Driving*. The panel shared valuable insights on current statewide strategies, data informed approaches, cross agency collaboration, and promising practices aimed at reducing impairment related crashes. Attendees gained practical insights into how states are adapting policies, training, and public health initiatives to address the growing complexity of multi substance impairment on today's roadways.

These task force administrators also joined the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force meeting on March 26, 2026, to engage in a targeted discussion on drug- and polysubstance impaired driving. They noted that while laws and structures vary, many of the challenges are consistent across states.

A key focus of the discussion was how task forces engage in legislative activity. Some states operate as volunteer based organizations with greater flexibility

to interact directly with legislators, while others are limited to supporting legislative efforts through education and information sharing rather than advocacy. Several practical approaches to legislative engagement were highlighted. These included developing draft bills and posting them publicly on task force websites, utilizing advisory boards to elevate task force recommendations, and sustaining progress by re-introducing priority policy proposals across multiple legislative cycles.

Discussions also focused heavily on cannabis, hemp, and "green lab" initiatives. Multiple states described hands on green lab programs designed to educate law enforcement, judges, and policymakers on modern cannabis impairment. Key themes included the dramatic increase in THC potency compared to past decades, the resulting training gaps, and the shared understanding that "THC is THC," regardless of whether it originates from marijuana or hemp derived products.

Participants stressed the need for proactive engagement with lawmakers

A key focus of the discussion was how task forces engage in legislative activity. Some states operate as volunteer based organizations with greater flexibility to interact directly with legislators, while others are limited to supporting legislative efforts through education and information sharing rather than advocacy.

to avoid confusion over substance classification and enforcement authority. States with legalized cannabis reported clear regulatory practices such as strict separation of alcohol and cannabis sales, zero-tolerance for underage access, and vehicle restrictions similar to open container laws.

It was a privilege to host these thought leaders at both the Forum and the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force meeting. We greatly value their insights and collaboration, and we look forward to welcoming them back to the Lone Star State soon.



STATEWIDE PROGRAM & POLICY UPDATES

TxDOT Behavioral Traffic Safety Updates

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) emphasized a strong shared commitment to alignment and cohesion in reducing impaired driving and saving lives, while recognizing the growing challenge of polysubstance impaired driving, with particular concern about cannabis packaging and increased accessibility. TxDOT shared ongoing drugged impaired driving campaign efforts, noting an expanded focus on cannabis and polysubstance messaging to better address emerging risks.

Additionally, there was a reminder of the upcoming [Traffic Safety Conference](#) in Addison, Texas, scheduled for July 14–17.



The Task Force received an update on recent eGrants system improvements, which were positively received. Updates were also provided on grant modifications and anticipated timelines, alongside a reflection on recurring themes identified across assessment responses and the importance of continued collective engagement to advance shared safety goals.

Judicial Developments



The Judicial Bond update highlighted extensive training efforts focused on impaired driving within the criminal justice system. Judicial training at the 2026 Criminal Justice Conference addressed key considerations in impaired driving cases, including DRE

testimony, judicial responsibilities and best practices before and after conviction, and constitutional evidence issues. The 2026 DWI Court Team Training (Basic and Advanced) emphasized drug testing, supervision best practices, screening and assessment, recovery oriented approaches, and strategies for individuals with co occurring mental health and substance-use disorders.

Upcoming training includes two 2026 Regional Conferences covering voir dire practices, retrograde extrapolation science, and critical charging issues. There will be DWI Summits in Floresville and Marble Falls that will focus on bond decisions, pre trial considerations, supervision and monitoring tools, and scenario based learning. A DWI Symposium in Boerne will address impaired driving bond decisions, due process, public safety, case law, legislative updates, and specialized topics such as cannabis related impairment.

Across all efforts, there was an emphasis on the ongoing need for continued judicial education, collaboration, and consistent application of best practices to enhance public safety and system effectiveness.

Toxicology

An overview was provided of the four DPS Crime Laboratory teams that support impaired driving cases: breath alcohol, certified reference materials (CRM), blood alcohol, and drug toxicology. The Breath Alcohol Testing Program is implementing a new calibration method and Intoxilyzer firmware updates to comply with ASB 055 standards, with phased implementation underway and full statewide deployment anticipated by Fall 2027. To support this transition, the Breath Alcohol CRM Laboratory is enhancing capabilities through new equipment validation, improved measurement traceability, and expanded personnel training. For blood alcohol testing, a standardized analytical method has been fully implemented across all 8 laboratory locations, resulting in more than 95 percent of cases being completed within 30 days, and an electronic discovery portal is planned for Fall 2026 to improve access to records. In the area of drug toxicology, hiring has been completed and analyst training is ongoing, with facility renovations in progress to expand capacity; average case age has decreased, and limited outsourcing continues during the transition period.

DPS Drug Toxicology: Top 5 Drug Categories

- Delta 9 THC and/or Metabolites
- Methamphetamine and/or Amphetamine
- Cocaine and/or Cocaine Metabolites
- Alprazolam and/or NPS Benzos
- Delta 8 THC and/or Metabolites



Cannabis & Alcohol Subcommittee



Draft Task Force recommendations related to hemp derived THC sales and regulation were presented, noting that additional dialogue and refinement will continue in future meetings. Key messaging priorities were emphasized, including

the need for clearer dosage consistency, improved public understanding of the fundamental differences between alcohol and cannabis impairment, the amplified effects of combining these substances, and increased awareness of the risks associated with unregulated products. The discussion also highlighted strengthened coordination with TxDOT, Sherry Matthews Group, and the Ad Council to ensure aligned, effective drug impaired driving messaging across agencies and campaigns.

