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Study: Ignition Interlocks Stop Repeat Drunk Driving Offenses

A report released today by the Michigan Supreme Court says that ignition interlocks are successful in preventing convicted drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel and driving drunk. The study by researchers at Grand Valley State University found ignition interlock devices are an effective means of controlling drunk-driving recidivism among chronic offenders when incorporated into a DWI/Sobriety Court program, such as the 86th District Court.

As part of an intensive program of supervision and sanctions for convicted drivers, ignition interlocks prevent a vehicle from being driven if the blood alcohol content (BAC) of the operator exceeds a certain level (measured by blowing into the device). Specifically, the report found:

- **Recidivism Cut in Half.** A DWI recidivism rate of 2.8 percent among interlock participants who are off probation as compared to participants in the Standard Probation Group who have a DWI recidivism rate of 5.5 percent.
- **Nearly Universal Compliance.** More than 97 percent of people ordered by the DWI/Sobriety Court judges to put the devices on their vehicles actually put them on.
- **Failure Rate Two-Thirds Lower.** 12 percent of interlock participants failed the DWI/Sobriety Court program, while nonparticipants had a failure rate of 34 percent.

Last year, there were 236 alcohol-related fatalities on Michigan roadways and 9,396 crashes involving alcohol (Michigan State Police, 2014). There are 41 DWI/Sobriety courts statewide designed to assist participants in their recovery, prevent drinking and driving incidents, while improving their quality of life and strengthening local communities. The program keeps participants out of jail, avoiding the cost of incarceration and helping participants stay on the job.

The study, which uses data from 2011 to 2014, was commissioned by the Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals in cooperation with the State Court Administrative Office. The research in the report is based on data drawn from:

- 8th District Court (Kalamazoo)
- 51st District Court (Waterford)
- 61st District Court (Grand Rapids)
- 86th District Court (Traverse City)
- 96th District Court (Marquette)

The report reflects the Michigan Supreme Court's commitment to measure performance and to assist local trial courts in implementing best practices and improve outcomes.