



# FLORIDA

Occupant Protection Program Assessment

March 7 – March 11, 2016

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## INTRODUCTION

The State of Florida, in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), has undergone a comprehensive assessment of the occupant protection component of its highway safety program. This assessment is intended to guide the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) toward program improvements. The mission of the FDOT “includes the continual improvement of Florida’s transportation systems.” The FDOT SSO contributes to this mission “by seeking to improve the safety of Florida’s roadways through the work of the following sections: federal highway safety grants, engineering and crash data; and programs to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, Safe Routes to Schools, crossing guard training, and employee health and safety.” Recommendations put forth as a result of this assessment will facilitate FDOT SSO in carrying out its lifesaving mission.

Wearing a seat belt is the single most effective thing people can do to protect themselves in a crash. Research has shown that lap/shoulder seat belts (when used correctly) reduce the risk of fatal injury to front seat occupants, age five and older, of passenger cars by 45 percent (60 percent for light trucks) and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent (65 percent for light trucks). Furthermore, research on the effectiveness of child restraint systems has found them to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (younger than one year old), and by 54 percent for toddlers (one to four years old), in passenger cars. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the corresponding reductions are 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively. In 2014 alone, NHTSA estimates 919 lives were saved by seat belts and child restraints in Florida. An additional 161 lives could have been saved if everyone buckled up 100 percent of the time.

Florida is the fourth largest state in the United States. The 2015 population is an estimated 19,421,200 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Florida is growing rapidly – the State’s population has increased 5.8 percent since 2010 and 17.6 percent since 2000. Out of Florida’s 67 counties, Palm Beach is the largest, spanning 2,578 square miles and Union is the smallest covering just 245 square miles. The largest city is Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach with a population of 5,564,635. The capital city of Florida is Tallahassee.

The median age in Florida is 38.7 years. Almost 18 percent (17.6 percent) of the State’s population is age 65 or older; 19.3 percent is age 18-24. The population is predominantly white (78.1 percent) and Hispanic/Latino (23.6 percent). The percentage of Black or African Americans is 16.7 percent, American Indian or Alaska native is .5 percent, and 2.7 percent of the population is Asian.

Florida’s total area is 58,560 square miles (total land area 54,136 square miles and total water area 4,424 square miles) ranking 22nd among states in total area. The distance from Pensacola to Key West is 792 miles (by road). Florida’s highest natural point is 345 feet above sea level. The coastline is 1,197 statute miles, the tidal shoreline (general) is 2,276 statute miles, and Florida has 663 miles of beaches. Florida also has about 4,500 islands greater than 10 acres.

The objective of this assessment is to help Florida reduce fatalities and injuries on their roadways. Occupant protection is the foundation of any sound traffic safety program, and increased seat belt usage will provide immediate and substantial reductions in fatalities and injuries.

In 2014 (the most recent fatality data available), 2,494 persons lost their lives on Florida roadways and highways. The total number of unrestrained fatalities in Florida has decreased in recent years from 706 in 2010 to 510 in 2014.

Florida has two primary occupant protection goals: “decrease the number of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities, all seat positions in safety belt equipped vehicles by 5 percent annually from the 2012 FARS data baseline year total of 589 to 472 by December 31, 2016, and increase the observed seat belt use for passenger vehicles, front seat outboard occupants identified through an annual seat belt observational survey, from 88.8 percent in 2014 to at least 90 percent by December 30, 2016.”

According to the Preusser Research Group, Inc., the observed seat belt usage rate in Florida increased from 87.4 percent in 2012 to 89.4 percent in 2015.

This assessment process was designed to help Florida determine how to focus their resources and take their occupant protection program to the next level. The report provides Florida with an overview of the strengths and challenges of their occupant protection program, and presents the State with recommendations addressing those opportunities. Utilizing these recommendations will help the State to target persistent non-users more effectively and ultimately will help save lives on Florida roadways.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assessment team acknowledges and thanks Lora Hollingsworth, Chief Safety Officer; Chris Craig, Traffic Safety Administrator; and Ralph Salvas, Traffic Safety Program Manager of the Florida Department of Transportation, State Safety Office, for their support, level of effort, and obvious commitment to occupant protection in Florida. The team also recognizes the assistance provided by Dr. Morya Willis, Occupant Protection Program Coordinator. The assessment team acknowledges Jeri Shell and Morgan Witter, University of Florida, Transportation Safety Institute, for their efforts and logistical support in bringing the assessment process together.

The team also acknowledges the hard work and dedication of all those individuals who took the time to share their knowledge and expertise during the assessment. Many thanks to them and to everyone committed to saving lives on Florida's roads and highways.

This assessment could not have been conducted without the assistance and involvement of the NHTSA headquarters and regional staff: Janice Hartwill-Miller and Sandy Richardson; and support from their supervisors, Occupant Protection Division Chief Maria Vegega and Regional Administrator Carmen Hayes.

Special recognition and appreciation also goes to Susan Gillies for her able assistance as the Administrative Assistant throughout the assessment process and in producing this report.

Each member of the team appreciates the opportunity to have served, and hopes that consideration and implementation of the proposed recommendations will enable Florida to continue to make strides in increasing its usage rates and decreasing its number of unrestrained fatalities.

### Notes:

The information included in this document has been collected from a variety of sources including interviews, official documents, websites, and other materials. Sources may not be consistent. Some copyrighted material has been used under the "Fair Use" Doctrine of the U.S. copyright statute.

## ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

The purpose of the assessment is to aid the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) in a review of their occupant protection programs; the identification of the program's strengths, accomplishments, and challenges; and to offer suggestions for improvement. The assessment can be used as a tool for planning purposes and for making decisions about how to best use available resources. This assessment tool follows the format of the *Uniform Guidelines for State Highway Safety Programs*, Program Guideline No. 20, Occupant Protection (January 2013). The guideline that precedes each section of this report is taken from this document. The assessment process provides an organized approach for measuring program progress. The U.S. Department of Transportation developed the guidelines in collaboration with the states.

All states, in cooperation with their political subdivisions, should have a comprehensive program that educates and motivates its citizens to use available motor vehicle occupant protection systems. A combination of use requirements, high visibility enforcement, public information, and education is necessary to achieve significant, lasting increases in seat belt usage, which will prevent fatalities and decrease the number and severity of injuries. The Occupant Protection Program Assessment process establishes criteria against which these statewide and community programs are measured. The assessment team then examines significant components of a state's occupant protection program in the context of these criteria.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Headquarters and Regional Office staff facilitated the Occupant Protection Program Assessment. Working with the Traffic Safety Section, NHTSA recommended a team of five individuals with demonstrated expertise in various aspects of occupant protection program development, implementation and evaluation.

The assessment consisted of a thorough review of state-provided occupant protection program briefing materials, as well as interviews with state and community level program directors, coordinators, advocates, law enforcement personnel, and FDOT SSO staff. The conclusions drawn by the assessment team are based upon, and limited by, the facts and information provided by various experts who made presentations to the team, as well as the briefing materials supplied by FDOT SSO.

Following the completion of the presentations, the team convened to review and analyze the information presented. They noted programmatic strengths and challenges, as well as recommendations, resulting in a consensus report. The recommendations provided herein are based on the unique characteristics of Florida and what the team members believed the State, along with its political subdivisions and partners, can do to improve the effectiveness and reach of its occupant protection program.

The assessment team noted that many exemplary programs are conducted throughout Florida in the area of occupant protection and traffic safety in general. It is not the intent of this report to thoroughly document all of these successes, nor to credit the large number of individuals at all levels who are dedicated to traffic safety. By its very nature, the report tends to focus on areas that need improvement. Please consider this report as constructive criticism. It is an attempt to

provide assistance at all levels for improvement, which is consistent with the overall goals of these types of assessments.

On the final day of the assessment, the team briefed FDOT SSO on the results of the assessment and discussed major points and recommendations. This report is a FDOT SSO report; it is not a NHTSA document. Florida may use the assessment report as the basis for planning occupant protection program improvements, assessing legislative priorities, providing for additional training, and evaluating funding priorities. The final report is provided to FDOT SSO and to NHTSA.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

*(Note: Key Recommendations are **BOLDED** in each individual section)*

### **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

- Establish and convene on a regular basis a statewide occupant protection advisory coalition. The coalition should include agencies and organizations that are representative of Florida's demographic composition and critical to the implementation of occupant protection initiatives. Establish teen/graduated driver licensing and child passenger safety sub-committees. An option to one statewide coalition would be to establish and convene three or four regional committees, whose membership is representative of the local region, and establish the above listed sub-committees in each of the regional coalitions.
- Work with the Strategic Highway Safety Plan stakeholders to identify and establish occupant protection as a key behavioral emphasis area. Assist in the creation of an occupant protection team to develop strategies and an action plan to be included in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

### **LEGISLATION/REGULATION AND POLICY**

- Enhance Florida's current seat belt law to require every operator and passengers in all seating positions (front and back seat) to be secured by an appropriate restraint device when the vehicle is in motion. Publicly recognize those legislators who consistently and actively support strengthening Florida's key occupant protection laws.
- Continue efforts to enhance the current booster seat law that protects children to be consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics booster seat recommendations.
- Expand the child passenger restraint court offender/violator diversion program to include locations throughout the State to serve a greater percentage of those who, with the court's approval, have elected to participate in the child restraint safety program.
- Develop consistent and current talking points, fact sheets, and other materials and make them readily available on-line for those who can educate decision makers on the importance of the requirement of child restraint system use by child care centers.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- Set a statewide law enforcement goal of increasing public perception that they will be ticketed for failing to comply with seat belt laws. The proven methodology for law enforcement to achieve this goal is the deployment of short duration, evidence based, high-visibility enforcement, which includes media campaigns and public outreach, exclusively on the days of week, times, and locations where statistical analysis indicates they will have the greatest impact on public safety.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

- To ensure a coordinated statewide focus on occupant protection enforcement, establish reasonable performance expectations for sub-recipients of Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office funded occupant protection patrols. These expectations are not ticket quotas, but provide a clear understanding with contracted agencies that their overall highway safety mission is to reduce injury and death, resulting from motor vehicle crashes, by conducting vigorous high-visibility enforcement coinciding with public education and media outreach. Their specific mission in occupant protection is to encourage greater compliance with the State's seat belt and child passenger safety laws through a high level of motorist contacts during enforcement initiatives and public education campaigns.
- Increase the number of deployments of seat belt "checkpoints". Positioning spotters to identify seat belt violations is proven to be the most effective and efficient means of enforcement and results in increased productivity.
- Recruit more agencies to participate in the *Click it or Ticket Challenge* and encourage state, county, and municipal agencies to collaborate in joint traffic operations focusing occupant protection enforcement on targeted jurisdictions as a force multiplier. The high-visibility enforcement model is most effective when there is a perception of omnipresence of police resources with a common purpose communicated to the public through supporting media outreach. Individual police agencies cannot sustain intense high-visibility traffic enforcement within their jurisdiction throughout the year; however, a collaboration of forces deploying to multiple jurisdictions on a rotating basis is sustainable. The effect of multi-agency enforcement in a limited area increases public perception long after the initiative ceases.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

### COMMUNICATION

- Consider developing a comprehensive communications plan to include the following:
  - Outcome goals and objectives of the communications program;
  - Outcome objectives of the paid and earned media programs;
  - Details of the primary and secondary target audiences based on State data;
  - Specific requirements for any new materials that will be developed (e.g., paid media messaging will promote a high-visibility law enforcement message), including methods to test messages to ensure they resonate with the target audience;
  - Media buy plans based on State data by target audience, region of the State, and media type;
  - Expectations for bonus spots, collateral media (e.g., banners on web pages);
  - The identification of needed collateral materials such as State crash, injury and fatality data; seat belt and child restraint use data; frequently asked questions, etc., for earned media opportunities;
  - Template materials to aid law enforcement agencies, partners and stakeholders in promoting the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization(s), and non-enforcement messaging for other times of the year;
  - A timeline for the development and delivery of all communications, including time for review/revision; and
  - An ongoing evaluation plan to ensure that the messaging is effective, as well as to make mid-course corrections when it is found to be lacking.
- Use enforcement messaging only during *Click It or Ticket* mobilization(s) to maximize the impact of the increased law enforcement activities.
- Redesign the Department of Transportation website to make it easier for partners and stakeholders to navigate and locate traffic safety programs and materials. Ensure that all materials are current and consistent.

