

## LA gets another helping of underage drinking grant

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July 18, 2007

As the state's war against underage drinking draws on, Los Alamos County is getting another boost in funding from the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Block Grants Program.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., announced Friday that the New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) will receive the \$350,000 grant, funding the state has relied on for several years.

"The DOJ has been giving (the grant) out to states for eight years," said Annjenette Torres, CYFD Community Service Section supervisor.

Law enforcement, local government, DWI coordinators and private nonprofit organizations all compete for the grant money, Torres said.

This year will be the second Los Alamos has seen a slice of the grant that, when finalized, will come in the amount of \$20,000 from July 2007 through May 2008, said Eloisa Gonzales, CYFD's Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws coordinator.

Los Alamos County DWI Coordinator David Sims said that while the DOJ grant is only a piece of his total annual funding, it's still an integral part of the county's initiative.

"We have several programs we'd like to implement," Sims said, explaining that with the grant money, the DWI preventive services would like to generate a relationship in direct conjunction with the schools and also provide programming geared toward parents.

"We realize young people are drinking at younger ages all the time and sometimes high school is too late," he said. "They're beginning at middle school and even older elementary school."

The previous grant money has been put to use in the form of newspaper and movie-theater ads, as well as compliance checks, Sims said.

The compliance checks, performed every two to three months, involve sending a youth under the age of 21 into a store, bar, or restaurant to see if the business will sell alcohol to the minor.

In addition to the DOJ money, the county underage drinking prevention program receives \$140,000 a year from two other sources.

Primary funding comes from the local DWI alcohol excise tax provided by the Department of Finance and Administration, and a relatively smaller contribution is received from the Traffic Safety Bureau which collects \$75 per person convicted of drunk driving within the county's jurisdiction.