



State of Arizona  
Department of Liquor Licenses and Control

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## Press Release

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Contact: Lee Hill, Communications Director  
[lee.hill@azliquor.gov](mailto:lee.hill@azliquor.gov), 602-364-1936  
[www.azliquor.gov](http://www.azliquor.gov)

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### **T.R.A.C.E. Investigations Pinpoint Liquor Source in Underage Drinking Deaths**

PHOENIX – Who gave alcohol to an 18-year old before she fell to her death in March 2014? Who sold alcohol to the 19-year old who later drown in November 2012? The answers come from T.R.A.C.E., a crime investigation technique that traces liquor to the source.

T.R.A.C.E. stands for *Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies*, an investigation launched when alcohol consumption is suspected in connection to the death or injury of a person under the age of 21. A T.R.A.C.E. case is not concluded until the source of liquor is verified, and the supplier is charged with the crime. T.R.A.C.E. is a statewide program that uses a system of rapid communication between local law enforcement, and EMS personnel. Collaboration between agencies is critical to the success of a T.R.A.C.E. investigation.

Since the inception of the T.R.A.C.E. program in December 2004, Sgt. Wes Kuhl of the Department of Liquor Investigation Division has supervised approximately sixty-five (65) T.R.A.C.E. investigations. Kuhl clarified that, "Two examples of recent, successful T.R.A.C.E. investigations were opened due to the death of the underage. Officers rework the sequence of events in reverse, for example, from the time the underage death was determined, to the sale of the alcohol. Investigations are successfully concluded using evidence gathered through interviews with witnesses, surveillance camera images, financial records, and use of other technology. It may take a while, but suddenly the pieces fit. That's when we can charge the supplier with severe criminal or administrative penalties."

"The supplier can be a store, a bar, a friend, parent or acquaintance. We've seen it all", says Kuhl. "Liquor-licensed businesses and private residences have our attention. An example of this increased attention is the City of Tempe's [Safe & Sober Task Force](#), a collaborative effort resulting, in part, from previous T.R.A.C.E. investigations."

Kuhl continues, "Law enforcement, statewide, is very serious about underage drinking and DUI enforcement. It's illegal to provide liquor to someone under age 21. If you're under age 21, it's illegal for you to have liquor in your possession or in your system. Depending on your age and the number of previous arrests, in either case, you will end up being arrested and facing a Class 1 or Class 2 misdemeanor. Misdemeanors carry fines of up to \$2,500, a maximum of 12 months in jail, and driver license suspension of up to 12-months. When caught, don't expect leniency." (See Arizona Underage Drinking Penalties attached).

T.R.A.C.E. investigation training is offered to law enforcement agencies by the State of Arizona Department of Liquor.

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