



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

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DWI Court officials trained to address impaired drivers

The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission and the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug Court Office conducted training in Lafayette on Thursday and Friday for the state's eight DWI courts.

"DWI Courts are specialized courts that provide treatment, supervision and accountability for high-risk impaired drivers, such as repeat offenders and drivers with a high blood alcohol content," LHSC Executive Director Lisa Freeman said. "DWI Courts are predicated on the belief that impaired driving can be prevented if the underlying causes, like substance addiction and mental health issues, are identified and treated."

More than 160 judges, attorneys, treatment providers and law enforcement officers participated in the training, which was funded by LHSC and conducted by the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, Louisiana State Police, Correctional Counseling, Inc., and the 7th Judicial Circuit of Florida Drug Court Program.

The training was open to drug court officials and included workshops on treatment of severe alcohol disorder, the science of addiction, and the use of Drug Recognition Experts (DREs) to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.

Studies show that DWI Court participants are 19 times less likely to reoffend than drivers who are adjudicated through traditional courts. Drivers must plead guilty to the DWI charge before entering the program, which lasts a minimum of one year and is steeped in accountability.

Louisiana's DWI Courts are located in the 4th Judicial District (Morehouse and Ouachita parishes), 14th Judicial District (Calcasieu Parish), 15th Judicial District (Acadia, Lafayette and Vermilion parishes), 16th Judicial District (Iberia, St. Martin and St. Mary parishes), 22nd Judicial District (St. Tammany and Washington parishes), 24th Judicial District (Jefferson Parish), 32nd Judicial District (Terrebonne Parish), and Baton Rouge City Court. In addition to DWI Courts, the state is home to 49 drug courts.

"The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission first began funding DWI Courts in 2005 as an efficient and effective alternative to merely incarcerating impaired drivers," Freeman said. "DWI Courts represent justice reform at its very best."

Contact: Dortha Cummins
Dortha.Cummins@la.gov