Turning the Corner...
and Still Driving

A Review of Law Enforcement Programs Involving Older Driver Safety

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

America's median age is on the rise as the older population increases and a majority of law enforcement executives may not realize the magnitude of this issue as a law enforcement problem. Its latent nature prevents it from taking its place among the topics law enforcement leaders confront each day, when in fact the aging population presents law enforcement with the rapidly expanding, complex issue of the "older driver."

The so-called "baby boomers" (those born between 1946 and 1964) are primarily in their forties and fifties. As a group they are safe drivers and practice good driving habits. They are courteous, law-abiding drivers who take fewer risks and are less disposed to "aggressive driving" than their younger counterparts. In other words, they seldom call police attention to themselves by their driving. The first of their generation will not begin to exhibit the signs of aging that affects their driving skills for a few years. To the unobservant or the preoccupied, the aging process might be easy to overlook.

Our population is "graying." While it's a social topic with broad implications for society, it is also an important issue that today's law enforcement managers and tomorrow's line officers must prepare for.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Many mobility issues must be addressed by policy makers and aging Americans. In the transportation industries alone, dozens of disciplines are devising countless interventions aimed at older users: from engineering the roads of the future to making letters on road signs larger to enhancing public transportation modes. All these mechanisms will have an impact on both service delivery and end users. However, not all these issues pose an urgent concern for law enforcement. Even so, progressive, alert law enforcement officials are conscious that America's seniors are turning the corner and still driving.

This guide is intended to help sheriffs and other law enforcement administrators identify and locate resources, develop and implement strategies, and train and equip personnel to effectively address concerns posed by older drivers in their communities.

FACT SHEET

- People over 65 are the fastest-growing segment of the population in the United States – projected to reach 70 million by 2030.

- Law enforcement will steadily encounter more elderly drivers on the road—one-fifth of the population will be over 65 by 2030. By 2020, there will be more than 40 million licensed drivers 65 and older.

- Aging causes changes in psychomotor, cognitive, and visual abilities—all necessary for the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

  - Sheriffs need to know their States' referral process for driver licensing and retesting for errant drivers.

- Crash-related fatalities involving these drivers are projected to increase by 155 percent.

- Senior drivers are over-represented in intersection crashes. Eighty-one percent of fatal crashes involving seniors occur during the day and most involve another vehicle. (Source: Traffic Safety Facts 2002 – Older Population.)

  - The office of sheriff needs to plan and take into account the resources needed for this increased workload.

  - The office of sheriff can also fill the role of facilitator by partnering with community agencies and senior citizen groups to provide seniors with driving safely information and education programs.

BACKGROUND

For most of our history, a graph depicting the U.S. population resembled a pyramid. The oldest population formed the pinnacle and the youngest population provided its broad base. The baby boomers, however, are changing the shape of the graph; under their influence it no longer has a pyramid shape. Between 1946 and 1964 doctors delivered 76 million American babies. Dubbed the "baby boomers" by demographers, they have comprised the largest age group in our society for their entire lives. Although "boomers" are middle-aged today, in 2011 the first of them will arrive at "old age" when they turn 65. By 2029, when the last of them have celebrated their 65th birthday, there will be more than 70 million senior citizens living in the United States[1].

While the boomers' impact on our senior population is a key factor, it doesn't stand alone as the reason the U.S. population is getting older. Advances in health care and improvements in lifestyle during the last 50 years have translated into a longer lifespan, making the oldest citizens, those over 85, the fastest-growing segment of our population. At the beginning of this century, in 2000, there were 34 times more people over 85 than at the beginning of the last century in 1900[2]. This figure, provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, paints a vivid portrayal of the shift in our nation's median age.
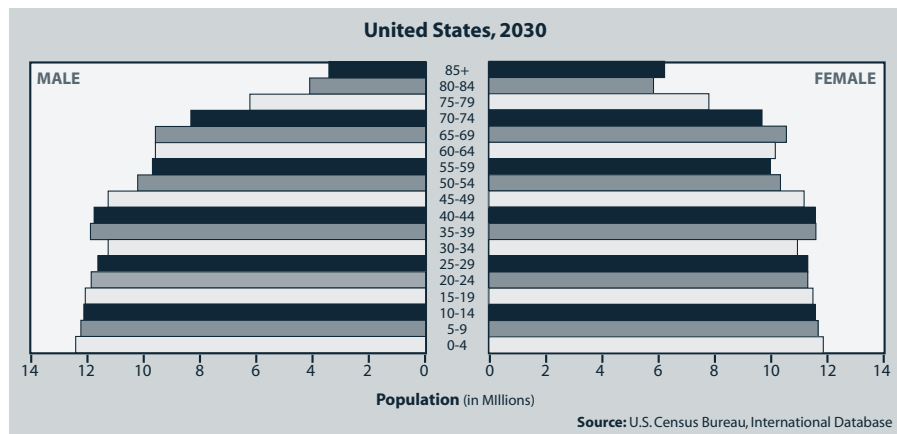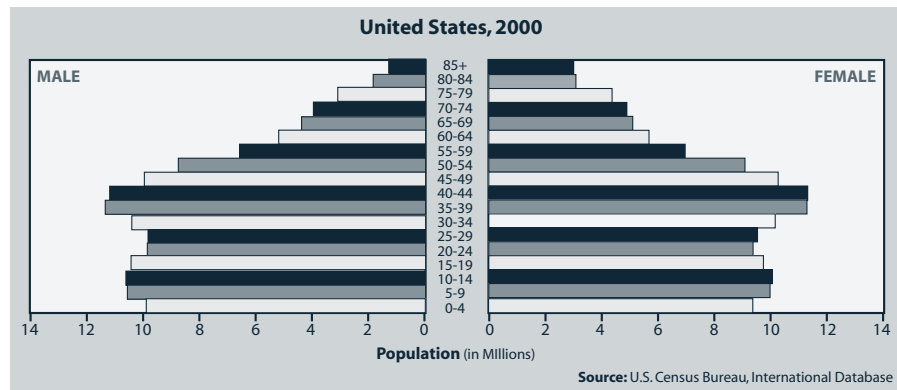
What effect does this demographic trend have on traffic regulation and enforcement? First, let's look at some characteristics of the aging driver.