### OCCUPANT PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

- Rename, refocus, and rebrand the Occupant Protection Resource Center to better identify its purpose and clientele. The focus could remain specifically on child passenger safety, in which case “Child Passenger Safety” should be included in the revised name. There should be a members’ only portal to disseminate materials to Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors as well as a public access for downloadable information.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)**

- Decrease the attrition rate of trained technicians and instructors by increasing opportunities for continuing education workshops, networking, and by empowering them to provide education to the public beyond fitting station activities. Examples of such opportunities include:
  - An annual Child Passenger Safety Technician Conference;
  - Developing or adopting a series of standardized abbreviated courses for:
    - Hospitals;
    - Law enforcement;
    - Emergency medical services;
    - Age appropriate kindergarten through high school presentations; and
    - Supplement the current outreach programs to adult parents, grandparents and caregivers within communities with Technician-led workshops at PTA meetings, Car-Fit events, boys'/girls' clubs, churches, etc.
- Survey Child Passenger Safety Technicians with current and expired certifications to evaluate how the recertification (retention rate) could be increased.
- Create a method and/or process that will enable easy access to the State's current, accurate morbidity/mortality data. The information should be available to key groups, but not limited to, program coordinators, Child Passenger Safety Technicians, school teachers and the media to promote a more thorough understanding of the scope and depth of the traffic safety initiatives.

## **OUTREACH**

- Facilitate the creation of easy-to-access, private, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) for Community Traffic Safety Team program coordinators and members, Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors, and other defined organizations, so that they are able to easily and quickly communicate and collaborate with each other to share best practices and research, ask questions, and post notices of events.
- Continue the expansion of the Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection outreach program in areas of the State having sufficiently large minority populations to increase seat belt and child restraint system use.

## **DATA AND EVALUATION**

- Design and implement a true, random sample, statewide direct observation child passenger seat survey annually to monitor occupant restraint rate data for children ages birth to 18, with the ability to track results among children covered under the primary law, ages birth to 18 and separately, teen drivers.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)**

- Select or develop and make available statewide a standardized high school direct observational survey instrument and analysis template. The standardized instrument would be used prior to and after any high school occupant protection intervention to measure the effects of the intervention. Consider gathering all resulting pre- and post-survey data centrally to produce a database which can be summarized on a larger scale, with the results eventually divided into geographic regions.
- Develop and implement an ongoing system of countermeasure assessment. If the countermeasure is found to be effective (i.e., to increase seat belt or child restraint use), disseminate the countermeasure more broadly. If the countermeasure is not effective, try something else, and assess again, repeating the cycle across a variety of topic areas, empirically developing an effective occupant protection program over time.

# 1. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

## GUIDELINE:

*Each state should have centralized program planning, implementation and coordination to achieve and sustain high rates of seat belt use. Evaluation is also important for determining progress and ultimate success of occupant protection programs.*

- *Provide leadership, training and technical assistance to other State agencies and local occupant protection programs and projects;*
- *Establish and convene an occupant protection advisory task force or coalition to organize and generate broad-based support for programs. The coalition should include agencies and organizations that are representative of the State's demographic composition and critical to the implementation of occupant protection initiatives;*
- *Integrate occupant protection programs into community/corridor traffic safety and other injury prevention programs; and*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of the State's occupant protection program.*

## 1A. STRENGTHS

- The State of Florida is committed to increasing occupant protection and has illustrated its dedication with, among other things, the conduct of this occupant protection assessment.
- In 2006, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) joined with other Florida highway safety partners in adopting a statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The plan was updated in 2012.
- FDOT State Safety Office (SSO) developed an annual statewide comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (HSP) which includes an analysis of Florida's traffic and crash statistics and other data to identify current safety issues and problems. The HSP outlines specific projects that address those identified problems and includes a proposed spending plan to initiate and deliver projects to those priority areas. The HSP is developed by FDOT SSO staff.
- FDOT SSO has developed objective, data-driven tools to identify traffic safety problems, and the geographic areas of the State that represent the highest risk for crashes, fatalities and injuries. The Florida Highway Safety Matrix consists of county and city level matrices that rank, on a per capita basis, the combined traffic fatalities and injuries based on five years of data.
- FDOT SSO designates a significant amount of 405 (b) funding for paid media for its Occupant Protection and Child Passenger Safety programs.
- Planned occupant protection strategies in the 2016 HSP directly relate to *Countermeasures That Work*, as recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

- FDOT SSO has a staff position dedicated to the leadership and oversight of the Occupant Protection Program. The Occupant Protection Program Manager is a certified child passenger safety technician and is responsible for problem identification, assisting with project selection and implementation, and monitoring and providing assistance to sub-recipients. This staff member is the liaison between the FDOT SSO and the Community Traffic Safety Teams (CTSTs) and works closely with federal, state and local organizations to improve the effectiveness of the program. It is evident that this staff member is highly committed to occupant protection.
- FDOT SSO conducts an annual observational seat belt use survey for drivers and front seat outboard passengers.
- In addition to the annual observational seat belt survey, seat belt use is also tracked through information from crash data, in particular whether seat belts were used in fatal crashes.
- FDOT SSO conducts an annual pre- and post-, self-report survey<sup>1</sup> for the national *Click It or Ticket* mobilization period and safety campaign that occurs in May.
- FDOT SSO has an active Law Enforcement Liaison (LEL) program with seven LELs and a coordinator covering all regions of the State. The LELs work closely with law enforcement agencies to boost seat belt use and participate in other traffic safety initiatives, and have developed several Florida-based Challenge competitions to support the goal of saving lives.
- Florida has a network of CTSTs who promote public awareness of traffic safety best practices and address traffic safety problems affecting their local communities. FDOT provides funding for a CTST Coordinator in each of the seven FDOT Districts and the SSO provides the CTSTs with funding for public information and educational materials.
- FDOT SSO staff members are perceived by their partners as helpful and supportive. It appears that they hold a level of respect and credibility with their partners.

## **1B. CHALLENGES**

- Florida does not have a statewide occupant protection advisory task force or coalition to provide guidance in program planning or generate broad-based support for programs and issues regarding occupant protection.
- Florida's current SHSP does not contain an occupant protection emphasis area. When developed and revised, SHSP stakeholders felt occupant protection was already being addressed by FDOT and its safety partners through existing programs in a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> *The Florida Department of Transportation Click It or Ticket Survey 2015*, conducted via telephone, reports the results of the pre- and post-wave occupant protection behavior, attitude, and awareness survey. For the purposes of this program assessment, this survey will be referred to as "self-report survey" throughout.

fashion and therefore has been identified as a continuing priority area and not an emphasis area.

- The seat belt use rate for teens in Florida is unknown. Lack of this data results in an inability to track progress in occupant protection programs for teens and difficulty in targeting teen seat belt education and awareness efforts.
- A statewide scientific observational survey for child passenger safety has not been conducted; therefore, the child restraint use rate in Florida is unknown.

## 1C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish and convene on a regular basis a statewide occupant protection advisory coalition. The coalition should include agencies and organizations that are representative of Florida’s demographic composition and critical to the implementation of occupant protection initiatives. Establish teen/graduated driver licensing and child passenger safety sub-committees. An option to one statewide coalition would be to establish and convene three or four regional committees, whose membership is representative of the local region, and establish the above listed sub-committees in each of the regional coalitions.**
- **Work with the Strategic Highway Safety Plan stakeholders to identify and establish occupant protection as a key behavioral emphasis area. Assist in the creation of an occupant protection team to develop strategies and an action plan to be included in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.**
- Conduct an annual teen seat belt use survey to evaluate progress, identify high priority areas, and establish a goal for increasing teen seat belt use.
- Conduct an annual child restraint survey to monitor the use rate. Collect data in areas where children are likely to be present and more detailed and accurate observations can be conducted. In addition to providing overall use rate for children under age 18, categorize by rural vs. urban use and by age groupings.

## 2. LEGISLATION/REGULATION AND POLICY

### GUIDELINE:

*Each state should enact and vigorously enforce primary enforcement occupant protection use laws. Each state should develop public information programs to provide clear guidance to the motoring public concerning motor vehicle occupant protection systems. This legal framework should include:*

- *Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires all motor vehicle occupants to use systems provided by the vehicle manufacturer;*
- *Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires that children birth to 16 years old (or the State's driving age) be properly restrained in an appropriate child restraint system (i.e., certified by the manufacturer to meet all applicable Federal safety standards) or seat belt;*
- *Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires children under 13 years old to be properly restrained in the rear seat (unless all available rear seats are occupied by younger children);*
- *Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws that include three stages of licensure, and that place restrictions and sanctions on high-risk driving situations for novice drivers (i.e., nighttime driving restrictions, passenger restrictions, zero tolerance, required seat belt use);*
- *Regulations requiring employees and contractors at all levels of government to wear seat belts when traveling on official business;*
- *Official policies requiring that organizations receiving Federal highway safety program grant funds develop and enforce an employee seat belt use policy; and*
- *Outreach to state insurance commissioners to encourage them to persuade insurers to offer incentives to policyholders who use seat belts and child restraints. Insurance commissioners are likely to have significant influence with insurers that write policies in their states.*

### 2A. STRENGTHS

- *Effective June 30, 2009, Florida's seat belt law became a "primary" or standard enforcement law. The law covers every operator of a motor vehicle as well as front seat passengers, and all passengers under the age of 18 years are required to be restrained by a seat belt or a child restraint device. Any person who violates the provisions of Florida's seat belt law commits a non-moving violation and shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$30. Additional assessment fees are decided by individual municipalities and counties.*
- *Florida's child restraint law requires that every operator, while transporting a child in a motor vehicle operated on the roadways, streets, or highways of the State, shall, if the child is six years of age or younger, provide for the protection of the child by properly using a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device. For children "aged through three years", such restraint devices must be a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child seat. For children aged four through six years, a separate*

carrier, an integrated seat, or a child booster seat may be used. Any person who violates the provisions of Florida's child restraint law shall be fined an amount not to exceed \$60. Additional assessment fees are decided by individual municipalities and counties. In addition, three points will be assessed against the violator's driver license.

- Florida law prohibits the transportation of occupants under age 18 in the open bed of pickup or flatbed trucks, and vehicle locations that are not designated for occupants.
- Law enforcement officers are not exempt from the State's seat belt law during the performance of official duties.
- Florida has a Graduated Driver Licensing law (GDL) that includes three stages of licensure: a learner's license, an intermediate license, and a full privilege license. Both the learner's and intermediate license stages place restrictions and sanctions on high-risk driving situations for novice drivers.
- Florida law requires new school buses purchased on or after December 30, 2000, to be equipped with seat belts or other federally-approved restraint systems, and requires each school bus passenger to wear a properly adjusted belt when the bus is operating.
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) has a policy requiring each sub-recipient and implementing agency that receives grant funds to have a written seat belt policy that is enforced for all employees. Copies of the policy are submitted with the sub-grant.
- Hospitals in Florida are required to have policies requiring safe transport of children upon discharge.
- The Florida Special Needs Occupant Protection Program, a short-term loaner program for special needs child restraints, is currently available in 12 of the State's 17 Children's Hospitals.
- Child care centers are not exempt from the State's child restraint law and must provide for the protection of the child by properly using an appropriate restraint device.

## **2B. CHALLENGES**

- Florida's seat belt law does not cover all seating positions in a motor vehicle. Back seat passengers 18 years of age or older are not required to be restrained by a seat belt when the vehicle is in motion.
- Both Florida's seat belt and child restraint laws contain exemptions in which the requirement to use a seat belt or child restraint does not apply.
- Florida's child restraint law only applies to children six years of age or younger.

