

TITLE: A Customized Approach to the Drinking Driver (Senate Concurrent Resolution 44 - Harmer)

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

(1) to explore the validity and effectiveness of drinking-driver classification systems, (2) to evaluate the use of medical advisory boards to classify drinking drivers, and (3) to evaluate various drinking-driver programs.

SUMMARY:

The study found that a moderate degree of internal validity and reliability can be obtained by classifying drinkers and drinking drivers along a problem-drinking continuum by means of blood alcohol concentration (BAC), prior driving-under-the-influence (DUI) convictions, and tests such as the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test and the Mortimer-Filkins test. It concluded that the medical advisory board concept would be neither necessary nor efficient; trained paraprofessionals could obtain the same degree of accuracy in less time and at less expense. It also concluded that there was no scientifically acceptable evidence to demonstrate that classifying drinking drivers or establishing customized rehabilitative treatment programs based on such classifications have positive driving-record effects. (The authors noted that these results do not mean that we can conclude such programs are ineffective, since nearly all research evaluations reviewed had methodological deficiencies.) In contrast, there was evidence to suggest that punitive sanctions had an impact on subsequent driving record and deterrent effects on the general driving population. This was particularly true of license suspension.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Several of the study recommendations were embodied in subsequent law changes (California's original .10% illegal per se law, the inclusion of BAC information on DUI convictions, and the use of license restrictions).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

This description covers the final report. Two related (unnumbered) interim reports were also produced:

Interim Progress Report to the Legislature of the State of California, in Accord with Resolution Chapter 134, 1971 Legislative Session (SCR 3 -Harmer), April 1972.

Interim Progress Report to the Legislature of the State of California, in Accord with Resolution Chapter 152, 1972 Legislative Session (SCR 44 -Harmer), April 1974.