United States, 2000

MALE — FEMALE

Age groups (top to bottom): 85+, 80-84, 75-79, 70-74, 65-69, 60-64, 55-59, 50-54, 45-49, 40-44, 35-39, 30-34, 25-29, 20-24, 15-19, 10-14, 5-9, 0-4

Population (in Millions): 14 12 10 8 6 4 2 0 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database

United States, 2030

MALE — FEMALE

Age groups (top to bottom): 85+, 80-84, 75-79, 70-74, 65-69, 60-64, 55-59, 50-54, 45-49, 40-44, 35-39, 30-34, 25-29, 20-24, 15-19, 10-14, 5-9, 0-4

Population (in Millions): 14 12 10 8 6 4 2 0 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database

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[1] Principal source U.S. Bureau of the Census.
[2] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, A profile of older Americans: 2000 (Washington, DC: 2002).

The Car Is Americans' Choice For Personal Transportation

Everyone knows that Americans have a fabled love affair with their cars—so much so that cars now outnumber drivers for the first time in history.

The numbers of both registered cars and licensed drivers have grown for decades. Not only are there more vehicles on our roads than in any other time in our history, but we also drive more miles. Highways and road systems are clogged with business commuters, errand-running parents, and pleasure drivers. While some of our grandmothers might never have learned to drive, driving is seen as a necessity in today's world. In fact, more women are driving than ever before.

This facet of the bigger issue is illustrative of the complexities of the aging driver issue. Researchers at NHTSA estimate that approximately 20 percent of women age 65 or older don't drive, either because they never learned or because they have stopped driving for some reason. (Source: Literature Review of the Status of Research on the Transportation and Mobility Needs of Older Women, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.) That percentage is declining rapidly while survivorship and immigration serve to increase the number of women drivers. Meanwhile, older women outnumber older men in our

population, a trend that will continue into the future alongside the fact that more women than men live alone in old age. Living unaccompanied leaves these women without someone else to rely on for driving or with whom to share the burden. This domestic profile increases women's reliance on the car for their routine transportation needs. In short, there will be more senior women driving cars in the future.

Driving Is A Factor In Personal Independence

Learning to drive represents a specific rite-of-passage, an inarguable freedom for each successive legion of teenagers who receive driving licenses. The ability to drive connects people to work, churches, social groups, doctors, shopping, friends, etc. Americans drive an estimated 2.8 trillion miles a year[3] , using the car almost exclusively to run errands and conduct the business of their daily lives.

Baby boomers, because they have always used cars as their primary mode of transportation, will continue to rely on their personal autos once they achieve senior citizen status. Tomorrow's seniors will have driven their entire adult lives and will be accustomed to the high level of mobility the automobile provides. That same sense of freedom and independence that teens acquire with their first license, seniors carry with them to old age. The ability to

[3]U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, National Household Travel Survey 2001 Highlights Report, (Washington, DC: 2003).

travel from place to place is an important characteristic of personal autonomy and good quality-of-life. Most seniors plan to continue driving in their later years in order to retain autonomy and quality of life.

Commuting to work and back home has always been a major portion of our daily mileage. The census indicates that nearly 88 percent of Americans travel to work by car, most without passengers. That percentage will not decline in coming decades even as people retire. That's because it is a fallacy that age 65 means retirement, according to baby boomers. Middle-aged Americans report that either out of desire or necessity, many will work at least part-time after they reach 65. Eight of 10 said that they expect to continue working after traditional retirement age[4]. Traditional retirement age has increased, too. The Social Security Administration is gradually increasing the normal retirement age to 67, another change that will affect most baby boomers—and their commuting habits.

There Are Few Alternatives To Driving

 Most communities offer few alternatives to driving. Public transportation systems are chiefly built on hubs that service inner cities, with only sporadic service in suburban neighborhoods. Rural services are limited. This is problematic, because some estimates

suggest that 80 percent of the elderly live in rural or suburban environments, leaving only about 20 percent with access to reliable, convenient public transportation. It is estimated that in the near future between 60 and 86 percent of the elderly population plan to age "in place," away from urban areas. When reviewed closely, these statistics support the theory that baby boomers are not going to be moving to the city in order to use public transportation systems as their driving ability declines.

To the contrary, because the majority live outside the city, they will likely continue to do so. Even today, consumers have to travel to commercial centers to obtain goods and services once readily available closer to home. "Big box" stores have all but eliminated mom-and-pop markets from residential neighborhoods. Lacking dependable public transportation, most elderly residents will continue to rely heavily on their automobiles and will need to commute to obtain goods and services. Many will have to travel on rural roads to get to retail outlets. This will be of special concern to sheriffs—rural roads have more than twice the fatality rate as urban roads[5].

National Policies Favor Mobility

Policy makers understand America's reliance on the car as the principal transportation choice. They recognize that taking cars

[4]AARP. These Four Walls…Americans 45+ Talk About Home and Community. (Washington, DC: 2003)
[5]U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration "Rural/urban comparisons," Traffic Safety Facts 2001, (Washington, DC: 2002).

away from senior citizens, without offering attractive alternatives, is not the answer: This would have a devastating effect on seniors, leaving them virtually stranded and isolated from society. The ability to drive or have viable transportation alternatives is vital to the maintenance of social and emotional well-being. Losing the ability to drive correlates to a loss of freedom and independence so severe that it can cause deep depression and other emotional distress[6] . Therefore, as policy discussions and development have taken place in the past decade, emphasis has been on keeping senior drivers behind the wheel for as long as they can be safe, rather than taking away their car keys.

This may seem like a departure from popular wisdom since the media has recently focused public attention on crashes involving elderly drivers. Unfortunately, much of that attention is devoted to tragedies wherein an elderly person crashes their car into a market or a sidewalk full of pedestrians. Due to the sensational nature of some media coverage, some of the public may be left with the impression that elderly drivers per se are dangerous. Support for this thesis hasn't been substantiated, despite TV, magazine, and newspaper stories.

