

## **LA County Public Health Receives OTS Grants to Strengthen Child Passenger Safety and Prevent Distracted Driving**

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention has been awarded \$640,000 in grant funds from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, to expand its child passenger safety program and promote safe vehicle driving across the county.

### **Child Passenger Safety**

Through OTS funding, the division will strengthen and expand its child passenger safety program, focusing on educating parents, training car seat technicians, and facilitating community outreach.

Specifically, this funding will help ensure children travel safely on the roadways, providing families and caregivers with driving safety education, training, and access to free car seats as well as proper fitting of car and booster seats for children, including those with special needs.

Through hands-on support and services, the Los Angeles County Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Program will host community car seat checkup events across the jurisdiction and offer one-on-one appointments with certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians to help parents and caregivers ensure their car and booster seats are installed and used correctly. Safety education classes will be offered as well, with an emphasis on reaching low-income families in communities with the greatest need.

Investing in workforce development is another key component of this OTS grant. Funding will be used to train, certify, and recertify child passenger safety technicians, providing specialized and continuing education. The CPS Program plans to host a regional conference this year to deliver skills-based training and coordinate among technicians.

To maximize the impact of this grant funding, CPS will collaborate closely with several traffic safety entities and partners, including government agencies, healthcare organizations, law enforcement, and community-based groups.

“This grant allows us to meet families where they are at and provide both the education and resources they need to protect their children on the road,” said Dr. Tony Kuo, MD, MSHS, Division Director. “By expanding training, outreach, and access to car seats, we can prevent injuries and save lives, especially in communities where crash fatalities and injuries are disproportionately high.”

## **Distracted Driving**

Through OTS funding, the division will expand its countywide distracted driving program to provide education, public awareness, and assessment of distraction-related behaviors among teens while driving. The Los Angeles County Distracted Driving Program accomplishes this by administering a survey to local teens to better understand their driving behaviors and to use the survey as an interactive opportunity for educating them about distracted driving. Survey data will also be used to deliver and refine evidence-based education and programming at community outreach events and/or in virtual or in-person classes. All program activities will align with national distracted driving and teen driver safety observances, and these efforts will be documented for reporting, evaluation, and accountability purposes. The Distracted Driving Program plans to expand its reach beyond high school to middle, elementary, and preschool settings for this upcoming year.

“Distracted driving is among the most preventable behavior that causes motor vehicle crashes among teens and young people. When drivers put their full attention on the road - free from cellphones and other distractions, fewer crashes and serious injuries occur and fewer lives are lost,” said Dr. Kuo. “Keeping our youth safe behind the wheel protects not only them, but everyone who shares our roads.”

“With support from the California Office of Traffic Safety, our division remains committed to advancing child passenger safety and preventing distracted driving while working with families and partners to help every child, teen, and youth travel safely for every trip, every time,” said Dr. Kuo

The division looks forward to implementing these grant efforts throughout 2025-2026. Grant activities will run through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.