- There is no legislation requiring that children under age two must ride rear-facing.
- Current statute does not prohibit children under 13 years of age to be in the front seat of a motor vehicle if there is a rear seating position available.
- Violations of Florida’s adult seat belt law result in a fine of \$30 and violations for child restraint systems result in a fine of \$60. There are no increases in the fines for subsequent violations.
- There are very few child passenger restraint offender/violator diversion programs in Florida and those that are, are not available on a statewide basis.
- It appears that the bulk of the assessment fees collected for Florida’s seat belt and child passenger safety violations are used to cover court administrative costs in the county in which the violation occurred.
- Florida is one of four states that does not impose a passenger restriction during the intermediate stage of Graduated Driver Licensing.
- There is no evidence that there is an executive policy for all levels of State government requiring employees, their passengers, and all contractors hired by the State to wear seat belts while traveling on official business. Seat belt policies are developed at the State agency level, and it is unknown if each agency has a seat belt policy, if the policies are consistent, or if there are repercussions for non-use of seat belts for State employees.
- At the time of this assessment, there is pending legislation (House Bill 7063) to amend the child restraint requirement for child care centers. If approved, the requirement to use a child restraint device would not apply when a child is being transported by a child care facility, family day care home, or large family child care home, as those terms are defined in §402.302; an after-school program not requiring licensure pursuant to Chapter 402; a child care facility exempt pursuant to §402.316; or an entity excluded from the definition of a child care facility pursuant to §402.302(2).
- It is unknown whether or not motor vehicle insurance companies offer incentives to policy holders who use seat belts and child restraints.

## 2C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enhance Florida’s current seat belt law to require every operator and passengers in all seating positions (front and back seat) to be secured by an appropriate restraint device when the vehicle is in motion. Publicly recognize those legislators who consistently and actively support strengthening Florida’s key occupant protection laws.**
- **Continue efforts to enhance the current booster seat law that protects children to be consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics booster seat recommendations.**

- Include a provision in the Florida child restraint law that requires children under age two to ride in a rear-facing child restraint while traveling in a motor vehicle.
- Include a provision in the Florida child restraint law that requires children under age 13 to be properly restrained in the rear seat of a motor vehicle (unless all available rear seats are occupied by younger children).
- Increase the basic fine for seat belt and child restraint law violations and implement a graduated fine schedule for each. For adult seat belt laws, studies have shown that an increase in fine level from \$30 to \$60 would likely result in a three to four point increase in seat belt usage.
- **Expand the child passenger restraint court offender/violator diversion program to include locations throughout the State to serve a greater percentage of those who, with the court's approval, have elected to participate in the child restraint safety program.**
- Allow a portion of the assessment fees collected for seat belt and child restraint law violations to be used for occupant protection education, child passenger restraint court offender/violator diversion programs, and/or for the purchase of child restraint systems in the county in which the violation occurred.
- Continue current efforts to enhance the Graduated Driver Licensing law to impose a passenger restriction (except family) during the intermediate license stage and to ban all cell phone use for novice drivers.
- Provide a sample model seat belt policy to all state agencies. Encourage all state agencies to adopt a policy requiring employees, their passengers, and contractors hired by the State to wear seat belts in all seating positions (front and back seat) while traveling on official business in either state or personal vehicles.
- **Develop consistent and current talking points, fact sheets, and other materials and make them readily available on-line for those who can educate decision makers on the importance of the requirement of child restraint system use by child care centers.**
- Provide outreach to state insurance commissioner(s) to encourage them to persuade insurers to offer incentives to policyholders who use seat belts and child restraints systems. Insurance commissioners are likely to have significant influence with insurers that write policies in their states.

### 3. LAW ENFORCEMENT

#### GUIDELINE:

*Each State should conduct frequent, high-visibility law enforcement efforts, coupled with communication strategies, to increase seat belt and child safety seat use. Essential components of a law enforcement program should include:*

- *Written, enforced seat belt use policies for law enforcement agencies with sanctions for noncompliance to protect law enforcement officers from harm and for officers to serve as role models for the motoring public;*
- *Vigorous enforcement of seat belt and child safety seat laws, including citations and warnings;*
- *Accurate reporting of occupant protection system information on police accident report forms, including seat belt and child safety seat use or non-use, restraint type, and airbag presence and deployment;*
- *Communication campaigns to inform the public about occupant protection laws and related enforcement activities;*
- *Routine monitoring of citation rates for non-use of seat belts and child safety seats;*
- *Use of National Child Passenger Safety Certification (basic and in-service) for law enforcement officers;*
- *Utilization of Law Enforcement Liaisons (LELs), for activities such as promotion of national and local mobilizations and increasing law enforcement participation in such mobilizations and collaboration with local chapters of police groups and associations that represent diverse groups (e.g., NOBLE, HAPCOA) to gain support for enforcement efforts.*

#### 3A. STRENGTHS

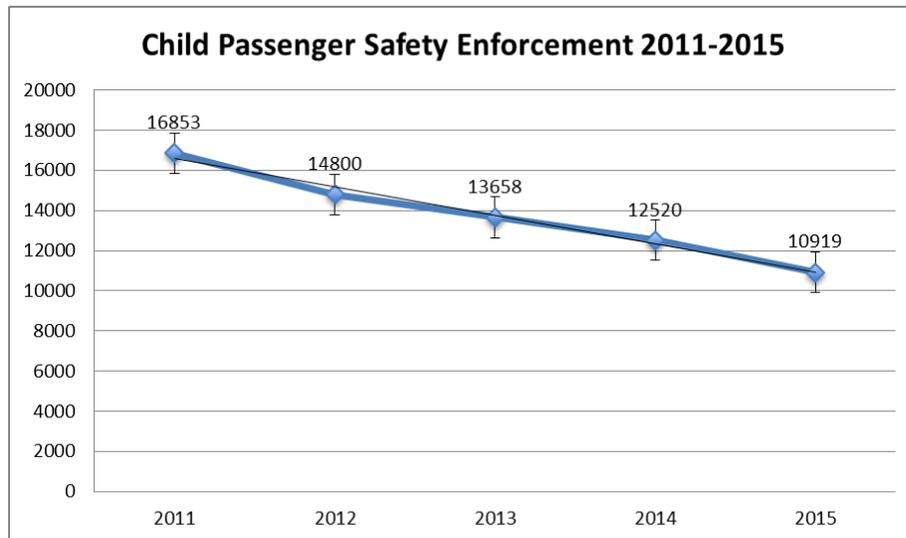
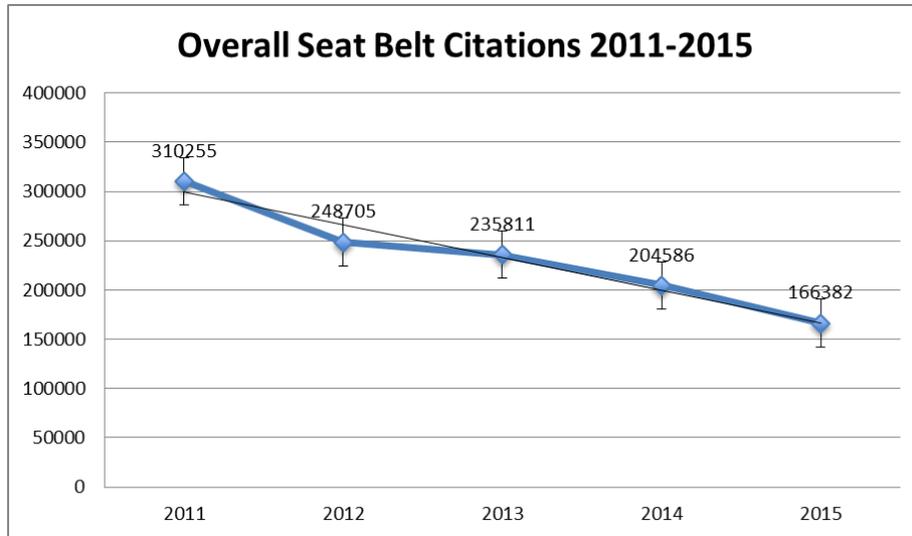
- Law enforcement agencies contracting with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) are encouraged through incentives to have written seat belt use policies and guidelines for law enforcement officers, with sanctions for noncompliance. Consequently, 99 percent of participating agencies have adopted policies mandating seat belt use for personnel.
- Participating law enforcement agencies are encouraged through incentives to enact policies and guidelines prioritizing occupant protection enforcement. Consequently, 90 percent of agencies contracting with FDOT SSO have adopted seat belt and child passenger safety (CPS) enforcement policies.
- Approximately 250 law enforcement agencies participate in three annual deployments of the *Florida Click it or Ticket Challenge*. Additionally, agencies conduct year round sustained occupant protection enforcement and educational outreach efforts coinciding with regional events. All grant funded efforts are required to be evidence based and agencies are monitored and evaluated based on their performance.

- Pre- and post-observational surveys conducted from 2010 to 2015 indicate that seat belt usage rates increased by an average of 5.4 percentage points as a result of the Florida *Click it or Ticket* mobilizations in May. These statistics confirm the effectiveness of high-visibility enforcement which includes an aggressive media component.
- While motor vehicle fatalities in Florida increased by 3.83 percent from 2013 to 2014 (2,403 fatalities in 2013 versus 2,494 in 2014), unrestrained occupant fatalities dropped by 7.8 percent over this same period (553 unrestrained deaths in 2013 versus 510 in 2014). Factoring in Florida’s rapidly increasing population, in 2013 Florida recorded its lowest fatality ratio on record at 1.25 motor vehicle deaths per 100 million miles travelled.
- The seat belt use rate increased from 81.7 percent in 2008 to 85.2 percent after the implementation of a primary seat belt law in 2009. Florida’s seat belt use rate has shown an upward trend with the highest rate occurring in 2015 at 89.4 percent.
- The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) contracted with Appriss, Inc. to develop and maintain the Florida Integrated Report Exchange System (FIRES) website. This website serves as a portal into the State of Florida’s repository for traffic crash reports completed by Florida law enforcement.
- Collision reconstruction is a vital element in the investigation of fatal motor vehicle crashes, establishing the cause, contributing factors, violations of law, and most pertinent to this discussion, the use or non-use of occupant restraints. In addition to county and municipal collision reconstruction teams, the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) supports requests for assistance with troop level collision reconstruction experts.
- FDOT SSO provides incentives to law enforcement agencies that participate in a multitude of public outreach campaigns and educational opportunities focused on occupant protection laws and related enforcement activities. This outreach includes teen driver safety, focusing on the next generation of drivers.
- The FDOT SSO sponsors three competitions for law enforcement agencies that include occupant protection components. Applications are scored on agency policies and guidelines, officer training, recognition components, public outreach initiatives, enforcement activity, and overall effectiveness in the area of highway safety. Traffic safety-related equipment awards provide incentives and recognition to agencies, encouraging greater participation and productivity.
  - The *Florida Click it or Ticket Challenge* focuses on the overall effectiveness of each agency’s occupant protection activities.
  - The *Florida Law Enforcement Challenge* provides competitive incentives and recognition to law enforcement agencies for their overall highway safety accomplishments.
  - The *Motor Unit Challenge* provides competitive incentives and recognizes agencies for their motorcycle unit’s traffic enforcement productivity.

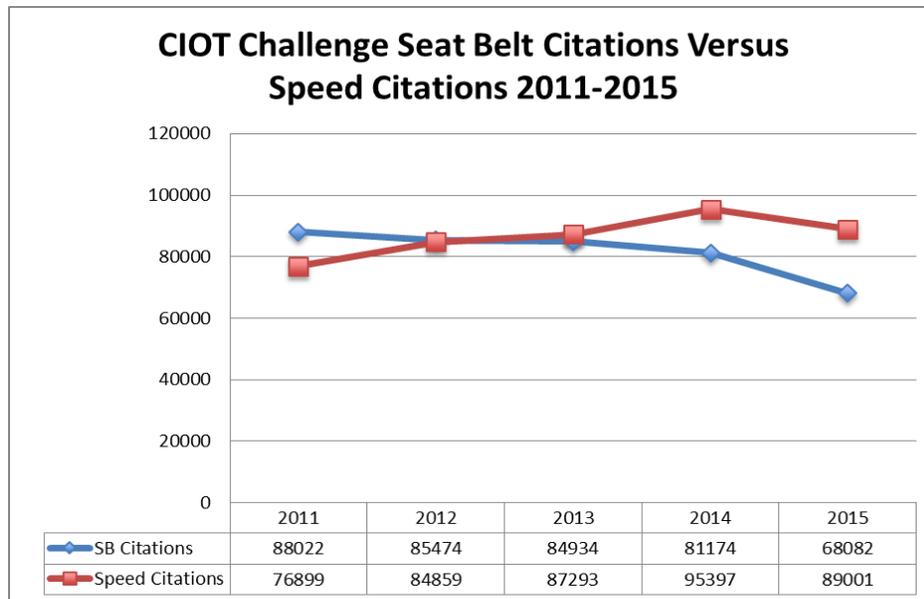
- “Saved by the Belt” awards for officers and citizens are a component of the *Challenge* programs.
- FDOT SSO provides *Challenge* incentives for state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies that enable officers to obtain National Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician Certification. Officers who are certified participate in car seat fittings and inspections, and participate in public education campaigns. In 2015 the FHP reinstated their commitment to the CPS effort by assigning Troopers to certification training and availing them for statewide efforts.
- Funding for CPS training, equipment, and web-based resources for law enforcement is provided by the Florida Occupant Protection Resource Center.
- DHSMV houses the Uniform Traffic Citation Statistics database, an intuitive public website that enables violation-specific statistical searches of citations issued by year, including court disposition statistics.
- FDOT SSO has a strong network of seven Law Enforcement Liaisons (LELs), plus an LEL Coordinator. The LELs foster relationships with law enforcement command staff, first line supervisors, and officers to communicate the occupant protection goals and objectives of FDOT SSO; promote, recruit, and monitor participation in statewide traffic safety campaigns; and provide technical assistance to individual law enforcement agencies.
- FDOT SSO contracts with two Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors that routinely communicate with and progressively work with the LELs and law enforcement agencies.
- The Florida Police Chiefs Association has an active Highway Safety Committee that promotes traffic safety initiatives including occupant protection.
- The Florida Sheriffs Association actively participates in highway safety activities including occupant protection.