Seniors have lower fatal crash rates per 100,000 licensed drivers when compared

with teenage drivers and slightly higher rates than drivers of other age groups. One reason is that seniors drive fewer miles and take shorter trips than other drivers. Even this statistic, alone, can be misleading. When their crashes are adjusted to reflect the number of miles traveled, seniors' crash rates go up with their increased exposure. This is important to law enforcement

Crash Involvement by Age Group
(**Source:** FARS)
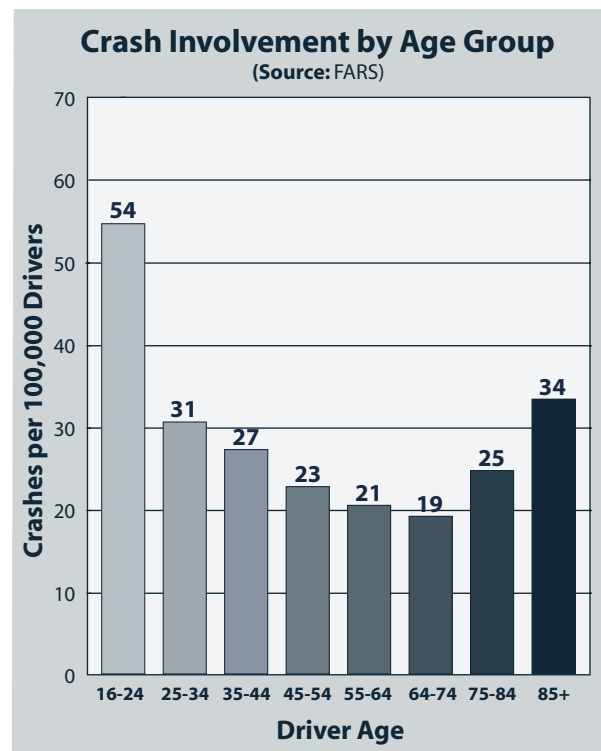
officials because the empirical data are based on the historical likeliness that seniors were driving fewer miles as they aged. Analysts predict that more senior drivers will drive more miles in the future. The resulting projections are daunting: the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety predicts that the number of senior citizens involved in

[6]U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Safe Mobility for Older People Notebook (Washington, DC: 1999).

reported car crashes will increase by 178 percent between 1999 and 2030. During the same period, seniors' involvement in fatal crashes is projected to increase by 155 percent.

From a traffic management viewpoint, this raises various issues for law enforcement practitioners. Encounters with elderly drivers will occur more often because the elderly will comprise such a large portion of our population (one in five will be over 65 in 2030[7]).

When seniors make up a larger proportion of road users, other implications for law enforcement emerge. For instance, more older drivers mean more age-related hazards being experienced on the roads. Even though we enjoy healthier lifestyles and live longer, aging still causes declines in motor skills, and in perceptual and cognitive abilities in the majority of adults. Since drivers rely heavily on these functions, any degradation can manifest itself in poorer driving performance.

For instance, most people lose flexibility and face declining strength with age. These losses are most pronounced in people who have arthritis or a similar condition, but can affect anyone. The resulting pain, weakness, and stiffness can limit both function and range of motion. Some drivers may feel pain or have difficulty turning to look over

their shoulders while they back or change lanes, and many of those will avoid turning to mitigate their discomfort. Others may find it difficult to manipulate the controls in their cars.

Generally, people slow down with age. They may experience slower reflexes, delayed reaction times, and have more difficulty concentrating. Some have trouble processing complex mental tasks, affecting the quick decisions and responses drivers frequently must make.

Aging adults commonly complain about weakened vision. Changes in eyesight can make it difficult for seniors to focus on moving objects, see well at night or under low light conditions, adjust to glare, or rely on peripheral vision. Clearly, drivers rely on sight more than any other sense to operate a car.

Many other changes can accompany the aging process, including:

- Different forms of dementia such as that caused by Alzheimer's disease
- Age-related illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, etc., and
- Effects induced by the consumption of medicines.

However, the highway transportation industry is anticipating the increased numbers of older drivers. Recognizing that an older driver may have difficulty looking

[7]U.S. Bureau of the Census.

to the rear, automobile manufacturers are investigating new technologies that will alert a driver to the presence of hazards behind the vehicle. In addition, automakers are redesigning lighting and instruments to make them easier to see. They also are creating handles and knobs that arthritic hands can grip easily. Highway departments around the country are making the lettering on signs larger and easier to read. Engineers are building roads and interchanges that are easier for seniors to navigate.

Law Enforcement's Role In Addressing The Elderly Driver Quandary

Just as other industries are preparing for more elderly citizens, law enforcement must analyze its role and develop sound strategies for the future. For example, it is already clear that senior drivers are over-represented in intersection crashes. Crashes at intersections present special concerns for law enforcement. They take significant manpower to secure, investigate, and clean up because they involve multiple roadways. Disrupted traffic flow often aggravates these challenges.

Crashes involving elderly drivers, passengers, and pedestrians require more on-scene processing time because seniors are more likely to be injured in these crashes. In its aged state, the human body is frailer than when it is young. About one-third of older driver fatalities occur at intersections. The fraction increases to about one half when the driver's age exceeds 80[8]. All other factors being the same, older drivers and passengers are more likely to suffer more injuries than younger people who are involved in the same type of crash. This means that there will be an increased use of rescue apparatus at more crash scenes complicating law enforcement's efforts to restore efficient traffic flow and accomplish other on-scene tasks.

The same frailty that exposes seniors to higher injury rates in crashes exacerbates their fatality rates. Early in 2004, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released study data that shows in crashes of similar severity, people over 65 are 1.78 times more likely to die in that crash than people age 55 to 64; that people over 75 are 2.59 times more likely to die; and that those over 85 are 3.72 times more likely to die. Since more elderly people in each of the three age groups will be traveling in an automobile as drivers or passengers, they will be involved more frequently in serious crashes. Fatal crashes consume more resources including investigative time than collisions without aggravating factors, and law enforcement managers need to plan for this increased workload.

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[8]U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration "Older drivers Have Some Problems Negotiating Intersections," Traffic Tech, No. 197, (Washington, DC: 1999).

Drivers are not dangerous because they are getting older. In fact, older drivers are more likely to obey speed limits, wear safety belts, less likely to drive while under the influence of alcohol, and report taking fewer risks than other age groups. And despite the wide media coverage of older driver tragedies, seniors are still less hazardous to the public than teenage drivers. Even as older drivers are at increased risk for crash involvement, they are not more likely to cause collisions that are fatal to other people on the road. Their obedience to many "rules of the road" supports the contention that when elderly drivers do crash they tend to injure themselves rather than someone else.

