

LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO
Governor
JOSHUA F. TENORIO
Lieutenant Governor



Meunir
THERESA C. ARRIOLA
Director
CARISSA E. PANGELINAN
Deputy Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 21, 2023

GBHWC, in partnership with TOHGE, Relaunches “Safe Drive Home” Designated Drivers Service on December 22nd to January 2nd

Hagåtña, Guam – Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center (GBHWC), in partnership with TOHGE, Inc. will offer Safe Drive Home, a free designated driver program during the Christmas and New Year holidays. Each ride request may accommodate up to five (5) individuals. The program is operational from 6 p.m. through 6 a.m., starting Friday, December 22, 2023 through Tuesday, January 2, 2024. To request for a Safe Drive Home designated driver, individuals may call 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) or (671) 787-9276 & (671) 686-9276 (TOHGE Warmline).

“The holidays are upon us and, now in its third year, we look forward to providing the **Safe Drive Home Program** with our partners at Tohge, Inc. We were very pleased with the outcomes from last year – helping get 61 individuals safely home to their loved ones,” said GBHWC Director Theresa Arriola. “We remind our community that if you’ve had too much to drink, please do not risk your life and others on the road. Protect yourself and your loved ones by getting a safe ride home from one of our designated drivers.”

Alcohol is a substance that reduces brain function and impairs thinking, reasoning, and muscle coordination, which are essential to safely operating a vehicle. Every day, about 37 people in the U.S. die in drunk-driving crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In the U.S., 13,384 people died in alcohol-impaired driving traffic deaths in 2021 — a 14% increase from 2020. In Guam, there were 358 arrests noted in the “Driving Under the Influence” (DUI) special report of the 2021 Uniform Crime Report, an increase from 329 arrests in 2020. These deaths and arrests are all preventable.

The Safe Streets Act of 2018 (9 GCA Ch 92) states “it is unlawful for a person to drive, operate or be in physical control of any motor vehicle within Guam having a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent.” Persons with this BAC experience decreased balance control, slurred speech, poorer vision and hearing, and delayed reaction time. Their detection of danger, judgment, self-control, reason, and memory are also impaired. These are not marked physical symptoms, and therefore they may not appear to others as drunk. Even more dangerous is that the person may insist on driving, not realizing the extent of their impairment.

The program’s designated drivers are from TOHGE Inc., Guam’s only peer-run recovery community. “We at Tohge, Inc. are so honored to be able to continue this much needed service alongside GBHWC to ensure others are celebrating safely this holiday season,” shared TOHGE Executive Director Brian Hahn. This is the *third year* that GBHWC and Tohge, Inc. is partnering in this prevention/harm reduction initiative. The hours of operation are set to accommodate more individuals – **now available 6pm to 6am starting December 22nd through January 2nd.**

For more information, contact the GBHWC Main office at (671) 647-5440 or the GBHWC Prevention and Training Branch at staff@peaceguam.org.

###