### 3B. CHALLENGES

- According to the DHSMV Uniform Traffic Citation Statistics database, overall year round occupant protection citations issued by all law enforcement agencies have steadily trended downward over the past five years. Specifically, the issuance of seat belt citations dropped by 47 percent from 2011 to 2015 (from 310,255 in 2011 to 166,382 in 2015). Additionally, the issuance of child passenger safety citations dropped by 35 percent from 2011 to 2015 (from 16,853 in 2011 to 10,919 in 2015).



- According to data submitted by FDOT SSO, seat belt citations issued during the three annual *Click it or Ticket Challenge* mobilizations trended down from 2011 to 2015 (from 88,022 in 2011 to 68,082 in 2015). This constitutes a 23 percent drop in *Click it or Ticket Challenge* seat belt activity over a five-year period. Simultaneously, speed enforcement citations issued during these same *Click it or Ticket Challenge* patrols increased by 19 percent from 2011 to 2014 (76,899 in 2011 to 95,397 in 2014). This suggests that law enforcement’s focus on occupant protection enforcement is waning during *Click it or Ticket Challenge* patrols.



- The *Florida Department of Transportation Click It or Ticket Survey 2015 Report* completed by the University of North Florida’s Public Opinion Research Lab, indicates that only 60 percent of Florida respondents believe that Florida law enforcement “somewhat or very strictly” enforces seat belt laws and only 50.8 percent perceive that they are “somewhat or very likely” to get ticketed for not utilizing a seat belt.
- Florida’s 2015 seat belt compliance rate ranges from a high of 92 percent for females and 86.2 percent for males in passenger vehicles to a low of 78.5 percent for males operating pickup trucks. Focusing enforcement efforts targeting specific vehicles is challenging for law enforcement, while gender/race based enforcement is prohibited.
- Florida’s state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies do not regularly collaborate in joint occupant protection enforcement mobilizations, limiting the maximum impact of the high-visibility model of enforcement.
- *Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies (TOPS)* training is not part of Florida’s basic police academy curriculum nor is it incorporated with in-service training.

### 3C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Set a statewide law enforcement goal of increasing public perception that they will be ticketed for failing to comply with seat belt laws. The proven methodology for law enforcement to achieve this goal is the deployment of short duration, evidence based, high-visibility enforcement, which includes media campaigns and public outreach, exclusively on the days of week, times, and locations where statistical analysis indicates they will have the greatest impact on public safety.**

The following recommendations are focused on increasing occupant protection enforcement:

- Reinvalidate law enforcement's commitment and focus on seat belt enforcement and child passenger safety. Encourage greater "buy-in" from all law enforcement entities, beginning at the command staff level, to promote greater collaboration and a coordinated effort.
- Motivate law enforcement officers to become advocates for occupant protection, with an emphasis on enforcement. Train officers in strategies to effectively enforce seat belt laws. Every motor vehicle stop should be viewed as an opportunity for occupant protection enforcement.
- **To ensure a coordinated statewide focus on occupant protection enforcement, establish reasonable expectations for sub-recipients of Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office funded occupant protection patrols. These expectations are not ticket quotas, but provide a clear understanding with contracted agencies that their overall highway safety mission is to reduce injury and death, resulting from motor vehicle crashes, by conducting vigorous high-visibility enforcement coinciding with public education and media outreach. Their specific mission in occupant protection is to encourage greater compliance with the State's seat belt and child passenger safety laws through a high level of motorist contacts during enforcement initiatives and public education campaigns.**
- Encourage roll-call or similar training prior to occupant protection deployments to relay information and strategies relative to the mission, set clear goals and expectations for officers assigned to Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office funded occupant protection enforcement, and hold officers accountable to work towards meeting those goals.
- **Increase the number of deployments of seat belt "checkpoints". Positioning spotters to identify seat belt violations is proven to be the most effective and efficient means of enforcement and results in increased productivity.**
- Target enforcement on high-risk operational strategies such as speeding, aggressive and reckless driving, and impaired driving. Motorists that refuse to utilize seat belts tend to engage in other dangerous driving activities.

- **Recruit more agencies to participate in the *Click it or Ticket Challenge* and encourage state, county, and municipal agencies to collaborate in joint traffic operations focusing occupant protection enforcement on targeted jurisdictions as a force multiplier. The high-visibility enforcement model is most effective when there is a perception of omni-presence of police resources with a common purpose communicated to the public through supporting media outreach. Individual police agencies cannot sustain intense high-visibility traffic enforcement within their jurisdiction throughout the year; however, a collaboration of forces deploying to multiple jurisdictions on a rotating basis is sustainable. The effect of multi-agency enforcement in a limited area increases public perception long after the initiative ceases.**
- Implement *Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies* training for law enforcement officers. This National Highway Traffic Safety Administration course is designed specifically for law enforcement officers to promote seat belt enforcement by state and local law enforcement agencies to reduce deaths and injuries due to traffic crashes.

## 4. COMMUNICATION

### *GUIDELINE:*

*As part of each State's communication program, the State should enlist the support of a variety of media, including mass media, to improve public awareness and knowledge and to support enforcement efforts to about seat belts, air bags, and child safety seats. To sustain or increase rates of seat belt and child safety seat use, a well-organized effectively managed communication program should:*

- *Identify specific audiences (e.g., low belt use, high-risk motorists) and develop messages appropriate for these audiences;*
- *Address the enforcement of the State's seat belt and child passenger safety laws; the safety benefits of regular, correct seat belt (both manual and automatic) and child safety seat use; and the additional protection provided by air bags;*
- *Continue programs and activities to increase the use of booster seats by children who have outgrown their toddler seats but who are still too small to safely use the adult seat belts;*
- *Capitalize on special events, such as nationally recognized safety and injury prevention weeks and local enforcement campaigns;*
- *Provide materials and media campaigns in more than one language as necessary;*
- *Use national themes and materials;*
- *Participate in national programs to increase seat belt and child safety seat use and use law enforcement as the State's contribution to obtaining national public awareness through concentrated, simultaneous activity;*
- *Utilize paid media, as appropriate;*
- *Publicize seat belt use surveys and other relevant statistics;*
- *Encourage news media to report seat belt use and non-use in motor vehicle crashes;*
- *Involve media representatives in planning and disseminating communication campaigns;*
- *Encourage private sector groups to incorporate seat belt use messages into their media campaigns;*
- *Utilize and involve all media outlets: television, radio, print, signs, billboards, theaters, sports events, health fairs;*
- *Evaluate all communication campaign efforts.*

### **4A. STRENGTHS**

- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) has identified its target audiences, as defined by state data, as 18 to 34 year old white males and pickup truck drivers. It has additionally targeted African American and Latino males 18 to 34 years of age.

- FDOT SSO has a detailed *Click It or Ticket* (CIOT) Mobilization plan that informs law enforcement agencies and partner organizations of the high visibility enforcement campaign's requirements. Included in the plan is information regarding earned and paid media, and links to resources, including template press releases and related materials to be used by local agencies.
- FDOT SSO supports the national CIOT Mobilization in May with paid and earned media, using materials developed and tested by the National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTSA). Florida also conducts two additional CIOT mobilizations, one in March during spring break and one in November during the Thanksgiving holiday travel period.
- FDOT SSO is in its second year of a five-year contract with its advertising agency, managed through the Tallahassee Community College. The ad agency creates and places advertisements to reach the identified targeted audiences in a variety of formats, including television, radio, mobile applications (e.g., Pandora), social media platforms, billboards, and other venues. The State's advertising agency has negotiated 1:1 bonus spots for paid media, doubling the frequency and reach of the messages and extending the value of the allotted funding. All materials are reviewed and approved by FDOT SSO.
- The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, The Florida Highway Patrol, and a number of county sheriff's offices and municipal law enforcement agencies utilize variable message boards to display CIOT messaging during mobilizations and other safety messages throughout the year.
- The FDOT Law Enforcement Liaisons (LELs) provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies in their regions in the use of earned media to augment high-visibility enforcement mobilizations/crackdowns.
- FDOT SSO utilizes a *Click It or Ticket Challenge* competition, through its LELs, to encourage state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies to actively participate in the three CIOT mobilizations. The Challenge includes earned media in support of the increased enforcement efforts.
- Florida has an active Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) program, comprised of local teams that develop programs for their communities based on specific traffic safety problems. These CTSTs support occupant protection programs, CIOT mobilizations and child occupant restraint programs and emphasis periods to varying degrees.
- FDOT SSO conducts self-report surveys to determine the success of its paid media program in reaching the target audiences.
- There appears to be a good working relationship between the FDOT public information officer, the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) public information officers (in each of the troop districts), the LELs, and the CTST program coordinators.

- The FDOT SSO public information officer participates in a weekly conference calls with regional FDOT public information officers to discuss traffic safety initiatives.
- Evidence was presented that law enforcement agencies have good working relationships with members of the media with whom they work. The FHP has initiated media coalitions (e.g., informal meetings of local law enforcement, members of the media, CTST members) that come together to discuss emerging law enforcement programs, mobilizations, and other issues of interest.
- FHP and other law enforcement agencies routinely report seat belt use in press releases that report traffic crashes and in social media posts.
- FDOT, FDOT SSO, LELs, and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles all use social media to promote traffic safety and various “emphasis periods”, including *Click It or Ticket*. For example, their Facebook pages have a following of more than 20,000, greatly extending the reach of seat belt and child restraint system messaging.
- Many county and local law enforcement agencies use social media, in varying degrees, to inform their followers of traffic safety concerns, crash locations and detours, work zones, and the importance of seat belt and child restraint system use.
- There is an emphasis on the use of earned media to enhance high-visibility enforcement during the March and November *Click It or Ticket* mobilizations.
- There are signs regarding Florida’s seat belt laws on major roadways as drivers enter the State, as well as signs at Welcome Centers encouraging drivers to buckle up as they leave the parking lots.
- Web-based child passenger safety materials are available from the Florida Occupant Protection Resource Center (FOPRC) for child passenger safety technicians and instructors. Additional child passenger safety materials are available upon request from the CTST Program Coordinators and Safe Kids Coalitions.
- There are some linguistically appropriate occupant protection messages and materials designed to reach the State’s newly arrived Hispanic populations.

#### **4B. CHALLENGES**

- FDOT SSO has not developed a comprehensive year-round communications plan that includes the target audience, a strategy for paid and earned media, or methods to increase active participation by partners and stakeholders to help guide all communications activities of the organization, sub-recipients, and partners/stakeholders.

- To cover the entire state, advertising time is purchased in ten media markets, all of which have high advertising rates, which consumes a large budget to ensure sufficient frequency and reach to affect a behavior change among the targeted audiences, even with a 1:1 match.
- FDOT does not receive NHTSA’s proposed media buy plan in sufficient time to make an informed media buy to ensure that the State buy does not duplicate the NHTSA buy but, rather, augments it.
- Materials developed by FDOT SSO’s advertising agency for the 2015 CIOT mobilization(s) do not promote a high-visibility enforcement message. For example, rather than a clear enforcement message, billboards were developed with the tag line “IT’S A REALLY BIG DEAL.”, superimposed over a seat belt, with a small CIOT (day/night) logo located in the lower right-hand corner. This message does not support high-visibility enforcement activities.