Also, license renewals drop dramatically for drivers in their 80s even as this age group expands—evidence that many senior citizens recognize their diminished abilities. Before deciding to stop driving all together, though, many senior drivers compensate for diminished driving skills. They may choose familiar or less challenging routes to make their driving more comfortable and avoid freeway driving, rush hours and congestion, driving at night, and other aspects of driving, such as making left turns, that could cause anxiety or injury.

Based on the knowledge that drivers may self regulate, curricula have emerged that are aimed at helping senior citizens understand the physical changes they are undergoing, how these changes affect driving, and how to adjust their driving behaviors to compensate for some of these changes. One role that law enforcement can fill is that of facilitator. Sheriffs' offices and other law enforcement agencies can join with community agencies to provide these lesson plans to senior communities.

Still, not all drivers are willing to stop driving when appropriate, and some drivers may need to be persuaded to give up driving. Others may cease driving prematurely. In these instances, law enforcement agencies can fill the role of educator. Educational literature can be distributed in building lobbies and at community safety events where law enforcement agencies are exhibiting. The local sheriff is likely to field many inquiries from the public regarding driver licensing. Relatives frequently turn to law enforcement when they don't know where else to go for answers, to seek advice on how to convince loved ones that it's not safe for them to drive anymore, and to learn what alternative means of transportation are available when they can't provide rides to specific events. These real-life examples will be replayed repeatedly in the future as more members of our society age to the point where they eliminate driving from their lives.

The local sheriff typically isn't funded or staffed at levels that will allow employees

to drive the elderly to individual events. But law enforcement officers can act as a community referral source to elderly citizens. Officers can be trained to answer specific questions about the licensing procedures in their States and help families navigate the obstacles they might encounter as they try to determine transportation options for seniors who are no longer able to drive safely. Then they can refer citizens to the appropriate public or private agency charged with keeping seniors mobile in their own communities, and to other resources such as the area's agency on aging.

Another situation that law enforcement must consider is a policy or a plan that addresses traffic citations. Law enforcement must be sensitive to the effects of aging on drivers. Yet at the same time they have to fulfill their public trust to keep communities safe. Line officers who issue warnings to elderly drivers in lieu of citing them may be doing the seniors, the seniors' families, and their communities a disservice. Receiving a traffic citation may stimulate an elderly

driver to reevaluate the decision to drive. Also, this citation may provide the impetus a family needs to help an aging loved one investigate alternatives to driving and to consider relinquishing a driver's license. Law enforcement officers will continue to encounter senior drivers. Many seniors will display some signs of aging, such as reduced dexterity or hearing impairment. Officers and deputies should receive sensitivity training that prepares them for eventual interaction with senior drivers. They should be trained to differentiate between the elderly driver who is experiencing the effects of aging and the driver experiencing some form of dementia or confusion due to a medical condition such as diabetes.

Some law enforcement agencies have developed elderly driver programs. The level of sophistication is based on their community's needs. The costs are measured against available resources and other community conditions. The next section identifies some law enforcement programs on the cutting edge of the older driver issue.

PROGRAMS

The role of law enforcement in the aging driver arena is still largely undefined. What a community does, and when, is primarily a function of the community itself. Some jurisdictions — especially those in the "sun belt" — have larger populations of older drivers than others. Some communities have better access to public transportation or more efficient transportation alternatives. These and other variables have to be measured as an agency undertakes to serve its aging driver population.

The following programs provide an illustration of how sheriffs are pioneering the effort to address this component of their service to communities. These programs can be replicated and tailored to suit local needs.

Ross County, Ohio, Sheriff's Office

Ross County, Ohio, is a rural community where senior citizens face many of the same challenges while driving as in any other communities: difficult left-hand turns; busy intersections; old highway signs with small, faded lettering; increasingly heavier traffic; and other dilemmas elderly drivers encounter on a daily basis.

The Ross County Sheriff's Office is responsible for the county's senior driver safety — one element of a comprehensive senior outreach agenda is organized under the auspices of the Ross County Triad. One of the most prominent and successful components of the Triad is its SALT (Seniors And Lawmen Together) council. SALT councils provide a forum for discussion of senior driving and safety issues between a community's seniors and law enforcement officials. The Ross County SALT Council marked its fifth year of existence in 2004 and boasts an active membership of 65 senior citizens.

The driver safety curriculum provided by the Ross County Triad was born out of the SALT Council's input. The council collaborated with Sheriff Ron Nichols and brought the AARP's Driver Safety Program (formerly called 55 Alive) to its senior citizens. While creating his own elderly driver syllabus, the sheriff learned that the core curriculum of the Driver Safety Program met his community's needs. Rather than devote precious resources to program development and follow-up testing of a separate lesson plan, the Triad selected AARP's program for the county. Sheriff Nichols said the program was easily accessible to him, was relatively inexpensive to host, and was tried and proved with AARP's many years of experience behind it.

The Ross County Sheriff's Office, in its role as a Triad principal, began hosting the

Driver Safety Program in 2001. The class has been conducted following the AARP guidelines ever since, but with some special characteristics.

The first is that the AARP-certified instructor who moderates the training is a sergeant with the Ross County Sheriff's Office. Having a certified instructor in-house reduces some of the logistical obstacles in bringing the program to the public. The sheriff's office invites a trooper from the local Ohio Highway Patrol post to assist with the classes. They conduct classes in uniform, which officials believe adds to their credibility with attendees. Their respective law enforcement backgrounds make them uniquely qualified to address driving-related questions that may arise during the course.

Enhancing the information presented in the participant workbook, the sergeant invites guest speakers to supply additional information for the group. A local ophthalmologist discusses weakening eyesight, night driving, and bifocal glasses, pointing out how each can affect driving ability. He also provides pamphlets that address macular degeneration, cataracts, and glaucoma. His medical training and background allow him to answer specific questions about the medicines participants take, and how they might impact driving. And what may be unique, the doctor sits on the State board that reviews license revocations for drivers that have failed the requisite eye exam. Through this experience he is able to provide specific information about that process as well.

A public health nurse representing the Safe Communities program also speaks to the class. She emphasizes the importance of passenger safety, safety belts, and child restraints, pointing out that many senior citizens drive grandchildren and other youngsters. She directs class participants to the community resources available to help them with their individual passenger safety concerns.

The sergeant also supplements the normal class information with a variety of short videos relevant to the particular subject matter contained in the standard curriculum. His source for the videos is the Ohio Department of Transportation; therefore, the videos contain information localized and specific to his audience.

