

# Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events

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## *Rationale for Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events*

Reasonable restrictions on alcohol consumption at public events will improve the atmosphere of our community events, fairs, festivals, and parades by providing a safer and healthier environment for families, underage youth, and other concerned citizens. While such restrictions would involve changes for some adult participants, reasonable guidelines can be enacted to ensure that those adults wishing to consume alcohol may do so at community events permitting alcohol consumption.

### Potential Problems with Alcohol Access at Community Events

- ✦ Community events can offer easy opportunities for underage youth to purchase and consume alcohol or to obtain it from others.
- ✦ Widespread and unchecked alcohol use at community events can fuel foul language, disruptive behavior, fights, and violence. These problems can cause harm to individuals and our community.
- ✦ Excessive alcohol consumption at events adds to other community problems such as noise, littering, and traffic congestion (16).

## *Policy Solutions*

### Plans and Implementation

- ✦ Establish adequate and proportional alcohol-free areas.
- ✦ Sponsor special activities for underage youth.
- ✦ Establish designated alcohol areas that prohibit underage youth. Keep people from leaving the specified area with alcoholic beverages.
- ✦ Promote special alcohol-free days/nights for multi-day events.
- ✦ Establish and enforce procedures for selling, possessing and consuming alcohol at the event.
- ✦ Disallow participants from bringing their own alcohol to the event.

### Sales and Service

- ✦ Require all alcohol servers to be licensed vendor servers.
  - ✦ Establish age identification checking procedures.
  - ✦ Prohibit servers from consuming alcohol.
  - ✦ Establish procedures for managing intoxicated persons.
  - ✦ Limit cup sizes to 12 ounces.
  - ✦ Distinguish cups for alcoholic beverages from cups for non-alcoholic beverages.
  - ✦ Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before the event ends.
  - ✦ Sell food and non-alcoholic drinks and provide water.
  - ✦ Establish food and alcohol-free beverage booths adjacent to alcohol booths.
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## ***Existing Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events***

### **Alcohol-Free Zones in Louisiana**

Houma established an alcohol-free zone at all of its city's Mardi Gras parades for the 2002 and 2003 seasons. The city ordinance declared the Good Earth Transit Bus Station at 7617 Main Street as a voluntary "Alcohol Free Zone" for parade spectators. The established zone was the size of a small city block and was patrolled by policemen to ensure persons in the area were not consuming alcohol. Signs were also posted to identify the area (1).

Natchitoches declared in 1990 that a restricted downtown area would be alcohol-free for its annual Christmas Festival. The Christmas Festival Alcoholic Beverage Control Law specifies that in the city's restricted downtown area no alcoholic beverages shall be consumed, sold, or possessed in any public area or public way. Private property is exempt from the ordinance. Strict procedures are in place to enforce the ordinance (2).

Baton Rouge Spanish Town Mardi Gras Parade organizers voluntarily have established an alcohol-free zone at their parade since 2000. The two-block zone is designated on Fourth Street from North Boulevard to Main Street with signs identifying the zone. The parade organizers publicize the availability of the zone prior to the parade in the city newspaper, *The Advocate*, and on the official parade website (3).

The Shreveport Police Department established a non-alcoholic family area for the city's 2002 and 2003 Mardi Gras parades. The police can designate and enforce the restriction because the zone is located in a city park, running from Red Railroad Bridge to Stoner Drive. Banners identify the area and police patrol the zone to enforce no drinking (4).

### **Alcohol Free Zones Outside Louisiana**

Asheville, NC hosts one of the southeast's largest free street festivals featuring cultural and fun events. While the Bele Chere festival permits beer sales (to persons with the proper ID wristband), the festival features a designated alcohol-free zone from County Courthouse to Woodfin Street. They also restrict persons bringing in coolers to the festival (5).

### **Other Alcohol Control Mechanisms in Louisiana**

Breaux Bridge has adopted a Crawfish Festival Ordinance for its annual Crawfish Festival. The ordinance does not allow individuals to bring alcohol of any kind into the festival or to bring in their own coolers, although beer and liquor is sold to attendees once inside the festival grounds (6). The ordinance also sets some guidelines for alcohol sales, including that only vendors with valid permits shall be permitted to sell or distribute alcohol. These vendors are only allowed to operate "within the confines of the licensed premises only."