- Because the 2015 pre-CIOT self-report survey takes place immediately following the March CIOT mobilization, it may not be a true base-line measure.
- In the 2015 self-report survey conducted by the University of North Florida Public Opinion Research Laboratory, the results seemed to indicate that the paid media was not particularly effective in reaching the intended audiences.
  - The percent of those who believed that their likelihood of getting a ticket was “very likely” when not wearing a seat belt over the next six months *decreased* in the post-survey, as follows:
    - For 18-34 year olds, from 27.3 percent to 26.1 percent, and
    - For pickup truck drivers, from 30.2 percent to 28.3 percent.
  - The percent of those who thought law enforcement in their counties/communities enforced seat belt laws *decreased* in the post-survey, as follows:
    - For 18-34 year olds, from 32.8 percent to 26.6 percent, and
    - For pickup truck drivers, from 32.3 percent to 26.2 percent.
  - The percent of those who had seen or heard anything about seat belt checkpoints where law enforcement were looking for unbuckled drivers were divided, as follows:
    - For 18-34 year olds, a *decrease* from 9.5 percent to 6.9 percent, and
    - For pickup truck drivers, an *increase* from 7.2 percent to 9.0 percent.

- The FDOT website is difficult to navigate for those looking for general traffic safety program materials and other resources (e.g., template press releases, frequently asked questions), and specifically for occupant protection materials/resources. Unless specific key words or phrases are used (i.e., Florida Safety Office), the “casual” user would have a difficult time locating such information. Further, in many cases the information provided is out of date and not consistent among the web pages.
- While there is evidence that some law enforcement agencies use social media to support local initiatives, it is department-specific. Not all law enforcement agencies appear to take full advantage of the value social media can play in supporting occupant protection programs and specifically CIOT mobilizations.

#### 4C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Consider developing a comprehensive communications plan to include the following:**
  - **Outcome goals and objectives of the communications program;**
  - **Outcome objectives of the paid and earned media programs;**
  - **Details of the primary and secondary target audiences based on State data;**
  - **Specific requirements for any new materials that will be developed (e.g., paid media messaging will promote a high-visibility law enforcement message), including methods to test messages to ensure they resonate with the target audience;**
  - **Media buy plans based on State data by target audience, region of the State, and media type;**
  - **Expectations for bonus spots, collateral media (e.g., banners on web pages);**
  - **The identification of needed collateral materials such as State crash, injury and fatality data; seat belt and child restraint use data; frequently asked questions, etc., for earned media opportunities;**
  - **Template materials to aid law enforcement agencies, partners and stakeholders in promoting the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization(s), and non-enforcement messaging for other times of the year;**
  - **A timeline for the development and delivery of all communications, including time for review/revision; and**
  - **An ongoing evaluation plan to ensure that the messaging is effective, as well as to make mid-course corrections when it is found to be lacking.**
- Analyze unrestrained injury/fatality data and observational data to determine if there are regions of the State that do not require as much paid media due to higher seat belt use rates, with a view toward reducing the media buy in high rate regions, allowing for additional funding in those media markets where seat belt use is lower.
- **Use enforcement messaging only during *Click It or Ticket* mobilization(s) to maximize the impact of the increased law enforcement activities.**

- Increase collaboration between the Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office, the advertising agency, and the University of North Florida Public Opinion Research Laboratory so that self-report surveys are more appropriately timed and different media markets could be over- (or under-) sampled based on State data regarding seatbelt use by the target audiences.
- Develop and test culturally and linguistically appropriate materials to reach minority populations. Consideration should also be given to literacy levels for non-English speaking populations.
- Encourage the expansion of the use of social media by municipal and county agencies to reach drivers with traffic safety messages particularly during emphasis periods such as *Click It or Ticket*, as a low-cost, high pay off earned media opportunity. Further, encourage partners and stakeholders to utilize their social media platforms to support traffic safety programs, including occupant protection and child restraint systems.
- **Redesign the Department of Transportation website to make it easier for partners and stakeholders to navigate and locate traffic safety programs and materials. Ensure that all materials are current and consistent.**

## 5. OCCUPANT PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

### GUIDELINE:

*Each State should enact occupant protection laws that require the correct restraint of all children, in all seating positions and in every vehicle. Regulations and policies should exist that provide clear guidance to the motoring public concerning occupant protection for children. Each State should require that children birth to 16 years old (or the State's driving age) be properly restrained in the appropriate child restraint system or seat belt. Gaps in State child passenger safety and seat belt laws should be closed to ensure that all children are covered in all seating positions, with requirements for age-appropriate child restraint use. Key provisions of the law should include: driver responsibility for ensuring that children are properly restrained; proper restraint of children under 13 years of age in the rear seat (unless all available rear seats are occupied by younger children); a ban of passengers from the cargo areas of light trucks; and a limit on the number of passengers based on the number of available seat belts in the vehicle. To achieve these objectives, State occupant protection programs for children should:*

- *Collect and analyze key data elements in order to evaluate the program progress;*
- *Assure that adequate and accurate training is provided to the professionals who deliver and enforce the occupant protection programs for parents and caregivers;*
- *Assure that the capability exists to train and retain nationally certified child passenger safety technicians to address attrition of trainers or changing public demographics;*
- *Promote the use of child restraints and assure that a plan has been developed to provide an adequate number of inspection stations and clinics, which meet minimum quality criteria;*
- *Maintain a strong law enforcement program that includes vigorous enforcement of the child occupant protection laws;*
- *Enlist the support of the media to increase public awareness about child occupant protection laws and the use of child restraints. Strong efforts should be made to reach underserved populations;*
- *Assure that the child occupant protection programs at the local level are periodically assessed and that programs are designed to meet the unique demographic needs of the community;*
- *Establish the infrastructure to systematically coordinate the array of child occupant protection program components;*
- *Encourage law enforcement participation in the National Child Passenger Safety Certification (basic and in-service) training for law enforcement officers.*

### 5A. STRENGTHS

- Florida's child restraint law requires that every operator, while transporting a child in a motor vehicle operated on the roadways, streets, or highways of the State, shall, if the child is six years of age or younger, provide for the protection of the child by properly using a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device. For children "aged through three years", such restraint devices must be a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child seat. For children aged four through six years, a separate carrier, an integrated seat, or a child booster seat may be used.

- There is a specific statute that prohibits occupants less than age 18 to be transported in the bed of pickup trucks and vehicle locations that are not designated for occupants.
- There is a law regarding the inclusion of seat belts on school buses.
- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Program is housed within the Florida Occupant Protection Resource Center (OPRC).
- There are 98 currently certified CPS Technician Instructors in the State. All appear to be easily accessible by phone and/or email and are willing to travel to remote areas of the State to assist CPS Technicians with recertification needs.
- There are 1,358 currently certified CPS Technicians, two of which are Technician Proxies and four are Instructor Candidates in the State. Technician Proxies are designated individuals who are authorized to assist instructors with the car seat check verification process for recertification of currently certified Technicians. Instructor candidates are Technicians who have met the minimum criteria to complete the required process to become Certified Instructors and are approved by Safe Kids Worldwide.
- The State Occupant Protection Program Manager sends communication blasts via electronic mail to all currently certified CPS Technicians as needed.
- There are currently 70 publicized fitting stations which are reported to cover 83.4 percent of the State to serve the 67 counties. There are a few additional unpublicized stations that serve local or in-house clients. Check-up events are also available periodically throughout the State during advertised operating dates and times such as National CPS Week and local mobilizations.
- The fitting stations are housed within diverse agencies and locations. They are located within the most populous areas of the State but are also accessible to the rural communities.
- There is support for CPS programs from the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), county sheriff's offices and law enforcement agencies and police departments.
- FDOT SSO has strong partnerships with local advocacy groups such as Community Traffic Safety Teams (CTSTs), Safe Kids Coalitions, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), and others.
- There is a Florida State Safe Kids Coordinator who is housed within the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) with 13 coalitions. Opportunities for networking are made possible via periodic conference calls.

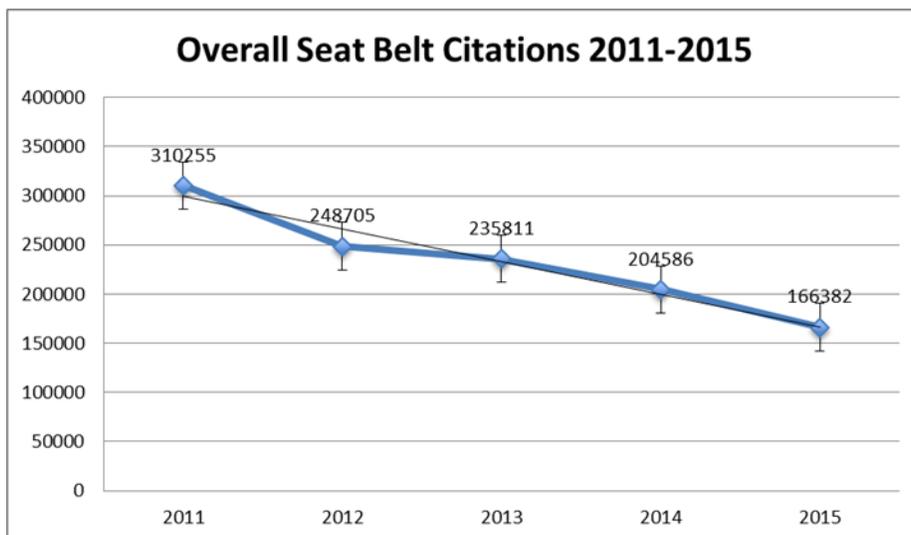
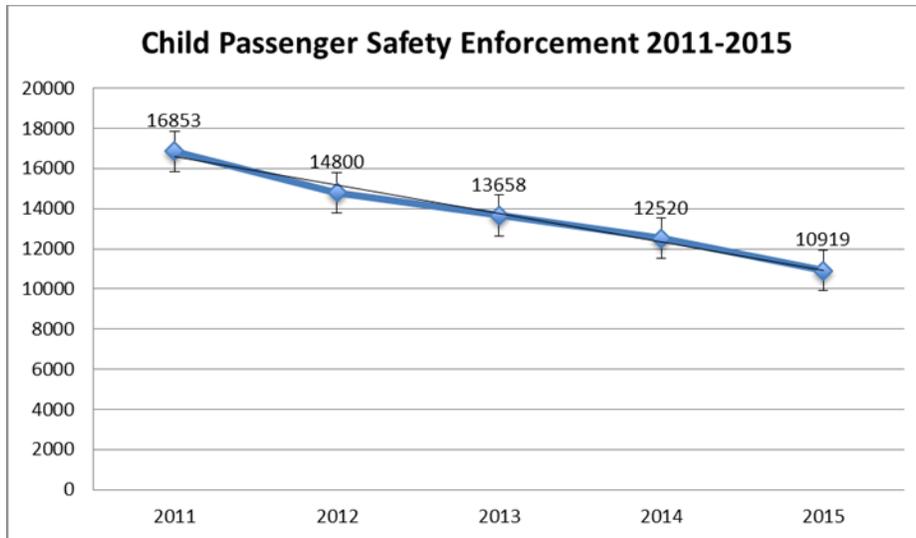
- A unique program has been created for hospitals that serve children with special health care needs. The program includes a one-day training for key staff members regarding the selection, use, installation and care/maintenance of specialized child restraints that were purchased for the hospital by the Florida OPRC and intended for patient-use through a loaner program. There are currently 17 hospitals, 12 of which have staff who have completed the training and all 12 have specialized child restraints that are provided by OPRC. The Occupant Protection Program Coordinator conducts quality assurance monitoring in all of the hospitals that have trained staff.
- Grant funding information for CPS programs is available on the FDOT website. Proposals are submitted to FDOT SSO in the form of concept papers, then evaluated for funding based on need and innovative approach.
- The printed information that is provided to parents and caregivers conforms to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) minimum best practice recommendations. The majority of the publications reflect the optimal NHTSA and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) best practice recommendations.
- The videos on the OPRC website and various other Florida CPS websites are relevant and well-crafted with accurate information that include ethnic diversity.
- CPS awareness-level courses are conducted in some of the hospitals, health departments and distribution centers to expectant parents and community members.
- The number of Nationally Standardized Child Passenger Safety Technician Training courses appears to be adequate to counter the attrition of certified technicians. All fees including participant registration fees and stipends for instructors are paid by the OPRC.
- *A Safe Travel with All Children: Transporting Children with Special Healthcare Needs* standardized two-day course is offered at least once in a two-year period. A number of certified technicians have completed this additional training.
- The OPRC provides car seats for children and support materials through designated distribution centers and fitting stations at no cost to the locations. Accountability from distribution centers is required; information is able to be submitted via a web-based activity and data reporting system.
- Data that are collected from the fitting stations is tabulated and analyzed. The data include correct/incorrect car seat selection, location of use within the vehicle, correct/incorrect harness use and installation plus incidence of non-use.
- Most hospitals have a Newborn Discharge Policy that is consistent with the AAP recommendations.
- Hispanic outreach materials are available through the Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection and some of the Safe Kids Coalitions.