Finally, after the class has officially concluded, the sheriff's office offers seniors the opportunity to drive a golf cart around a short obstacle course set up in an adjacent parking lot. The seniors are shepherded through the short maze of pylons while the sergeant rides beside them. Then they take a second run through the course wearing "Fatal Vision" goggles. Fatal Vision goggles mimic the visual effects of alcohol impairment on a driver. In this adaptation,

however, the sheriff's office uses them to drive home the point that some prescription drugs can interfere with a driver's ability to safely pilot a car.

The Ross County Triad hosts the Driver Safety Program three or four times a year. The courses, offered approximately once every quarter, are held in one of Ross County's five senior citizens' centers. Typically, the class is spread over two days, beginning in the morning and concluding in the early afternoon. Each senior citizens' center is equipped with a lunchroom, and participants are invited for a low-cost lunch.

The senior citizens' centers, the sheriff's office, and the Triad all advertise the classes through various outlets. The Triad announces the classes on the Web site it maintains through the sheriff's office. The senior centers make announcements at meetings and via postings on bulletin boards. The sheriff's office makes public announcements and posts information in public buildings. Each entity relies on newsletters and media coverage to promote the program.

Classroom dynamics and space constraints keep the roster at about 30 participants per session. The sheriff reports they never have trouble filling the classes. In addition, the Ross County Sheriff's Office covers the cost of the classes, including the cost of

participant manuals. The sheriff compared the financial cost of hosting one session of AARP's Driver Safety Program to the cost of human life: "My responsibility as a law enforcement administrator is to save lives. This is saving seniors' lives; $300 (the approximate cost for manuals) is pennies compared to saving just one life."

Educating seniors is critical to its mission, but the Ross County Sheriff's Office also understands the importance of educating its employees about the affects of aging. Law enforcement officers need to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of seniors the same as any other special-needs population. This is particularly true of Alzheimer's patients. The sheriff's office teamed up with a local Alzheimer's clinic to train deputies to recognize dementia victims and how to effectively intervene with dementia patients they might encounter on the job.

Franklin County, Massachusetts, Sheriff's Office

Although the Franklin County, Massachusetts, Sheriff's Office struggles with many of the challenges that any sheriff's office battles, it still manages a successful older driver program.

The sheriff's office directs the Franklin County Triad, which is composed of five area SALT councils. The Triad administrator, a captain in the sheriff's office, describes

driver education programming as one part of a broad system of outreach to the county's mature populace.

Through its Triad, the sheriff's office coordinates and delivers the AARP Driver Safety Program as often as the need arises. The sheriff's deputies evaluate their need by polling seniors at a local senior center and when enough seniors express interest, they form a class. Class size is limited to about 12 seniors because of meeting space and instructor preference. As with the Ross County program, the class is held over two days rather than just one day.

The local AARP office provides the certified Driver Safety Program instructor while the sheriff's office donates the meeting space and refreshments. Participants pay the cost of their own workbooks, which is about $10.

Franklin County is a large, rural county covering about 770 square miles. The county's senior population is estimated at 10,000, with approximately 2,000 registered with the Triad to participate in programs or receive benefits. Managing such a large Triad is a Herculean task. The county's answer to this challenge is a multi-faceted response that includes a simple computer database. When seniors come into the program, they provide the sheriff's office with basic information including name, address, and telephone number. The seniors

are free to share as much other information as they like, including:

- Name and contact information for friends and relatives;
- Name and contact information for neighbors;
- Name and contact information for their physicians;
- A photograph;
- Their current medical concerns/conditions.

This database, invaluable in emergencies, is used to assist emergency responders as appropriate under prevailing circumstances.

In addition to collecting information, the Triad shares information with its enrollees, too, such as a booklet, Older Drivers — Making Changes for the Better. The publisher, Channing Bete Company (see Appendix C), describes this publication as helping "readers assess whether they need to make changes in their driving habits or give up driving entirely for their own and others' safety." The Triad also provides a community directory of local service providers, which lists alternative transportation resources for seniors unable to drive themselves.

Deputies, moreover, provide information to seniors any time they find an opportunity. In the words of the Franklin County Triad supervisor, "we always educate 'em—drive home the point." He was describing the

philosophy that repeatedly mentions the risks senior drivers face in order to keep the issue fresh in the minds of the county's elderly drivers. The Triad underscores the need for senior citizens to 1) be aware of and assess their own abilities, and 2) plan for the day when they may not be able to drive anymore.

Deputies are scheduled to make personal visits with seniors enrolled in Triad programs. Through this personal contact, deputies become aware of any special needs a particular citizen may have. During these visits deputies are tasked with noticing any recent or unusual damage to the seniors' cars and garages — tips that a senior's driving skills might be declining. When such a clue arises, the deputy can intervene in various ways, depending on the individual situation. The deputy may encourage self-assessment through the Older Drivers booklet described above or, for seniors with access to the Internet, several Web-based assessment tools. In cases where the affected driver has a spouse, sibling, or other loved one living in the same household, the deputy may suggest that someone else assume primary responsibility for driving.

Any intervention is designed to encourage the senior to consider alternatives to driving as their personal choice— not be forced into the decision by the sheriff's office. Deputies are expected to act with compassion toward

the senior and to preserve the cooperative relationship between their office and the senior citizen. Many of the enrollees depend on the Triad's services and the deputies, so the office makes every effort to avoid alienating the citizen. It's important to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office to retain good rapport with seniors and that they not be perceived as "bad guys" for taking away a senior's driving privileges.

As a practical matter, though, not every driver who should cease driving does so voluntarily. When Franklin County senior citizens reach the point their driving is hazardous to themselves or to the general public, Triad officers take steps to remove driving privileges. When deputies reach the conclusion that a senior driver should stop driving for safety purposes, they try to engage professionals, paraprofessionals, or lay people close to the driver to encourage the senior to give up driving.

The sheriff's office also encourages doctors to discuss driving safety with their older patients. They begin an open dialogue with the partners of the senior driver who might make living without driving easier for that senior. In addition, they make quiet referrals to the motor vehicle administration, viewing confrontation with the driver as a last resort.

