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Title: AN OVERVIEW OF THE FLORIDA TRAFFIC AND BICYCLE SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract:

In 2008, the state of Florida led the United States in the number of bicyclists killed in traffic crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2009). Funded by the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Safety Office, the primary goal of the Florida Traffic and Bicycle Safety Education Program (FTBSEP) is to reduce injuries and fatalities by teaching children the knowledge and skills needed to be predictable and competent pedestrians and bicyclists throughout their lives. The program works with Safe Routes to School programs throughout Florida and ties in with the goals of the FDOT's Pedestrian/Bicycle Program. The Florida Department of Education recently published the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (2008) that require physical education teachers to teach specific skills related to traffic and bicycle safety to students in kindergarten through fifth grade levels. The FTBSEP provides statewide training workshops that "teach the teachers" about traffic and bicycle safety so that they can, in turn, teach their students. The FTBSEP also trains law enforcement personnel, recreation leaders, and bicycle safety advocates to teach bicycle safety in their local communities. Workshop participants receive not only pedestrian and bicycle safety training, but also receive educational materials that can be utilized for teaching in their schools and community. Using specifically designed, comprehensive curriculums for elementary, middle, and high schools, the FTBSEP training programs address several important pedestrian and bicycle safety topics including, but not limited to: stop and search, visual barriers, safely crossing the road, traffic signals, school bus safety, helmet importance and correct use, bicycle safety inspection, identifying and avoiding road hazards, traffic and bicycle laws, and sharing the road. Each lesson of the curriculum includes estimated time required, learning objectives, materials/equipment needed, background information, activity description, discussion topics and questions, and additional references. The curriculum also includes activities for physically/mentally challenged individuals, activity worksheets, videos, interactive software and DVDs, and a comprehensive equipment and resource contact list. Additionally, the training workshops include outside, on-bicycle skill instruction and practice. To further assist schools and communities the FTBSEP also provides a mini-grant program in which schools, communities, safety coalitions, and others can apply for funds which can be utilized to purchase new pedestrian/bicycle safety training equipment, maintain existing equipment, and/or for substitute teachers so the regular teachers can attend a training workshop. Given that the FTBSEP's services are offered statewide, the program utilizes Regional Trainers throughout Florida to assist with, or conduct, workshops in their area. Future program plans include developing a university curriculum to educate college students about traffic and bicycle safety. This presentation will provide an overview of the FTBSEP, curricula, and training materials.