## 5B. CHALLENGES

- The current Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) does not identify occupant protection as an emphasis area.
- The State’s child restraint law does not reflect the minimum best practice recommendations by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration or American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
- The Florida CPS Program operates under the alias of OPRC. It was intended to serve as a resource to certified CPS Technicians and Instructors only, but has been branded on numerous webpages as the public resource site for occupant protection for all ages.
- The annual recertification rate of CPS Technicians has remained below the National average for the past 5 years:

Year	National Average (%)	FL Year End (%)	Difference
2015	58.8	47.9	-10.9
2014	56.0	49.3	-6.7
2013	57.5	53.3	-4.2
2012	54.9	43.66	-11.24
2011	56.4	47.5	-8.9

- Although in-person Continuing Education Unit (CEU) workshops are offered to certified technicians two times per year in locations that have denser volumes of certified technicians and instructors. There is evidence that technicians and instructors in the remote areas cannot attend because of travel limitations, which may be a significant contributing factor to the higher-than-average attrition rate.
- There has been a steady decline in seat belt and child restraint citations issued by the State’s law enforcement agencies. The 2011 through 2015 citation data shows a decline of 35 percent in child restraint violations and 47 percent in seat belt violations. This may be evidence of a need to provide additional education/training to law enforcement officers to achieve a better understanding of the efficacy of and need for rigorous enforcement of CPS and seat belt portions of the law. *(See charts on following page.)*



- There is evidence that a large portion of the child restraint citations issued to violators are dismissed in court.
- There are a very limited number of offender/violator diversion programs available to the public to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the need to correctly restrain all occupants. The courses are not accessible by the vast majority of the State's CPS law violators/offenders.
- There does not appear to be a public calendar for statewide CPS activities and educational opportunities.
- Very few educational opportunities exist for school-age children regarding occupant protection. It is unclear if the education conducted by School Resource Officers is consistent with the State's messaging.

- There are no data available to assess the effectiveness of the CPS program or caregivers' understanding of transporting children safely and legally.
- There has not been an observational study to measure child restraint use. Fitting station data may not be the most reliable source of accurate data because those attending a fitting station may not represent the behavior of the general population.
- It is unknown if the hospital emergency departments include post-crash information about car seats in their routine discharge processes. It is also unknown if all hospital systems have discharge policies consistent with the AAP guidelines.
- There is no established method for communication and collaboration among CPS-related program coordinators or CPS Technicians and Instructors.
- It is unclear if any education is being conducted to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire departments regarding transporting pediatric patients in emergency vehicles. No information could be obtained about transportation protocols for ambulance personnel in cases of motor vehicle traffic crash incidents.
- The CPS data that are available (e.g., morbidity/mortality, seat belt use, child restraint use) on various Florida websites is inconsistent and outdated.
- Morbidity/mortality data are collected by EMSTAR/NEMESIS system but are not readily accessible to CPS program coordinators or injury prevention specialists. Injury statistics on the FDOH website can be accessed by the public but are somewhat outdated.

## **5C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Identify occupant protection as an emphasis area in the next Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- Enhance the child restraint law to include mandated appropriate child restraint systems for children up to age 18 in accordance with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. A well-crafted law should include the following elements:
  - Children should be correctly restrained in a child restraint system appropriate for their age, weight and height until age 18, and seated in the rear seat of the vehicle if at all possible up to age 13;
  - Children should remain in rear facing child restraints as long as possible but to a minimum of age two, based on current American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations, and restrained according to manufacturer's instructions;
  - Children should remain in child restraint systems with a harness, used according to manufacturer's instructions, for as long as possible but to a minimum of age four;

- Children should remain in a booster seat or child restraint system, used according to manufacturer’s instructions, for as long as possible but until a minimum of age nine;
  - Children nine to 18 years old should be correctly restrained in a child restraint system or seat belt;
  - The seat belt must be used according to vehicle manufacturer instructions;
  - There should be no exemption for trucks or vans that exceed 6,500 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight;
  - There should be no exemptions for child care providers and child care centers, school systems, church vehicles, private bus or any other non-commercial vehicle;
  - The number of child passengers should not exceed the number of seating positions in the vehicle as designated by the vehicle manufacturer; and
  - All child restraints should be age and size appropriate and enforceable as a primary violation up to age 18.
- Include the rear seat as a primary offense in the adult occupant statutes to assure all occupants are adequately and correctly restrained according to manufacturer recommendations since evidence shows that there is a strong relationship between adult seat belt use and restraint use for children up to age 18.
  - **Rename, refocus, and rebrand the Occupant Protection Resource Center to better identify its purpose and clientele. The focus could remain specifically on child passenger safety, in which case “Child Passenger Safety” should be included in the revised name. There should be a members’ only portal to disseminate materials to Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors as well as a public access for downloadable information.**
  - Develop and promote law enforcement training to assist officers in recognizing incorrect child restraint use and promote increased enforcement activities.
  - Increase the number of child restraint law violator/offender diversion programs throughout the State to promote behavior change.
  - Conduct a statewide observational survey on child passenger restraint use and publicize the results.
  - Include questions on the annual self-report survey to determine the level of program effectiveness and caregivers’ understanding to ensure the Child Passenger Safety Program is conveying clear and consistent messaging.

- **Decrease the attrition rate of trained technicians and instructors by increasing opportunities for continuing education workshops, networking, and by empowering them to provide education to the public beyond fitting station activities. Examples of such opportunities include:**
  - **An annual Child Passenger Safety Technician Conference;**
  - **Developing or adopting a series of standardized abbreviated courses for:**
    - **Hospitals;**
    - **Law enforcement;**
    - **Emergency medical services;**
    - **Age appropriate kindergarten through high school presentations; and**
    - **Supplement the current outreach programs to adult parents, grandparents and caregivers within communities with Technician-led workshops at PTA meetings, Car-Fit events, boys'/girls' clubs, churches, etc.**
  
- **Survey Child Passenger Safety Technicians with current and expired certifications to evaluate how the recertification (retention rate) could be increased.**
  
- Facilitate the creation of easy-to-access, private, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) for Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors, Community Traffic Safety Team program coordinators and members, and other defined organizations, so that they are able to easily and quickly communicate and collaborate with each other to share best practices and research, ask questions, and post notices of events.
  
- Recruit Child Passenger Safety Technician Proxies in areas that have no currently certified instructors for more efficient recertification verification opportunities.
  
- Incorporate morbidity data into development of injury prevention education and printed materials and communication.
  
- **Create a method and/or process that will enable easy access to the State's current, accurate morbidity/mortality data. The information should be available to key groups, but not limited to, program coordinators, Child Passenger Safety Technicians, school teachers and the media to promote a more thorough understanding of the scope and depth of the traffic safety initiatives.**

## 6. OUTREACH PROGRAM

### *GUIDELINE:*

*Each state should encourage extensive statewide and community involvement in occupant protection education by involving individuals and organizations outside the traditional highway safety community. Representation from health, business, education, and diverse cultures of the community are encouraged, among others. Community involvement broadens public support for the state's programs and can increase a state's ability to deliver highway safety education programs. To encourage statewide and community involvement, States should:*

- *Establish a coalition or task force of individuals and organizations to actively promote use of occupant protection systems;*
- *Create an effective communications network among coalition members to keep members informed about issues;*
- *Provide culturally relevant materials and resources necessary to conduct occupant protection education programs, especially directed toward young people, in local settings;*
- *Provide materials and resources necessary to conduct occupant protection education programs, especially directed toward specific cultural or otherwise diverse populations represented in the State and in its political subdivisions.*

*States should undertake a variety of outreach programs to achieve statewide and community involvement in occupant protection education, as described below. Programs should include outreach to diverse populations, health and medical communities, schools and employers.*

### ***a. Diverse Populations***

*Each State should work closely with individuals and organizations that represent the various ethnic and cultural populations reflected in State demographics. Individuals from these groups might not be reached through traditional communication markets. Community leaders and representatives from the various ethnic and cultural groups and organizations will help States to increase the use of child safety seats and seat belts. The State should:*

- *Evaluate the need for, and provide, if necessary, materials and resources in multiple languages;*
- *Collect and analyze data on fatalities and injuries in diverse communities;*
- *Ensure representation of diverse groups on State occupant protection coalitions and other work groups;*
- *Provide guidance to grantees on conducting outreach in diverse communities;*
- *Utilize leaders from diverse communities as spokespeople to promote seat belt use and child safety seat;*
- *Conduct outreach efforts to diverse organizations and populations during law enforcement mobilization periods.*

**b. Health and Medical Communities**

*Each State should integrate occupant protection into health programs. The failure of drivers and passengers to use occupant protection systems is a major public health problem that must be recognized by the medical and health care communities. The SHSO, the State Health Department and other State or local medical organizations should collaborate in developing programs that:*

- *Integrate occupant protection into professional health training curricula and comprehensive public health planning;*
- *Promote occupant protection systems as a health promotion/injury prevention measure;*
- *Require public health and medical personnel to use available motor vehicle occupant protection systems during work hours;*
- *Provide technical assistance and education about the importance of motor vehicle occupant protection to primary caregivers (e.g., doctors, nurses, clinic staff);*
- *Include questions about seat belt use in health risk appraisals;*
- *Utilize health care providers as visible public spokespeople for seat belt and child safety seat use;*
- *Provide information about the availability of child safety seats at, and integrate child safety seat inspections into, maternity hospitals and other prenatal and natal care centers;*
- *Collect, analyze and publicize data on additional injuries and medical expenses resulting from non-use of occupant protection devices.*

**c. Schools**

*Each State should encourage local school boards and educators to incorporate occupant protection education into school curricula. The SHSO in cooperation with the State Department of Education should:*

- *Ensure that highway safety and traffic-related injury control, in general, and occupant protection, in particular, are included in the State-approved K-12 health and safety education curricula and textbooks;*
- *Establish and enforce written policies requiring that school employees use seat belts when operating a motor vehicle on the job; and*
- *Encourage active promotion of regular seat belt use through classroom and extracurricular activities as well as in school-based health clinics; and*
- *Work with School Resource Officers (SROs) to promote seat belt use among high school students;*
- *Establish and enforce written school policies that require students driving to and from school to wear seat belts. Violation of these policies should result in revocation of parking or other campus privileges for a stated period of time.*

#### ***d. Employers***

*Each State and local subdivision should encourage all employers to require seat belt use on the job as a condition of employment. Private sector employers should follow the lead of Federal and State government employers and comply with Executive Order 13043, “Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States” as well as all applicable Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Regulations or Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations requiring private business employees to use seat belts on the job. All employers should:*

- *Establish and enforce a seat belt use policy with sanctions for non-use;*
- *Conduct occupant protection education programs for employees on their seat belt use policies and the safety benefits of motor vehicle occupant protection devices.*

#### **6A. STRENGTHS**

- Florida has a network of many diverse organizations that address traffic safety issues, including seat belts and child passenger safety, such as the Community Traffic Safety Teams (CTSTs), Safe Kids, Car-Fit, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and more. Further, it has a well-established network of Law Enforcement Liaisons (LELs) that promote traffic safety programs and provide technical assistance to agencies throughout the State.
- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office (SSO) promotes materials developed and pilot tested by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and national organizations such as AARP and the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) for its outreach programs.
- The State has a large number of traffic safety advocates that volunteer their time, talents, and resources to promote the programs and activities of the FDOT SSO, including occupant protection.
- The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, FDOT SSO, and the Florida LELs have a combined total of more than 20,000 followers on Facebook, providing an excellent platform to promote traffic safety in general, and mobilizations such as *Click It or Ticket* to Florida’s motoring public.
- There are a number of localized initiatives to provide traffic safety education, and specifically occupant protection, through the State’s schools. Law enforcement agencies make presentations, there are SADD chapters in approximately 147 schools, MADD presents school programs, and Safe Kids and local CTSTs work with schools to promote traffic safety, including occupant protection.