One of the tools Franklin County deputies can use to avoid such a confrontation is a driving agreement. Long before the seniors'

driving abilities are questioned, a deputy might open a driver safety discussion with a senior. Following the discussion, a senior can complete a form called Agreement With My Family About Driving. In essence, the form is the driver's acknowledgement that the time may come when he or she can't make the decision to keep driving without help.   In addition, there's a place on the form where the driver appoints a family member who will, if the time comes, tell the driver when driving is no longer safe. It is especially useful in cases where a patient later develops dementia, as the form is completed before the onset of dementia, and includes the driver in the decision-making process.

About 60 seniors in the Triad database are Alzheimer's patients. In these cases, the database includes updated photographs, because pictures have proven invaluable during a crisis. In any case where an Alzheimer's patient gets lost, the sheriff's office is able to quickly disseminate information, including a photo, to local law enforcement and other first responders. And in at least one case the Triad supervisor's personal knowledge about an Alzheimer's patient may have helped to avoid a tragedy. One of these patients was inadvertently allowed access to a car and in his confused state drove away. The captain knew enough about the patient and the patient's background to predict the route

the man might drive. The man was located by the State Police along that very route and was apprehended before he could cause harm to himself or others.

Another feature of the Triad's program that helps elderly drivers is the File of Life. The File of Life is a magnetic envelope in which senior citizens can record emergency medical data. First responders know to look on the refrigerator for medical information if their patient is unconscious or unable to help them. Seniors are given a companion envelope, which they can keep in the glove compartment of their cars. Similarly, if they are injured in a crash or roadway emergency and are unable to answer medics' questions, emergency workers can retrieve "File of Life" data from the glove box envelope.

Though this program has existed for years, it has not reached its final evolution. In mid-2004 western Massachusetts officials created a task force to study and address older drivers on a larger scale. The final composition of the task force has not been determined, but representatives of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the Hampshire County Sheriff's Office, the local district attorney's office, the State Police, medical practitioners, and others attended its initial meetings. Officials at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office report the task force will not replace its efforts, but will augment them.

DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLORADO, SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Douglas County is situated in the center of Colorado. It's a large suburban county south of the Denver metropolitan area and much of its vehicle traffic is comprised of commuters. The latest census data put the elderly population of the county at only 4.2 percent and the median annual household income at more than $82,000. As a result of the community's economic prosperity, senior driver issues take on a different complexion from the other communities detailed in this report. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office participates in a Triad, but its Triad doesn't offer a senior driving course.

In addition to the Triad, the sheriff's office participates in the Douglas County DriveSmart Coalition. One of the members in this coalition is Master Drive, a private company specializing in driver education. Master Drive offers fee-based driver education for senior citizens and the sheriff's office can refer seniors to Master Drive when appropriate. The Master Drive curriculum is markedly different from the AARP class. For instance, a major difference is that Master Drive operates a driving track. Enrollees pay a fee for a one-day defensive driver curriculum marketed to drivers 55 and older.

The course is called X-tend Senior Driver Refresher Course. Drivers taking the course receive the following training:

- One-hour assessment;
- Two-hour skills training on the closed track;
- One-hour classroom instruction;
- Two hours of individual on-street coaching.

This kind of training is more individualized and more costly. But for the time being it suits the community's needs.

However, Douglas County officials are planning for the future. With 20 to 25 percent of the county's population in the baby boom age bracket, officials project a future burgeoning with senior drivers. Through its close relationship with county and regional government leaders and with its community policing initiatives, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office has become more involved in finding solutions to this problem as its population ages and age-related issues increase.

Each of the communities profiled here has created a senior driver program that fits its present needs. These programs also undergo continual reassessment and evolution as the needs of the community at large change.

For additional information on these programs contact:

Ross County Sheriff's Office	Franklin County Sheriff's Office	Douglas County Sheriff's Office
Sheriff Ronald L. Nichols	Capt. Howard H. Sheperd, Sr.	Capt. Brock McCoy
28 North Paint Street	160 Elm Street	4000 Justice Way
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601	Greenfield, Massachusetts 01301	Castle Rock, Colorado 80109
Phone: 740-773-1186	Phone: 413-774-4726	Phone: 303-660-7505

IDENTIFYING THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

The success of any senior driver program is due to inclusion of key components. Successful replication depends on identifying these components, recognizing their value, and including them in local programs. Each component is important but dependent; together they work in tandem with the other elements, leading to overall success of the program. Their relative significance depends on many factors, such as size of the law enforcement agency, size and nature of the community, level of community involvement, and other factors.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Perhaps the most essential trait shared among the programs profiled in this report is their reliance on partnerships and communities. Law enforcement can't be all things to all people, and sheriffs shouldn't "reinvent the wheel." Many other agencies, both public and private, have outreach programs aimed at senior drivers. The role of law enforcement in finding solutions to senior driver problem must include meaningful cooperation between and among local agencies. Effective on-going partnerships are key to the success of older driver outreach programs. In each of the

programs highlighted in this report, the sheriffs have recognized this fact and taken advantage of resources available outside their own agencies.

That is not to say that sheriffs haven't committed resources of their own. Each has successfully assessed the needs of their citizens, the resources available in their communities, and the resources at their disposal within their respective offices. Afterwards, these components have been combined to maximize their delivery and impact on the public without unnecessarily duplicating efforts or products.

The potential of effective partnership with community groups cannot be overstated. For example, the Ross County Senior Citizen's Center needed a van or bus to transport senior citizens who couldn't drive to events. The center couldn't afford a new vehicle and was unable to locate a used one that fit its needs and budget. The sheriff's office successfully negotiated with a local car dealership to sell the center a van at the dealer's cost. The dealership traded its normal handling and profit markups for a credit painted on the outside of the van. The savings for the center was significant and allowed it to acquire a new, state-of-the-industry van that maximized safety and comfort for its senior passengers.

TRIAD

One of the most recognizable partnerships is the Triad. Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police are already familiar with Triads, which have proven their value as successful partnerships for nearly two decades. A Triad, as the name implies, is an alliance of three entities. It teams the county's sheriff's office with its police and senior-citizen community leaders who agree to work together to ensure seniors' safety needs are met.   The Triad's national partners, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), launched Triad in 1988, and local Triads have been sprouting up across the country ever since.

An integral part of a local Triad is its SALT council, an advisory council of senior citizens and law enforcement representatives that provides a forum for seniors to address law enforcement and an information conduit between the two groups. Many SALT councils create bylaws, incorporate or file for tax-exempt status, and develop mission and goal statements. Most meet regularly to take up the council's business.