### **Other Alcohol Controls Outside Louisiana**

Little Rock, AR does not allow attendees at its annual RiverFest Arts and Music Festival to bring in alcohol or coolers and requires all participants who want to drink to purchase wristbands. Alcohol is sold only to persons who wear a wristband designating they are 21-years old. ID must be shown to purchase a new wristband each day of the event (7).

Boston, MA restricts alcohol consumption at its annual Fourth of July parade (8). Boston has also taken strict measures to control alcohol use at its annual St Patrick's Day Parade. All St. Patrick's Day Parade participants sign a contract specifying that they will not consume alcohol during the parade. In addition, city police closely monitor alcohol use, throwing away alcohol being consumed by parade spectators. City garbage trucks follow the police officers to allow them to remove the alcohol (8).

Los Angeles, CA has joined other U.S. cities (Boston, Charleston, Williamsburg) in establishing alcohol-free "First Night" celebrations (cultural festivals held on New Year's Eve). Los Angeles began First Night in 2000, with five parties that would accommodate 500,000 participants. Police officers searched festivalgoers for alcohol upon entering the festival (10).

San Diego, CA hosts few public events featuring alcohol sales. The events that do allow alcohol designate a special section for of-age participants to purchase alcohol. They must show ID to enter the alcohol area and must consume the alcohol there (11).

## ***Community and State Surveys Supporting Alcohol Restrictions***

Professional public opinion polls and other surveys of Louisiana citizens have helped to pinpoint concerns and opinions on alcohol policy and public alcohol consumption issues. Results from the last several years indicate that Baton Rouge citizens would favor establishment of alcohol-free areas at public community events in the parish.

On March 4, 2001 at the Spanish Town Mardi Gras Parade, LSU graduate students conducted 104 surveys on the establishment of an alcohol-free zone. About 57% of the total respondents were located in the parade's established alcohol-free zone and 43% were located outside of the zone (12).

- ⌘ When asked if the zone positively contributed to the parade environment, 92% of the respondents agreed.
- ⌘ When asked if they would like to see alcohol-free zones at other public events, 93% respondents agreed.
- ⌘ 70% of the respondents said they were aware of the alcohol-free zone prior to the parade. The top two methods through which respondents received the information were media reports and friends.

A February 2003 public opinion poll of registered voters in East Baton Rouge Parish conducted by Southern Media and Opinion Research, Inc., provides similar information and support for alcohol-free zones (13).

When asked if they would favor or oppose alcohol controls at public events accessible to youth, 480 East Baton Rouge Parish residents, representing all 12 metro districts, reported the following:

- ⌘ 81% of respondents favored family zones where alcohol is not allowed.
- ⌘ 74% favored limiting the number of alcohol booths at public events.
- ⌘ 91% favored keeping alcohol booths away from children's activities.
- ⌘ 68% favored not allowing people to bring their own alcohol to public events.

A January 2003 survey of parade and festival organizers in Baton Rouge (14) revealed the following sentiment on alcohol-free zones:

- ≈ 6 of the 8 respondents replied that they would consider eliminating alcohol completely from the event to provide a safer and healthier environment for youth and other attendees.

A 2001 Youth Access to Alcohol Survey (15), conducted in Louisiana by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., indicated that respondents would favor restrictions of public alcohol consumption.

- ≈ When asked about alcohol use on city streets, 77% believed it should be banned outright, 13% believed it should be allowed with permit only, and 10% wanted no restrictions.
- ≈ When asked about alcohol use at street fairs and festivals, 55% believed it should be banned outright, 33% believed it should be allowed with permit only, and 11% favored no restrictions.
- ≈ When asked about alcohol use at concerts and other cultural events, 33% believed it should be banned outright, 55% believed it should be allowed with permit only, and 12% favored no restrictions.

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