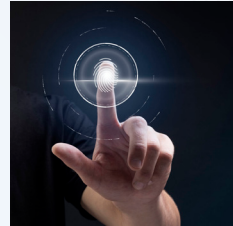
Education and Prevention Subcommittee

Prevention and education strategies are grounded in evidence based best practices, with several initiatives currently underway to strengthen outreach and impact. These efforts include engaging School Resource Officers through TASRO conferences, developing clear and accessible alcohol and drug fact sheets for both youth and adults, and expanding outreach to community and youth focused programs.



Opportunities exist for cross collaboration with the Cannabis and Alcohol Subcommittee to better align underage drinking and substance use prevention efforts, create shared educational resources on alcohol and cannabis, support implementation of **SB 826**, and coordinate with law enforcement and community partners on tools addressing intoxicating vape products. The subcommittee welcomed ideas, input, and collaboration from Task Force members to further enhance these efforts.

STREET TALK BLOG HIGHLIGHTS



The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force's [Street Talk Blog](#) is your hub for the latest insights, research spotlights, and practical strategies in the fight against impaired driving. From emerging trends to expert perspectives, the blog highlights best practices that make a meaningful difference on Texas roads.

Explore the [Street Talk Blog](#) today — and be sure to bookmark it for ongoing updates!

Recent Highlights Include:

- [The Two-Lane Road from Law to Innovation: How Technology Improves Traffic Safety](#)
- [Expanding Horizons for Ignition Interlock Usage and Implementation](#)
- [Reasons for DWI Recidivism](#)
- [Social Impacts on Traffic Safety: Family and Friends Matter!](#)
- [A Reality Check on Perceived BAC and Subjective Intoxication Levels](#)



TEXAS
IMPAIRED DRIVING
TASK FORCE



The next meeting:
August 6, 2026

**The Courtyard
by Marriott –
Pflugerville**

16100 Impact Way
Pflugerville, TX 78660



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



- [2026 National Association of Women Highway Safety Leaders \(NAWHSL\) Annual Meeting](#)
August 27–29, 2026 | Minneapolis, MN
- [Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
August 21, 2026 | Tyler, TX
- [Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
August 28, 2026 | Dallas, TX
- [Governor’s Highway Traffic Safety \(GHSA\) 2026 Annual Meeting](#)
August 29–September 2, 2026 | Minneapolis, MN

MAY

- [Worst Case Scenario: Impaired Driving Cases from Crash to Courtroom](#)
May 1, 2026 | Nacogdoches, TX
- [Guarding Texas Highways: Revisiting Impaired Driving Investigation & Prosecution](#)
May 8, 2026 | Hillsboro, TX
- [Institute of Police Technology and Management \(IPTM\) Symposium on Traffic Safety](#)
May 18–21, 2026 | Lake Buena Vista, FL
- [Traffic Record Coordinating Committee \(TRCC\) Quarterly Meeting](#)
May 27, 2026 | Virtual



JUNE

- [DITEP: Lexington Free 16-Hour Course](#)
June 3–4, 2026 | Lexington, TX
- [2026 CANNRA External Stakeholder Meeting](#)
June 9–10, 2026 | Oklahoma City, OK
- [DITEP: Abilene Free 16-Hour Course](#)
June 16–17 | Abilene, TX

JULY

- [TxDOT Traffic Safety Conference](#)
July 14–17, 2026 | Addison, TX
- [All Rise RISE26 Conference](#)
July 20–23, 2026 | Nashville, TN
- [Traffic Record Coordinating Committee \(TRCC\) Quarterly Meeting](#)
July 29, 2026 | Virtual

AUGUST

- [Association of Transportation Safety Information Professionals \(ATSIP\) 2026 Traffic Records Forum](#)
August 2–5 | New Orleans, LA
- [Texas Impaired Driving Task Force \(TxIDTF\) Quarterly Meeting](#)
August 6, 2026 | Pflugerville, TX
- [Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
August 7, 2026 | Seymour, TX
- [Texas Municipal Courts Education Center \(TMCEC\) Impaired Driving Symposium](#)
August 12–13, 2026 | Boerne, TX
- [Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
August 29, 2026 | Richmond, TX
- [2026 International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\) Impaired Driving and Traffic Safety \(IDTS\) Conference](#)
August 21–23, 2026 | Anaheim, CA

SEPTEMBER

- [National Liquor Law Enforcement Association Conference](#)
September 20–23, 2026 | New Orleans, LA
- [Alcohol Policy Conference](#)
September 29–October 1, 2026 | Arlington, VA

OCTOBER

- [International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\) Annual Conference 2026](#)
October 24–27, 2026 | Orlando, FL
- NASID National Conference
April 27–29, 2027 | Arlington, VA (Save the Date)

**See the full list of FREE Impaired Driving Training & Detection Courses at [Texas DRE](#), [Texas SFST](#) and [Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals \(DITEP\)](#).*