

# Pitt County Health Department: Pitt Co and Countdown 2 Drive

## *Targeting Safe Teen Driving through Multidisciplinary Collaboration*

**Focus Area:** Motor Vehicle Crash

**Pitt County Burden:** 24 deaths, 121 hospitalizations, 272 ED visits (2012)

**Target Population:** Teens and their partners

**Approach:** Education

### Overview

This case study summarizes two safe teen driving programs in Pitt County:

- **Pitt Co:** Student-run “peer-to-peer” driver safety group at D.H. Conley High School
- **Countdown 2 Drive:** Teen and parent education sessions in concert with Pitt County high schools’ driver education programs. The course culminates with a “Passenger Agreement” in which parents and teens sign a contract committing to safe driving.

These programs are implemented in collaboration with the Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Center (ECIPP) at Vidant Medical Center (VMC), a non-profit hospital system serving Eastern Carolina. Pitt County Health Department (PCHD) has collaborated with ECIPP for over 15 years to implement programs that focus on traffic safety, bicycle and pedestrian safety and the built environment.

### Selection and Development

Crash data from county and law enforcement sources led to a strong focus on motor vehicle crash prevention in Pitt County. In particular, stakeholders aimed to address the leading causes of teen crashes: driver error and speeding. Pitt County has a long history of using multidisciplinary approaches to prevent motor vehicle crashes, which began with a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to establish the Safe Communities Coalition of Pitt County in 1996 (part of ECIPP). Teen driver stakeholders, including ECIPP-VMC, PCHD, and police and fire department staff attended an Injury-Free NC Academy workshop in 2012 sponsored by the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center and the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch of the N.C. Division of Public Health. This workshop provided critical training to help stakeholders develop and implement these safe teen driving programs. Pitt Co was modeled from a similar program in Johnston County, N.C., and Countdown 2 Drive is part of a national education program



**Population:** 174,263

**Median Household Income:** \$40,452



**Key Program Partners:** Vidant Medical Center, Pitt County Police Department, Pitt County Sheriff’s Office, N.C. State Highway Patrol, N.C. Department of Transportation, Pitt County Schools

**Funding Sources:** N.C. Governor’s Highway Safety Program, Pitt County ABC Board, State Farm Insurance

## Implementation

Countdown 2 Drive is now in its second year and Pitt Co has been running since December 2013. Both programs have required extensive collaboration and coordination between ECIPP and the local high schools to incorporate these programs into school schedules and engage busy teens. Despite these challenges, stakeholders view the programs as successful and Pitt Co will be replicated in additional high schools in the next year. Pitt Co allows students to shape the program, so it is flexible and adaptive to community needs. Activities have included Prom Safety and engaging students in safe driving activities. Countdown 2 Drive is implemented in concert with the local high schools' driver education programs in partnership with local law enforcement.

## Evaluation

To date, stakeholders have not conducted a formal evaluation of these programs. However, records indicate that Pitt Co has reached all 1,600 students at D.H. Conley High School and Countdown 2 Drive has reached 150 people. Stakeholders recognize evaluation as an important next step to help strengthen the evidence base and are planning to utilize student surveys and seatbelt surveillance to evaluate Pitt Co. In the meantime, stakeholders continue to map motor vehicle crashes in Pitt County as part of regular monitoring to help inform safety and enforcement measures.

## Keys to Success

Several factors have contributed to the implementation of these programs in Pitt County:

- **Multidisciplinary and collaborative approach.** PCHD's resources are limited, but they strategically expand their capacity by relying heavily on other stakeholders like ECIPP-VMC to implement programming. The Safe Communities Coalition of Pitt County involves stakeholders from law enforcement, business, schools and the medical community, among others. Despite the diverse opinions and missions of these various stakeholders, they have made great strides through compromise, communication, and what ECIPP representative Jennifer Smith called "mutual support." Giving credit where credit is due and showing support for initiatives of Coalition members helps to maintain these relationships. Finally, specific to the Pitt Co and Countdown 2 Drive program, involvement of teens *and* parents has been important.
- **Diversified funding.** The multidisciplinary involvement, as well as the complexity of factors contributing to motor vehicle crashes, has allowed stakeholders to seek unique funding sources such as the Pitt County Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and State Farm Insurance Company. This diversified funding, along with community support, strengthens the sustainability of these programs.

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