AARP is the sponsor of the most widely available and most well known senior driver program in the country, the AARP Driver Safety Program. AARP volunteers have presented the course to more than 9 million senior drivers, sometimes through Triads. The close relationship between IACP, NSA, and AARP makes AARP's Driver Safety Program a popular choice for law-enforcement-sponsored elderly driver education. It is popular with many seniors too, because it is relatively inexpensive and many insurance companies offer discounts to policyholders who have completed the course.

Community Liaisons

Liaisons, coalitions, and task forces offer numerous benefits to participants and their value is widely known to law enforcement managers. These alliances can be beneficial to all participants because of the opportunities for networking, shared resources, lightened work load, etc., and can result in greater efficiency, higher quality service, and enhanced morale.

Many projects and challenges are technical in nature and often exceed the expertise and resources of the lone law enforcement officer or even the entire agency. Collaboration with others provides a synergistic benefit that can optimize results. This is especially true of interdisciplinary collaborations where members bring a variety of skills to the table.

Law enforcement organizations lacking a Triad or other formal coalitions such as

DriveSmart can join or create less formal partnerships with community-based organizations. Their composition will vary by location and mission, but members might include community organizations, government agencies, businesses and individuals representing law enforcement, transportation, public works, motor vehicle administrators, educators, health and injury prevention specialists, parents, aging advocates, retailers, and manufacturers.

The benefits of community coalitions may reach well beyond senior drivers. The goodwill generated and enjoyed by the police agency that participates in community-based alliances can be a valuable tool in other problems police encounter.

COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

No program can succeed without a commitment from its leadership. In the programs described in this publication, the sheriff was supportive of, and in some cases the catalyst for, these programs.

Effective CEOs and managers recognize traffic safety is integral to the overall mission of law enforcement. Although there are many competing programs that deserve the attention and resources of a law enforcement agency, sheriffs in those agencies profiled here have created and maintained a commitment to traffic safety

generally, and to senior drivers specifically. In addition, they have allocated financial resources to support the programs and have generated public support for them through various channels. These sheriffs also recognized the leadership traits of program supervisors in their offices who demonstrate the ability and finesse to mobilize systems and people to achieve program goals. They make the programs thrive.

MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES

It is not enough to select the "right" sergeant or the "right" captain to lead a unit or implement a program. Talent has to exist and be cultivated at every operational level — especially on the line. The men and women on the line have the final responsibility to apply management philosophy and to deliver a product that is successful to the degree that the Office of Sheriff and the citizens can equally share.

Officials in Franklin County pointed out that their Triad deputies are able to empathize with their senior population. The deputies themselves are mature, with most of them retired from another career field. They are deliberately selected for their wisdom, compassion, and sensitivity. Their age and experience provide credibility; when a senior citizen reminisces about an old song or a classic TV show, the deputy can share their memory. The deputies also can empathize with the seniors' aging concerns.

Franklin County attributes these deputies with being a major asset of its overall program.

Officials in both Ross and Franklin Counties described their deputies as decision makers with strong personal traits. The sheriffs empower these employees with the authority to complete their tasks.

TRAINED STAFF

The Triads are staffed with competent, well-trained deputies. The personnel charged with delivering older driver training to the community have been trained to deal effectively with seniors. They have been trained to be sensitive to the special needs of senior citizens and have received training about dementia and its effects.

Law enforcement officers who receive training about dementia are better skilled at recognizing its signs in an afflicted driver. Knowing they are dealing with a dementia victim, these officers can better assess the situation and intervene effectively. Quick and appropriate law enforcement intervention restores safety to the roadway and frees officers to resume their traditional roles.

PROACTIVE ORGANIZATIONS

The visionary sheriffs and managers in the agencies profiled here have assumed the responsibility of preparing today's law enforcement officers for tomorrow's challenges. They manage their organizations under a community-oriented policing model through which they maintain contact with the community and evaluate its needs. They have recognized the need to provide senior driver resources and have mobilized assets to address the community's need.

Through these efforts they in turn enjoy the goodwill of their communities. A good example can be found in the Franklin County program. Unable to fund the purchase of a new computer for the Triad database, officials there relied on the goodwill of the community. A local bank donated the computer and related equipment and no public funds were needed to increase the project's efficiency and effectiveness.

INNOVATORS

The sheriffs whose organizations are described in this publication are innovative leaders. They aren't satisfied with maintaining the status quo, choosing instead to keep their agencies on the cutting edge. They see themselves as leaders in their communities and in their profession. They choose to "look outside the box" for solutions, and are known to be proactive as opposed to reactive policing executives.

Adaptable Organizations

Each of these sheriffs' offices can be described as adaptable. Their adaptability keeps them viable to their service bases. As environments change, successful organizations recognize, evaluate, and respond to change according to their missions. Their employees are flexible and able to adjust to change and as a result the entire organization embraces change. Flexible staffs are able to fluidly adapt to changing difficulties, technologies, and expanding roles.

Conclusion

Though the issues raised by an aging driver population are not foremost in the minds of many law enforcement executives, these are real issues that cannot be disregarded. Sheriffs and police chiefs cannot ignore the fact that their populations are aging, nor can they overlook the many ways aging baby boomers will impact traffic enforcement and service delivery.

Different communities have tackled the problems in different ways. Sheriffs and police chiefs who have not yet developed a plan to cope with the senior driver phenomenon can duplicate successful programs highlighted in this publication now, in proactive fashion, rather than later in a reactive response to a crisis scenario. No law enforcement agency has to go it alone.

Many community resources are already in place so law enforcement can quickly and easily join with them to build state-of-the-industry senior driver training that fits the needs of the local population.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

1440 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 201

Washington, DC 20005

Tel: (202) 638-5944 or (800) 993-7222

Web site: www.aaafoundation.org

AARP

AARP Driver Safety Program

P.O. Box 93114

Long Beach CA 90809-3114

Web site: www.aarp.org/drive

E-mail address: drive@aarp.org

American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators

4301 Wilson Blvd, Suite 400

Arlington, VA 22203

Tel: (703) 522-4200

Web site: www.aamva.org

(NOTE: Your local Motor Vehicle Department is also a good resource.)

National Association of Triads, Inc.

