Mandatory Ignition Interlocks Devices for All Convicted DUI Offenders

One of the most effective countermeasures available to jurisdictions to separate drinking from driving is the alcohol ignition interlock. The interlock requires that a DUI offender blow into the device, which is connected to the starter or other on-board computer system, in order to start the vehicle. If the breath sample registers a BAC above a defined pre-set limit, the vehicle will not start. The device also requires repeated breath tests while the vehicle is in use to ensure the DUI offender continues to remain sober throughout the duration of their trip.

Ignition interlock devices are highly effective for both repeat (hardcore) drunk drivers and first-time DUI offenders, while they are installed. Interlocks have the most potential to reduce recidivism when coupled with other effective interventions such as assessment and treatment. The technology is reliable and seamless.

Research Highlights:

- More than 10 evaluations of interlock programs have reported reductions in recidivism ranging from 35-90% with an average reduction of 64% (Willis et al., 2004).
- A recent study commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that involved a systematic review of 15 peer-reviewed studies on interlocks revealed that, while the devices were installed, the re-arrest rate of offenders decreased by a median of 67% compared to groups who never had an interlock installed (Elder et al., 2011).
- A study of New Mexico's interlock program (Marques et al., 2010) found that first offenders who participated in the program had a 61% lower recidivism rate while the device was installed and a 39% lower recidivism rate following the removal of the interlock when compared to offenders who never installed the device.
- Results from a survey of DUI offenders required to install an interlock in Santa Fe, New Mexico reveal 87% felt that interlocks reduced driving after drinking. Furthermore, 85% of the offenders thought that interlocks were fair to DUI offenders and 67% believed that all convicted DUI offenders should be required to install the device (Robertson et al., 2006).
- Long-term alcohol recovery efforts can be supported by integrating interlocks into treatment programs (Beirness, 2001).

Prevalence:

Currently, all 50 states have passed some form of interlock legislation and achieved different degrees of program implementation. Currently, 24 states and four counties in California have passed mandatory interlock provisions for all DUI offenses, including first offenses. However, more work is needed to strengthen existing practices and increase program participation rates. Interlocks are installed by only 22% of individuals arrested for DUI.

Responsibility.org Position:

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility supports mandatory and effective use of ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders. Effective use of interlocks requires proper assessment and treatment, supervision, and verification of installation for all offenders ordered to install a device.

References:

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