

# DESIGNATED DRIVER PROGRAMS

Designated driver programs are very popular—promoted by universities, fraternities/sororities, community organizations. At first glance, they seem like a responsible way to prevent people from driving while intoxicated. *However*, there are liability implications for sponsors of designated driver programs that can't be ignored.

Students understand the dangers of driving while intoxicated and of riding with an intoxicated driver. The decision to seek out a safe ride is a good one. However, it isn't the job of the chapter to promote a platform for unsafe drinking, and designated driver programs can become just such a platform. No fraternity/sorority chapter wants to give the impression that they encourage the excessive consumption of alcohol. And without carefully controlled safeguards, the following challenges exist:

- If new members are most consistently assigned to designated driver duty, it creates an environment of servitude that we should be avoiding
- It can place a new member in a dangerous situation with intoxicated upperclassmen
- When designated drivers are selected, the chapter should answer the following questions:
  - Are the designated drivers licensed and safe drivers without a history of accidents? The only way to confirm this is through a Motor Vehicle Records check.
  - Are the driver and vehicle adequately insured?
  - Is the driver prepared to handle the distraction of a car full of intoxicated passengers?
  - Is the vehicle that is being used safe?
  - Is the designated driver always sober, or merely "not as drunk"?
  - There is also a risk of putting the driver in a difficult situation when taking home intoxicated female guests; this can lead to all sorts of allegations. If you review the safe rides programs sponsored by several universities, a male and a female ride in each vehicle

**According to the Institute for Highway Safety, young drivers have a crash rate per mile driven that is four times higher than all other drivers.**



## OTHER OPTIONS DO EXIST

- The use of cabs or safe ride programs has caught on with campuses in lieu of a designated driver program. Many utilize easy-to-use apps. Find sample programs here:  
[http://police.ucdavis.edu/divisions\\_services/campus\\_security/safe\\_rides.html](http://police.ucdavis.edu/divisions_services/campus_security/safe_rides.html)  
<http://www.depauw.edu/studentacademiclife/campus-safety/publicsafety/campus-safety-services/safe-ride/>
- Uber or Lyft—some chapters have developed partnerships with these ride providers
- Voluntary, informal programs within a chapter—some chapters post the phone numbers of members who plan to go out and stay sober and who are willing to provide rides.

Encouraging friends to help friends informally is the best course of action. Based on the exposure chapters face as well as the lack of attention in preventing risk in these programs, **we do not endorse chapter-sponsored designated driver programs.**

## SAFE TRANSPORTATION FOR CHAPTER EVENTS


The other part of this issue involves chapter-sponsored activities: social events, mixers, philanthropies—any activity planned and hosted by the chapter. It is important to be aware of the exposure chapters face when their events require driving a distance, and the importance of taking necessary precautions to protect the chapter from that exposure. In that case, the safest way to transport members and guests to the event is by using **professional transportation services.**

We recommend the following requirements for any selected vendor employed to provide transportation to members and guests:

- Commercial Auto Insurance that provides coverage for transporting people and property for a fee, and provides, at a minimum, primary coverage of \$1,000,000.00 combined single limit for bodily injury and property damage.
- A professional driver who has a valid commercial vehicle operator's license in the state in which the driver is located.
- A vendor who will agree to add the chapter and national organization as an additional insured.

**Hiring professional transportation services is the best way to manage the transportation exposure for a function you host.**



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