



TRANSPORTATION CABINET

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SPOTLIGHT: Kentucky's Roadside Oral Fluid Program

Overview: Driving Towards Safer Roads

Drug-impaired driving is a rapidly growing menace on American roads, often proving harder to identify and document than alcohol impairment. To combat this, the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS) has successfully implemented a statewide roadside oral fluid testing program. By adopting advanced screening technology, Kentucky has transformed its ability to detect drug-impaired drivers, providing officers with immediate, reliable evidence that strengthens investigations and prosecution. This is because of the SoToxa roadside oral fluid testing device, through Abbott and Intoximeters.

How the Program Started: From Pilot to Implementation

- **The Problem:** For the past 7-10 years increased drug-involved crashes prompted the need for tools that could detect substances—like prescription drugs, marijuana, and fentanyl—that do not appear on traditional breathalyzers.
- **Initial Testing:** Kentucky initiated pilot programs to test the accuracy and reliability of portable drug kits, utilizing voluntary tests to refine the process. Early pilots showed that Abbott SoToxa was highly effective, especially in borderline Driving Under the Influence (DUI) stops.
- **Implementation & Expansion:** In 2024, GHSA and Responsibility.org provided a \$28,750 grant to the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety to purchase 5 SoToxa devices and test kits. We placed these devices with 5 local agencies in different areas of the state. Once they were trained and on the road with these devices, the officers feedback was very positive and they have seen this as a game changer, due to confidence and safety the device gave them. Once we saw the success, more funding was acquired by the KOHS and we purchased 55 more units and distributed 34 out to the Kentucky State Police. We knew with a project of this caliber and expense that we needed to show that it works. The office put together a dashboard and an online reporting page so the agencies could enter when they used the device and the results of the test. This dashboard would help us to trace not only the usage but provide us with the drug intelligence and data that we would hope to match up with the blood results. We started highlighting what we were seeing and informing agencies around the state and we started having agencies reach out wanting to know how to get this device for their agency. With the success we were seeing, our Executive Director Ryan Fisher was able to acquire additional funding from the state for more devices and we performed a training for 45 more agencies on March 25th 2026. Kentucky now has more than 80 SoToxa units throughout the state.

Success Highlights: A Force Multiplier

- **Data Collection:** The dashboard for data collection on the SoToxa that Ed Harding created has been a game changer. Not only does it justify the need and funding for this program, but the data helps to show other partners and states what is possible to aid law enforcement, and how it works.



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- **Real-time Evidence:** The devices allow officers to screen for six, and now seven, drug categories (including fentanyl) on the roadside in about 5 minutes.
- **Reduced Lab Burden:** The program has reduced reliance on slow, expensive laboratory resources, providing faster turnaround for DUI cases and helping remove impaired drivers from the road faster.
- **Effective Prosecution:** Early results indicate the technology provides actionable evidence that strengthens prosecution. Judges and Prosecutors are finding this beneficial when matched with the blood results. It aids in the need for warrants to get blood draws.

Lessons Learned & Ongoing Evolution

- **Sustainability:** Investing in "train-the-trainer" models is critical for widespread adoption and lasting program impact.
- **Borderline Cases:** Oral fluid testing has proven most effective at detecting impairment in scenarios where traditional techniques (SFST) might be inconclusive and an officer is unsure.
- **Collaboration:** Working closely with prosecutors and law enforcement stakeholders from the beginning was vital for acceptance and collection of data helped to reinforce collaboration.
- **Adaptation:** The program continues to add new drug categories (like fentanyl) to meet evolving safety threats. This is a device that will and should continue to evolve.

Data Collection & The Digital Dashboard

A key component of Kentucky's success is a robust, organized data collection strategy.

- **Real-time Logging:** Officers use a standardized process to record oral fluid test results, allowing for a digital "rolling log" of device usage.
- **Data Analysis:** The data is compiled into a comprehensive, searchable spreadsheet, enabling officials to analyze trends, such as which substances are most prevalent in specific regions.
- **Strategic Planning:** This data feeds back into the statewide Highway Safety Plan, ensuring that training and equipment are deployed efficiently.

Interested in Learning More?

Kentucky's model is designed to be replicated. If your state is interested in learning more about our data collection processes, please contact Matt McCoy at Matt.McCoy@ky.gov.