



## **INTRODUCTION**

The *Every 15 Minutes* program is a two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, the responsibility of making mature decisions and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, and many others.

This first of its kind prevention and education program was developed by the Chico Police Department in 1995 through a Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Grant Assistance to Law Enforcement (G.A.L.E.) grant. In 1996, the Chico Police Department was fittingly awarded the Excellence In Community Policing Award by the National League of Cities for its efforts.

The program's name was derived from the fact that in the early 1990's, every fifteen minutes someone in the United States died in an alcohol-related traffic collision. However, with the implementation of new laws, grass roots programs like Mother's Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), Students Against Destructive Decisions SADD, Friday Night Live (FNL) and programs such as these, the death rate is now every thirty minutes, a figure which continues to be unacceptable.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The program brings together a broad coalition of interested local agencies with the goal of reducing alcohol-related incidents among youth. The partnering of the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, local hospitals, emergency medical responders, schools, businesses, and service clubs validates the importance of working together to ensure a healthy community.

The result of 8-10 months of careful planning is this two-day program called *Every 15 Minutes*. Prior to the actual event, approximately 25 students, representing a cross section of the school, are selected. Waivers are reviewed and signed by students and their parents. We strongly encourage you to require 100% participation by both students and their parents.

## **PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

### ***Day One***

One student is removed from class every fifteen minutes and becomes one of the "living dead." A uniformed officer and a counselor enter the classroom and read each student's obituary to those remaining in the class. The obituary is posted in the classroom for the remainder of the school year. Simultaneously, the parents of each living dead student are given their child's death notification by a uniformed officer and/or chaplain.

Although the death notifications are simulated and everyone knows this, the notifications typically result in overwhelming displays of emotion and concern.

Throughout the day, members of the living dead place their tombstones in a temporary cemetery on the school campus so friends and classmates can mourn their loss.

A simulated drunk driving collision involving pre-selected high school students is staged on school grounds for the benefit of the entire student body. It begins with a pre-recorded 911 call that triggers an emergency response by law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics, and the coroner. Each agency uses the drill as a training exercise to simulate real life responses.

Paramedics treat one student for minor injuries. A second critically injured student is trapped inside a vehicle and must be rescued by firefighters using the "Jaws of Life." A third student is declared dead and removed by the coroner. The fourth student, designated as the drunk driver, is given a field sobriety test and is arrested for driving under the influence.

After the collision, the drama continues for the students involved in the crash. Officers book the drunk driver into jail. After booking is completed, the drunk driver must call a parent or guardian to explain what he or she has done.

Emergency medical responders transport the critically injured patient to a local trauma center where doctors simulate attempts to save his or her life. Unable to do

so, the doctor on duty has the grave task of notifying the student's parents of their child's untimely death. Organ procurement team members discuss the option of organ donation with the parents of the deceased child. Meanwhile, the student who died on-scene is taken to the morgue, weighed and measured, and placed in a body bag until a family member can identify the body.

At the end of the day, law enforcement chaperones take the living dead to an overnight retreat. Once the students become members of the living dead, there is no contact with family or friends. At the retreat, the students participate in team building activities and learn first hand from people who have been involved in or affected by an incident involving alcohol. The evening ends as the students write letters to their loved ones, expressing the thoughts they would convey if they had not been killed on that particular day.

### ***Day Two***

The living dead students return to school to attend a student body assembly. The living dead students are seated in the front of the auditorium, opposite their parents. Members of the community who were involved in planning the event sit in a semi-circle behind the living dead.

During the assembly, everyone in the auditorium watches a video of the previous day's events. After the video, several of the living dead students read excerpts from the letters they wrote the night before. They share with their friends and classmates what if felt like to die without having the chance to say good-bye.

Other members from the community, like trauma doctors, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders, explain how they are personally affected on a daily basis when someone makes a poor choice involving alcohol.

The assembly concludes with a call to action challenging everyone in the auditorium to make responsible choices when alcohol is involved. After 24 hours on an "emotional roller coaster," parents and living dead students are reunited. Parents and teens are typically overwhelmed with emotion and gain a new sense of love and commitment to one another to make the right choices.

After the assembly, everyone gathers at a reception hosted by and for the participants. The program helps the students see members of their community in a different light. They are no longer just cops, doctors, paramedics, or firefighters, but also friends, mentors, and human beings who care about the kids in their community.

The two-day *Every 15 Minutes* program is very dramatic and emotional—and purposely so. Teenagers are constantly reminded about the choices they have to make involving alcohol and how many others are affected by their decisions. They know the intellectual statistics. However, many teens share the belief it will never happen to them.

### **RESULTS AND IMPACT**

This powerful program is designed to create an awareness among students that they are not invincible. This program helps open the emotional doors, and it addresses a problem most teens do not know exist. They experience first hand how their actions affect the lives of so many other people.

### **FUNDING**

With funding available from the California Office of Traffic Safety, the California Highway Patrol provides mini-grants to agencies and organizations implementing the program.

Experienced California Highway Patrol personnel are available to provide technical assistance in planning and implementing your program. The California Highway Patrol *Every 15 Minutes* project coordinators can help you avoid the most common mistakes and help you overcome some of the most difficult obstacles.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For further information concerning the *Every 15 Minutes* program or to apply for a grant, please contact your local California Highway Patrol office or:

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