- The FDOT SSO funded a successful Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection study to reach African American and Hispanics in specific locations in Florida. On the basis of that study, plans are under way to expand the program to other locations in the state with high minority populations.
- Several traffic safety partners have implemented occupant protection and child passenger safety programs to reach minority populations including African American college students, Hispanic immigrants, and Haitian populations.

## 6B. CHALLENGES

- While there are a large number of organizations involved with various aspects of traffic safety, there are noticeable absences of organizations that represent business and industry, medical/health, education, and other areas.
- There appears to be little coordination of information between organizations focused on traffic safety, particularly from the local level to the State level and across the range of organizations. This results in a limited ability to share best practices, emerging concerns, etc., between different organizations across the State.
- There is no coordination in educational programs or materials, from elementary through high school, presented by different organizations. This results in the probability that inconsistent, outdated, or erroneous information is presented. Further, the State is not able to form an opinion from any occupant protection data collected as they are not uniform.
- The title “Florida Occupant Protection Resource Center” is misleading, which can cause confusion and frustration from those seeking information and materials across the range of occupant protection programs. In fact, the materials are limited to child passenger safety. In addition, many would assume that materials and assistance would be available for any interested person when resources are only available to certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors.
- The State does not take full advantage of social media opportunities to promote occupant protection and, specifically, the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization periods.
- There is no State-level effort to reach out to the business community to encourage occupant protection programs for their employees and their families—from seat belt policies to safety fairs for family members.
- There is no executive-level seat belt policy governing the use of seat belts by employees and contractors during the performance of their official duties, whether in State-owned or personal vehicles. Each agency may have developed its own policy, resulting in potential inconsistencies among State agencies.

- The work that the Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection has done has not yet been replicated in other areas of the State.
- There is no evidence that occupant protection outreach, including child passenger safety, is addressed on Tribal lands.

## 6C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a state-level occupant protection task force, comprised of but not limited to members of key traffic safety organizations, members of the medical/health and education communities, employers and representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office, etc., to accomplish the following:
  - Provide consistent, current information and resources to regional and community advocates;
  - Obtain and share best practices from community programs;
  - Actively support mobilizations and crackdowns; and
  - Keep the Florida Department of Transportation State Safety Office informed of concerns at the community level, emerging issues, etc.
- **Facilitate the creation of easy-to-access, private, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) for Community Traffic Safety Team program coordinators and members, Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors, and other defined organizations, so that they are able to easily and quickly communicate and collaborate with each other to share best practices and research, ask questions, and post notices of events.**
- Rename, refocus, and rebrand the Occupant Protection Resource Center to better identify its purpose and clientele. The focus could remain specifically on child passenger safety, in which case “Child Passenger Safety” should be included in the revised name. Alternatively, the focus could be expanded to include all occupant protection programs. In either case, there should be a members’ only portal to disseminate materials to Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors.
- Engage key leaders in the Florida Departments of Health and Education in supporting traffic safety, and specifically occupant protection, as an important component of their programs to increase the health and wellbeing of their constituents.
- Facilitate the development of an executive seat belt policy that would cover all employees in all seating positions in both State and personal vehicles while on official business. Include a requirement that State contractors have a mandatory seat belt policy for their employees.

- **Continue the expansion of the Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection outreach program in areas of the State having sufficiently large minority populations to increase seat belt and child restraint system use.**
- Develop avenues to work with Native American Tribal leaders to ensure that occupant protection, including child passenger safety, is promoted on Tribal lands.

## 7. DATA AND EVALUATION

### GUIDELINE:

*Each State should access and analyze reliable data sources for problem identification and program planning. Each State should conduct several different types of evaluation to effectively measure progress and to plan and implement new program strategies. Program management should:*

- *Conduct and publicize at least one statewide observational survey of seat belt and child safety seat use annually, making every effort to ensure that it meets current, applicable Federal guidelines;*
- *Maintain trend data on child safety seat use, seat belt use and air bag deployment in fatal crashes;*
- *Identify high-risk populations through observational usage surveys and crash statistics;*
- *Conduct and publicize statewide surveys of public knowledge and attitudes about occupant protection laws and systems;*
- *Obtain monthly or quarterly data from law enforcement agencies on the number of seat belt and child passenger safety citations and convictions;*
- *Evaluate the use of program resources and the effectiveness of existing general communication as well as special/high-risk population education programs;*
- *Obtain data on morbidity, as well as the estimated cost of crashes, and determine the relation of injury to seat belt use and non-use;*
- *Ensure that evaluation results are an integral part of new program planning and problem identification.*

### 7A. STRENGTHS

- Florida has a current National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) approved direct observational survey design, under the new *Uniform Criteria for State Observational Surveys for Seat Belt Use*, as defined in the Federal Register Volume 76, Number 63. The most recent report is named *June 2015 Safety Belt Use in Florida*.
- Florida also conducts a direct observation seat belt survey prior to the May *Click It or Ticket* (CIOT) mobilization using the same sample and method as used in the summer survey. The purpose of the pre-survey is to establish an annual baseline from which to measure the effects of the May CIOT mobilization.
- Florida uses the direct observation survey results, the self-report survey results, and the most currently available crash data to identify high-risk populations. Current targets include pickup truck drivers, young males, the 18-34 age group, and select minorities.

- Florida conducts two self-report surveys annually to measure knowledge and attitudes about occupant protection laws and systems, one prior to and one after the May CIOT mobilization. The most recent report, *Florida Department of Transportation Click It or Ticket Survey 2015*, contains results from both surveys. Both self-report surveys exceed the basic requirements provided by NHTSA. The purpose of conducting two surveys is to measure the effects of the May CIOT mobilization.
- Law enforcement agencies that participate in CIOT are required to collect and report local results from both pre- and post-seat belt observational surveys.
- Florida has an emerging pool of high schools that participate in occupant protection and other traffic safety programs including Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapters, and students who participate in the Teen Safe Driving Academy events.
- Florida has partnered with competent and experienced researchers who are able to provide quality survey data collection and analysis.

## **7B. CHALLENGES**

- Though Florida's direct observational seat belt survey meets NHTSA guidelines, it is limited to 15 of 67 counties, leaving large areas of the State without survey data. Also, with three waves of CIOT mobilizations conducted throughout the year, the baseline survey may not measure a true baseline. In addition, Florida has already thoroughly documented the effects of the May CIOT mobilization in prior years.
- There is currently no systematic, scientific, statewide occupant restraint rate data available for child passengers covered under the primary law, ages birth to 18, or for teen drivers, who are unlikely to be captured in the annual summer survey.
- Florida's current Crash Analysis and Reporting System (CARS) uses both electronic and paper reporting methods resulting in an extensive lag time between the crash event and subsequent inclusion in the database, limiting the usefulness, and possibly completeness, of the crash database.
- Though there are ten questions included in the annual self-report survey regarding the topic of occupant protection, there are some questions of limited usefulness. There are also a few important topics currently not covered in the survey which could be useful in evaluating the effectiveness of some occupant protection programs and activities.
- The first administration of Florida's self-report survey, the pre-survey, is designed to establish an annual baseline from which to measure the effects of the May CIOT mobilization. However, with three waves of CIOT mobilizations conducted throughout the year, the baseline survey may not measure a true baseline. In addition, Florida has already thoroughly documented the effects of the May CIOT mobilization with both the direct observation seat belt survey, and the self-report survey, in previous years.

- It appears that both the statewide citation data and the conviction data (citations resulting in a fine) are not consistently collected, or deposited in a single, central database, resulting in incomplete or inaccessible data. It also appears that, for the citation data, there is a significant lag time between the initial issuance of the citation and the availability of that data for analysis.
- Though law enforcement agencies that participate in CIOT are required to collect and report results from both pre- and post-seat belt observational surveys, the data do not accumulate in a centralized database which could result in a more complete picture of seat belt-use statewide.
- Though many student groups collect both pre- and post-event observational seat belt survey data, these data often remain at the school and do not accumulate into a central database which could be used to more completely describe seat belt use among Florida teens.
- Though many examples of program evaluations exist in Florida's occupant protection program, some other strategies and expenditures continue un-evaluated. In addition, while process data are often collected and reported, outcome data are not as readily available.
- Some occupant protection entities operating within Florida lack the technical expertise to design and implement a quality program evaluation component.

## 7C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eliminate the pre-mobilization direct observation survey and use those resources to evaluate other occupant protection programs around the State, current and future.
- **Design and implement a true, random sample, statewide direct observation child passenger seat survey annually to monitor occupant restraint rate data for children ages birth to 18, with the ability to track results among children covered under the primary law, ages birth to 18 and separately, teen drivers.**
- Work toward a centralized, electronically reported crash database, used by all eligible reporting agencies that would result in a crash database that is current, accessible, and beneficial. The complete database could be utilized to identify high-risk populations and locations, produce mapped crash data as well as all the other functions of a timely and centralized database.
- Review self-report survey questions to identify those with limited usefulness, keeping important core questions that need to be tracked over time. Periodically include new questions that explore topics that facilitate occupant protection program evaluation, (e.g., to further assess the reasons for seat belt use and non-use, attitudes toward enforcement, appropriate fines, public support for enhancing the primary laws), especially among high-risk populations.

- Eliminate the self-report survey conducted prior to the May mobilization and use those resources to evaluate other occupant protection programs around the State, current and future.
- Work toward one, single e-citation system with resulting data deposited into a single, central database, plus an accurate conviction database (citations resulting in a fine); the purpose of which is to disseminate monthly or quarterly data, by county and by region, displaying the number of seat belt and child passenger safety citations, and the number and percent of those citations resulting in a fine, yielding a conviction rate.
- Record data into a centralized database from both pre- and post-observational surveys collected by law enforcement agencies participating in *Click It or Ticket* mobilizations. Combine the contributed data into county and regional groups and calculate the seat belt use rates, which would result in a more complete picture of seat belt use across the state.
- **Select or develop and make available statewide a standardized high school direct observational survey instrument and analysis template. The standardized instrument would be used prior to and after any high school occupant protection intervention to measure the effects of the intervention. Consider gathering all resulting pre- and post-survey data centrally to produce a database which can be summarized on a larger scale, with the results eventually divided into geographic regions.**
- **Develop and implement an ongoing system of countermeasure assessment. If the countermeasure is found to be effective (i.e., to increase seat belt or child restraint use), disseminate the countermeasure more broadly. If the countermeasure is not effective, try something else, and assess again, repeating the cycle across a variety of topic areas, empirically developing an effective occupant protection program over time.**
- Make technical assistance available to occupant protection programs around the State, assisting them in designing and implementing a quality program evaluation component. Explore partnering with area universities to engage college students and faculty in these projects with the intent of providing technical assistance at minimal cost.