1450 Duke St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

Tel: (703) 836-7827

MasterDrive

3530 Austin Bluffs Pkwy

Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Tel: (719) 260-0999

(NOTE: Your local driver education programs might offer senior driver programming.)

ElderCare Locator

(ask for your local or State office on aging)

Tel: (800) 677-1116

Web Site: www.eldercare.gov

State Highway Safety Office/ NHTSA Regional Offices

Visit NHTSA on the Web at http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/whatis/regions to locate information and contact points for NHTSA regional offices and the local office in your state.

NHTSA PUBLICATIONS ON AGING DRIVERS

NHTSA Publications on Aging Drivers

NHTSA publishes a variety of documents that may be useful to law enforcement officers interested in senior driver topics. Copies are available at the NHTSA online catalogue: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/media/catalog/index.cfm. Some of them are described here.

Driving When You Have… (Cataracts/Glaucoma /Macular Degeneration, etc)

Description: These brochures include information about symptoms of the medical condition they cover, how this condition may affect driving, suggested steps drivers might take to increase their driving safety if they have this condition, and relevant resources for drivers with this condition. Physical ailments addressed by this series are: cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, sleep apnea, seizures, arthritis, and Parkinson's disease. They are intended to be discussion tools between patients and their doctors. The brochures were developed with NHTSA partners to help drivers, especially when making decisions about ability, risk, and safety. This may be particularly relevant for older drivers seeking to maintain mobility after being diagnosed with one of these conditions.

Safe Driving for Older Adults

Description: This booklet is designed to help older adults determine if physical and mental changes have affected their driving skills. The booklet is written at a easy-to-read level with a large type font, and provides helpful tips about what senior citizens can do to deal with these changes so they can remain safe drivers for as long as possible. Child safety seat and seat belt guidelines are also included for older adults who drive with children or young adults.

A Compendium of Law Enforcement Older Driver Programs

Description: This resource guide of older driver programs was developed to assist law enforcement agencies identify viable programs and provides partnership information addressing positive community policing methods as they relate to older drivers. This guide provides numerous examples of enforcement programs, strategic planning and problem oriented policing approaches.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS ON AGING DRIVERS

Physician's Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers

Published by the American Medical Association, 515 North State Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610. Co-published by U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT HS 809 647.
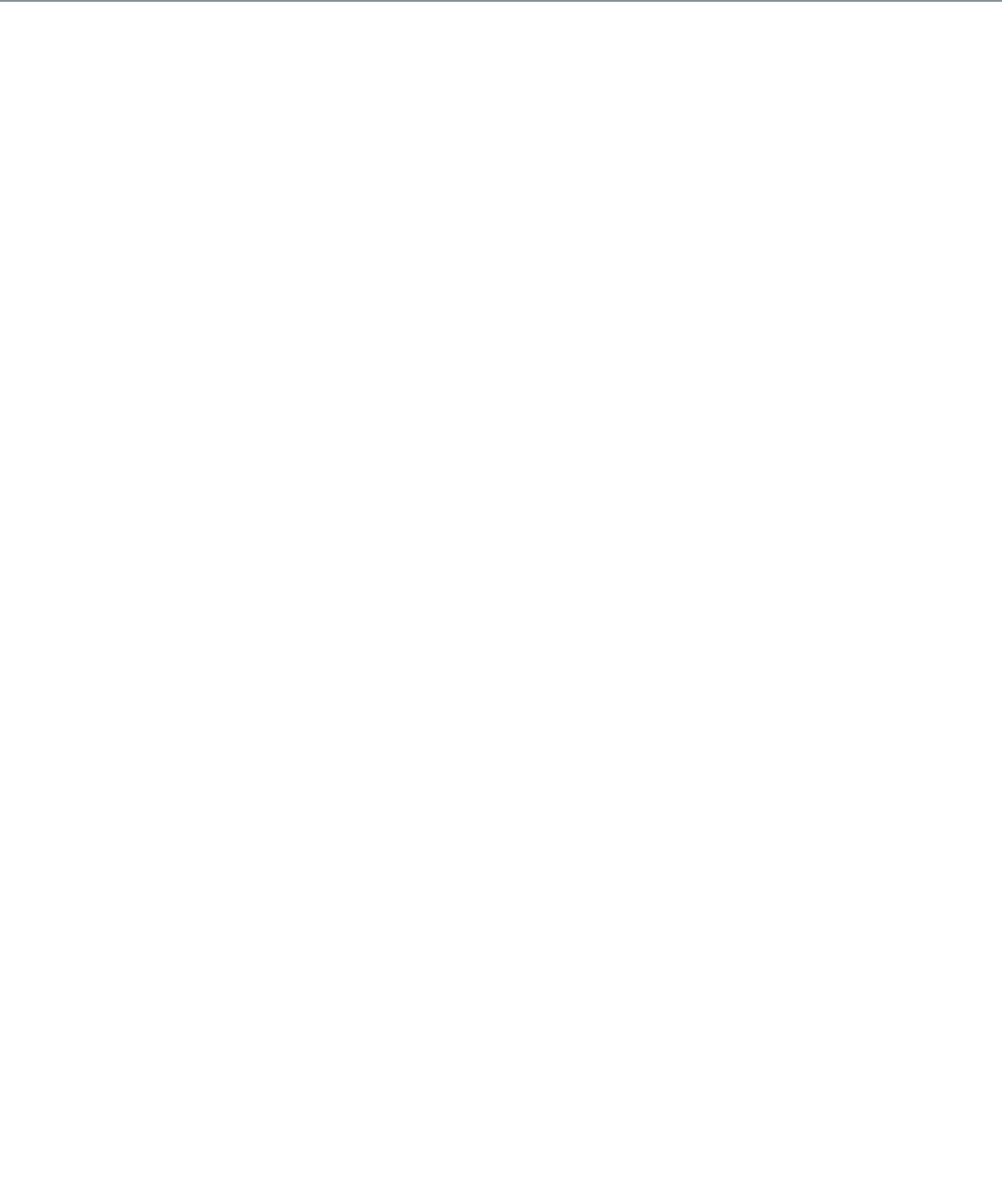
Documents and publications used by the three sheriffs' offices are listed here:

Older Drivers -- Making Changes For The Better

Published by the Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., 200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373. Tel: (800) 628-7733. Web site: www.channing-bete.com.

Agreement with My Family About Driving

© The Hartford and available at its Web site: www.thehartford.com/alzheimers