

January 22, 2009

To: Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team
Congressional Leadership on Stimulus Packages focused on Prevention
and Sustainability

From: Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research (SAVIR)

Re: Research on Safety and Injury Prevention is a Critical Element
of Prevention and Sustainability

SAVIR, a professional organization that represents violence and injury researchers nationwide, is pleased to provide input about the important role that safety plays in health improvement and prevention efforts. Safety is also an integral part of community infrastructure development because this development must include workplace safety; the design of safe, livable communities; and, strengthening of individuals and families (such as through reduction of family violence and assuring high-quality long-term life).

INJURY IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR AMERICANS AGES 1 TO 44. These deaths include motor vehicle crashes, drowning, falls, home fires, poisonings as well as domestic violence, child abuse, youth violence, homicides, and suicides. The pain, suffering, long-term disability and lost productivity due to injury are enormous and the costs staggering – and, for the most part, these injuries are predictable and preventable.

Every year in the U.S., injuries result in approximately 150,000 deaths, 2 million hospitalizations, and nearly 30 million Emergency Department visits. Every one of these injuries has consequences for the individual, their family, their workplace, and their community.

Here are some staggering figures about the burden of injuries:

- The cost of injuries that occur each year can reach \$406 billion in medical care costs and lost productivity. Treating injuries costs more than treating heart disease and cancer combined.
- The number of Americans killed or hospitalized each year due to injuries is equivalent to the number of people who would be killed if **14 jumbo jets crashed every single day of the year.**
- Death rates from injuries have steadily increased since 1999.

INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED. Years of research have enabled us to develop life saving answers that we often take for granted - such as seat belts, air bags, car safety seats, smoke alarms, bicycle helmets, drunk driving laws and specific centers for treating injuries. However, research to create informed programs has been sadly lacking in resources when compared to prevention research for chronic and infectious diseases. These funds will be used to injury prevention research centers and individual investigators to help build safe and sustainable communities. Research will help us prevent more injuries through the identification of successful programs like the following:

- **Environmental modifications** such as safer roads for motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians; community design to reduce crime; and, home design to reduce residential fire deaths.
- **Policy improvements**, such as Graduated Driver Licensing programs to reduce crashes of young teen drivers; research-based strategies to reduce distracted driving; and, child product safety legislation.
- **Educational and Behavioral strategies**, such as safety education for primary school children; safe walks to school programs; programs to assist victims of violence.
- **Improve medical care for trauma**, such as organized trauma systems for triage and transport; improved methods for care in rural populations; increased intervention for the psycho-social consequences of trauma.

WE NEED TO FILL THE CRITICAL GAP IN FUNDING FOR INJURY RESEARCH. The Institute of Medicine's landmark report on reducing the burden of injury in the U.S. declared that "**The nation's investment in injury research is not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.**" According to national public opinion polling by Research! America, almost 8 in 10 Americans think it is important for the U.S. to invest in new knowledge to identify ways to prevent injury. We desperately need to build the evidence base to guide injury programs to be successful and cost-effective.

With the huge toll that injuries bear on US citizens, it is imperative that safety and injury prevention be a prominent part of any stimulus package focused on prevention. This investment can save billions of dollars in health care costs, but, more importantly, could save the life of you or your loved ones.

SAVIR IS A RESOURCE. We encourage you to contact us with any questions about our efforts, needs in this area, or data to support these needs. SAVIR has members in most states who can serve as experts in injury and safety research. Please contact:

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