**ASSESSMENT AGENDA**  
Florida Occupant Protection Program Assessment  
Homewood Suites, Tallahassee

**Sunday, March 6**

**6:30 p.m. Pre-Assessment Briefing**  
Capital I Room, Second Floor, Homewood Suites

**7:30 p.m. Dinner**  
Marie Livingston's Steakhouse

**Monday, March 7**

**8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – Session I**  
**Introductions/Program Management**

Lora Hollingsworth, Chief Safety Officer, Florida Department of Transportation  
Chris Craig, Traffic Safety Administrator, Florida Department of Transportation  
Ralph Salvas, OP Program Manager, Florida Department of Transportation  
Dr. Morya E. Willis, OP Program Coordinator, Tallahassee Community College

**Break, 10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.**

**10:15 a.m. – 12:15 a.m. – Session II**  
**Legislation, Regulation and Policy**

**Tara Kirschner, Director, The Dori Slosberg Foundation**  
Bevin Maynard, Supervisor, St. Joseph's Children's Hospital, Child Advocacy Center  
Karen Morgan, APR, Manager Public Policy at AAA  
Chris Craig, Traffic Safety Administrator, Florida Department of Transportation

**Lunch Break, 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.**

**1:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. – Session III**  
**Law Enforcement**

Tim Roberts, Director, Florida Law Enforcement Liaison Program  
Trooper Eddie Cruz, Florida Highway Patrol, Troop C, SW Florida  
Deputy Gregg Rittger, Orange County Sheriff's Office

**Break, 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

**3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. – Session III Continued**  
**Law Enforcement**

Chief Art Bodenheimer (Chair), Florida Police Chiefs Association’s Highway Safety  
Committee

Major Mark Welch, Troop Commander, Florida Highway Patrol Troop H  
Sergeant Brandon Kutner, Alachua County Sheriff’s Office, on behalf of Sheriff Sadie  
Darnell, President, Florida Sheriff’s Association

**Tuesday, March 8**

**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Session IV**  
**Communications Program**

Chris Craig, Traffic Safety Administrator, Florida Department of Transportation  
Ralph Salvas, OP Program Manager, Florida Department of Transportation  
Jeanette Loudermilk, Account Manager, St. Johns & Partners  
Dylan Bryan, Master Sergeant, Florida Highway Patrol  
Janice Martinez, Law Enforcement Liaison, South Central Florida Region

**Break, 10:30 – 10:45 a.m.**

**10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. – Session IV Continued**  
**Communications Program**

Karen Smith, Public Information Officer, Florida Department of Transportation, Safety  
Office  
**Carlos Sarmiento, Community Traffic Safety Program Coordinator, Florida  
Department of Transportation - District 6**

**11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Session V**  
**Data & Evaluation Programing**

Mark Solomon, Vice President, Preusser Research Group  
Robert H.B. Chaffe, Senior Research Associate, Preusser Research Group  
Dr. Michael Binder, Assistant Professor, Political Science, Faculty Director - Public  
Opinion Research Laboratory, University of North Florida  
Al Roop, Institute of Police Technology and Management, University of North Florida

**Lunch Break, 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.**

**1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. – Session V Continued  
Data & Evaluation Programing**

Joe Santos, State Traffic Safety Engineer, FDOT Safety Office

**Break, 1:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. – Session VI  
Occupant Protection for Children**

Dr. Morya E. Willis, Safe Kids Certified Child Passenger Safety Instructor and Director,  
Florida Special Needs Loaner Program  
Allison Tillman, Senior Information Specialist, Florida Transportation Technology  
Transfer Center University of Florida: Florida Occupant Protection Resource Center  
Karen Favorite, President, Favorite Studios, Inc

**Break, 3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.**

**3:45 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. – Session VI Continued  
Occupant Protection for Children**

Mary Crew, Statewide Coordinator, Safe Kids Florida  
[Sally Kreuzer, Coalition Coordinator, Safe Kids Lee/Collier Counties](#)

**Wednesday, March 9**

**9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. – Session VII  
Outreach Programs (Statewide Programs)**

Dr. Doreen Kobelo, Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, Construction/Civil  
Engineering Technology  
Gail M. Holley, Safe Mobility for Life Program and Research Manager, Florida  
Department of Transportation  
Fran Carlin-Rogers, Senior Transportation Consultant & CarFit Instructor, Carlin Rogers  
Consulting

**Break, 10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.**

**10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Session VII Continued  
Outreach Programs**

Dr. Morya E. Willis, Co-Chair, Florida Minority Task Force on Occupant Protection  
Andrea Atran, Community Traffic Safety Program Coordinator, Florida Department of  
Transportation - District 2  
Kelly Powell, Safe Kids Palm Beach Coalition Coordinator, Community Partnerships  
Group

**12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m. – Session VII Continued  
Outreach Programs**

Danielle King, Traffic Safety Program Manager, Traffic Records, FDOT, Safety Office  
Danielle Branciforte, State Coordinator Florida SADD

**Lunch Break, 12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.**

**1:15 p.m. – Until**

**Assessment Team Report Preparation**

**Thursday, March 10**

**Assessment Team Report Preparation**

**Friday, March 11**

**8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.          Assessment Team Presents Draft**

**11:30 a.m.                  Departure to Airport**

## ASSESSMENT TEAM CREDENTIALS

### **DONNA BLACK**

[Donna.Black@ots.ca.gov](mailto:Donna.Black@ots.ca.gov)

Donna Black joined the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) in 2006 as a regional coordinator. Her responsibilities include planning, developing, monitoring and evaluating programs which assist the California OTS in conducting a coordinated and comprehensive statewide traffic safety effort. She manages numerous local traffic safety programs in six North and East Bay Area counties.

Donna also serves as the statewide Occupant Protection (OP) and Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Program Manager, which includes overseeing local OP and CPS grants as well as statewide occupant protection programs. She has been a NHTSA certified child passenger safety technician since 1999.

Prior to working with the California OTS, Donna worked as a community education specialist for the Shasta County Department of Public Health in Redding, CA, where for nine years she was assigned to the Injury Prevention Unit. She coordinated various local traffic safety programs and served as Shasta County's CPS coordinator.

Donna holds a bachelor's degree in physical education and a master's degree in wellness education, both from California State University, Chico.

Before her career in traffic safety, Donna worked for a large physical therapy and sports medicine clinic in Redding, CA, where she was the director of aquatic programs and an instructor in aquatic exercise, aquatic therapy, spine care and strength training.

## **VERA FULLAWAY**

[vfullaway@comcast.net](mailto:vfullaway@comcast.net)

### **EXPERIENCE**

RECARO Child Safety, Auburn Hills, MI

Training Specialist & Consultant for USA, Canada and Mexico

Safe Traffic System, Inc., Chicago, IL

Technical Consultant in Child Passenger Safety Product Development, Sales and Customer Support

North Suburban Medical Center & Sky Ridge Medical Center Fitting Station Co-Coordinator

Child Passenger Safety Consultant / Co-Owner Child Safety Solutions, LLC

Clek, Inc., Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Child Passenger Safety Consultant and CPS Advocate

Combi USA, Charlotte NC

CPS Advocate, New Product Development and Support Team Car Seats & Strollers

Colorado State Patrol: Statewide CPS Program Technical Training Coordinator

State CPS Program Technical Training Coordinator

Columbine Ambulance Service Illness & Injury Prevention Foundation

Director of Education Programs

TerraSciences/ICS, Lakewood, CO

Maintenance Programmer, Computer Information Systems

Denver General Ambulance and various privately owned Emergency Ambulance

Services as Paramedic

### **EDUCATION**

Colorado State University [Physics/Microbiology]

Aimes Community College [Emergency Medical Technician]

St Anthony's Hospital Institute of Pre-Hospital Care [Paramedic]

Denver Technical College [Computer Information Systems / Programming]

### **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Member National Child Passenger Safety Board [Term 2002-2004]
- Recipient of the NHTSA Public Service Award 2004
- National Standardized Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Curriculum Committee
- National Standardized CPS Course Technician Instructor /Trainer /Mentor
- Certified Safe Kids Worldwide CPS Technician Instructor since 1998
- Certification: Transporting Children with Special Healthcare Needs
- Certification: Transporting Children in the Emergency Medical Services Setting
- Colorado Statewide CPS Program Technical Training Coordinator
- Child Passenger Safety Team Colorado State Advisory Board Member
- Author / Editor of CPS Tech Update Publications (Colorado CPS Tech Update Monthly Publication, Safe Ride News, CPS Express for Safe Kids Worldwide, Internet Articles, various National, State and Regional CPS Programs)

- Author of numerous state standardized training curricula [professional & community programs]
- Statewide CPS Program Development
- Institutional CPS Program Development
- Community CPS Program Development
- K-12 Injury Prevention Program Development
- Young Driver Program Development
- Child Restraint Manufacturer CPS Advocate
- Child Restraint Product Development and Improvement
- Technical Writing: Instruction Manuals for Child Restraint Systems
- Website Development
- Product Development and Improvement
- Customer Service, Retail Support, Logistics
- USDOT, NHTSA, Technical Assistance Team, Occupant Protection Program, Team Member, States of Louisiana, Montana, Ohio, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Utah and Florida.

## **ROBERTA C. MAYER**

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Roberta (Robin) Mayer is currently Principal at Mayer & Associates strategic communications consulting firm. She has participated in a number of assessments of State occupant protection and impaired driving programs; has assisted in the development and updating of traffic safety curricula, websites, and guidebooks on a variety of topics; and has provided training on social media for state and local governmental agencies. She serves as the director of communications and public relations for the *Damariscotta Pumpkinfest & Regatta*; provides services as a copywriter, technical editor, and social media trainer; and is a contributing writer for several newspapers.

In 2015 Mayer was re-elected to her second three-year term of the Damariscotta, Maine, Board of Selectmen, and currently serves as its chairman.

Prior to opening her consulting firm, Mayer retired from NHTSA as its Chief of the Office of Consumer Information, where she was responsible for the development and implementation of NHTSA's national media campaigns and consumer information and materials for both behavioral and motor vehicle programs. She managed the *Click It or Ticket* and "Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest." advertising campaigns at the national level (English and Spanish), and provided technical assistance to States in the development and placement of State-specific ads in local media. She also led the development of NHTSA's Diversity Summit, bringing together 100 participants representing 75 multicultural organizations, to enlist their support for traffic safety initiatives. During her 20+ year tenure at NHTSA, she also served as the Chief of the Impaired Driving Division, Chief of the National Outreach Division, Policy Advisor, and Program Analyst/Highway Safety Specialist.

Prior to joining NHTSA, Mayer was a Senior Program Analyst with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), during which time she was responsible for highway safety programs including Standardized Field Sobriety Test training and related programs, occupant protection communications, police pursuit policies, and assessments of law enforcement agency's programs. She was involved in the development of the initial traffic standards for law enforcement agency accreditation (which came to be known as CLEA standards).

Mayer graduated from Frostburg State University with a degree in English Education, and has worked toward a Masters of Education at Bowie State University in Maryland.

## **DAN SCHULTE**

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Dan Schulte has been the Director of Research and Evaluation Services for DCCCA, Inc., since 1990.

Currently, he serves as a technical advisor and program evaluator for the Kansas Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Safety and Technology. He has also been the Project Director of the Kansas Occupant Protection Observational Surveys, and the Kansas Direct Observation Child Safety Seat Surveys since 2002. He also currently provides technical assistance to the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office (KTSRO), and Project S.A.F.E. (*s Are For Everyone*).

Previous projects include serving as program evaluator of the Kansas Drunk Driving Prevention Program, the Youth Alcohol Media Campaign, the Kansas Safety Belt Education Office, the Wichita School Traffic Officer Program, and the Governor's Center for Teen Leadership. He conducted the State-wide Student Survey of Traffic Safety Issues and was also a NHTSA Region VII Data Contractor.

## STEPHEN J. WALSH

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Lieutenant Stephen Walsh retired from the Massachusetts State Police in December of 2015, after 35 years of State and municipal law enforcement experience principally focused on the deployment and administration of traffic investigations/enforcement and highway safety initiatives. He is currently serving as a consultant in highway safety and a Subject Matter Expert for several NHTSA initiatives and State Assessments, particularly in the areas of impaired driving, distracted driving, and occupant protection.

Stephen is a U.S. Army veteran and holds a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice. As the Commanding Officer of the Andover barracks of the Massachusetts State Police he conducted a two year NHTSA coordinated *Distracted Driving* pilot initiative aimed at determining if law enforcement can effectively enforce current laws focused on distracted driving and if high visibility enforcement combined with an effective media campaign will reduce instances of distracted driving. As the Officer in Charge of the Department's Traffic Programs Section he was responsible for formulating and instituting statewide policies and strategies associated with the deployment of highway safety mobilizations using *Compstat* models via *Intelligence Led Policing* and *Data Driven Approaches to Crime & Traffic Safety*.

As the NHTSA liaison to the Massachusetts State Police, Stephen's duties included grant procurement and management, resource allocation, mobilization assessment, and after action reporting. These initiatives included training, operational planning, deployment, and reporting on the State's highway safety initiatives, including the highly successful sobriety checkpoint program, of which he was the Officer in Charge of hundreds of checkpoints. He further served as the liaison to several private and public partners, including MADD, AAA, NSC, CARE, and the State's *Strategic Highway Safety Plan* and *Traffic Incident Management Committee*. He was the key author to three award winning *IACP National Law Enforcement Challenge* submissions, as well as the *2009 Martha Irwin Award for Highway Safety Initiatives*.

Earlier in his career, Stephen was assigned to the Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Section where he conducted and supervised thousands of fatal motor vehicle crash investigations and prosecutions. Analyzing the causative factors that led to these fatal crashes formed the foundation for strategies he later deployed to promote compliance with traffic laws through education, enforcement, and engineering.