

# 9. Restricting Alcohol Sales at Public Events and Festivals

## CSAP Primary Prevention Strategies

- Information dissemination
- Education
- Community-based process
- Environmental

## Strategy

Alcohol restrictions at community events include policies that control the availability and use of alcohol at public venues, such as concerts, street fairs, community festivals and sporting events. Such restrictions can be implemented voluntarily by event organizers or through local legislation. Alcohol restrictions can range from a total ban on alcohol consumption to the posting of warning posters that detail the risks associated with consuming alcohol. See examples of voluntary and mandated restrictions at the end of this section.

## Considerations for Planning

Before your group calls for alcohol restrictions at public events, you will need to have evidence that shows restrictions are needed. It's also important to remember that many local community groups, including churches, use alcohol sales as a revenue source to raise money for charitable purposes. Be prepared to offer additional means generating revenue.

Emphasize that you are not seeking to ban alcohol sales, but you are proposing ways to make alcohol sales safer. For example, a survey of 45 community festivals in the summer of 2000 found that:

- 62% allowed individuals under 21 into designated drinking areas.
- 53% did not limit the number of alcoholic drinks purchased per sale.
- 33% received funding from the alcohol industry.
- 32% did not restrict alcohol to a specific area.
- 30% of event planners did not know whether alcohol servers were required to be trained on how to responsibly serve alcohol.
- 20% of those who served alcohol did not use any special methods to identify underage patrons.

## Key Terms

**1. Alcohol sponsorship:** Through sponsorship agreements, the alcohol industry utilizes community events to market its brands and products. When community events accept sponsorship from the alcohol industry, they become part of the industry's marketing strategy.

## Fundamental Steps

1. Determine whether your community has restrictions or ordinances related to the sale of alcohol at public events. If restrictions are in place, the following actions should occur:
  - Gather information about any problems associated with specific public events, such as community festivals, sporting events and public events. Contact the local police department, managers of facilities, security personnel, event coordinators and business and property owners near the event to gather information.
  - Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and enforcement of existing alcohol control policies for community and other public events.
2. If there are no restrictions or ordinances in place, use the information you gathered regarding problems as a basis to create change. Mobilize to ensure the passage and enforcement of restrictions or ordinances that will affect a county, city or a specific public event. The following strategies have proven effective in reducing alcohol problems at public events:
  - Restrict the issuance of licenses at youth- and family-related events.
  - Restrict or prohibit alcohol sponsorship at community events.
  - Ban the sale of alcohol at events and locations popular with young people.
  - Prohibit open containers in unsupervised public locations.
  - Establish procedures for dealing with intoxicated people.
  - Enforce strict conditions for alcohol sales and consumption at events in order to reduce youth access and to prevent over-consumption by people over 21:
    - Designate restricted drinking sections where young people are not allowed.
    - Ban attendants/participants from bringing alcohol into an event/festival.
    - Require responsible beverage service management policies and training for workers at public events and require that alcohol servers are at least 21 years old.
    - Limit the cup size and servings of alcohol per person.
    - Have alcohol-free nights and/or days at community events and alcohol-free seating in stadiums.
    - Use cups for alcoholic beverages that are easily distinguishable from non-alcoholic beverage cups.
    - Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before closing.
    - Sell food and low-cost non-alcoholic drinks and water.
  - Enforce alcohol restrictions vigorously for both public events and public places, maintaining the seriousness of these regulations.
  - For private parties in public places, require permits contingent on strict stipulations and responsible beverage service guidelines.
3. Write letters to event organizers or sponsors of public events describing problems caused by unrestricted sales of alcohol at public events and how restrictions can help these problems.

4. Ensure that coalition members are available for interviews and educate all members about the data on problems associated with over-service and underage drinking.
5. Obtain and strengthen community support for this strategy from event organizers, law enforcement and other community members. Focus public awareness activities in the community and highlight the relationship between unrestricted sales of alcohol at public events to specific alcohol-related problems (property damage, alcohol-related traffic crashes, inappropriate adult behavior in front of youth, etc.).
6. Hold individual meetings with those who are in key positions to affect change (e.g., elected officials, alcohol policy organizations and insurance companies).
7. Inform the organizers of community/sporting events that having well-trained servers and adhering to enforcement strategies may reduce legal and civil liability.
8. Identify immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the strategy. Continue to monitor and evaluate progress.

## **Helpful Tips and Suggestions**

### **Establishing Support and Obtaining Partners**

Focus on the people (neighborhood residents, season ticket holders, victims) and agencies (city cleanup, insurance companies, law enforcement, governing body that grants temporary sales permits) negatively impacted by unrestricted sales. Gather their support for change.

### **Media Awareness and Advocacy**

- Try to get media coverage of the problem. Stage a rally or an event in or near the public event that is selling alcohol with minimal or no enforcement.
- Issue press releases highlighting key activities and important events, such as public hearings, on potential alcohol restrictions at public events.
- Obtain press coverage and identify credible spokespeople that can identify first-hand how unrestricted sales affect individuals and the community in terms of manpower, liability and services.

### **Potential Partners**

- Licensing authority for temporary alcohol sales permits
- Local insurance agencies
- Neighborhood groups and associations
- Business owners who hold permits to sell or serve alcohol
- Local media – television and newspapers
- Law enforcement
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local substance abuse prevention agencies and coalitions

## **Estimated Timeline**

Voluntary restrictions – immediate to three months

Mandated restrictions – three months to a year

## **Potential Barriers or Obstacles**

- Breaking tradition with the historical way public events have been conducted related to alcohol sales
- Lack of concrete data that makes a direct link between no policies (or policy enforcement) and increased problems
- Fear on the part of event planners that policies will affect sales and profits
- Alcohol policies at public events are viewed as a low priority
- High community tolerance for public intoxication or inappropriate behavior

## **Possible Short- and Long-Term Outcomes**

- Rate of alcohol-related complaints from neighborhood residents decreases. Reductions in alcohol-related property damage, vandalism, public urination, etc.
- Decrease in the number of alcohol-related arrests (disorderly conduct, assault, minors in possession)
- Decrease in the number of alcohol-related ejections from athletic events by security staff
- Decrease in the number of alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities
- Public knowledge of regulations that govern the sale of alcohol at public events
- Policy changes in how alcohol is sold and served at public events
- Increased commitment and support for sustaining policy changes and creating consistency in community process tied to alcohol sales at public events
- Restrictions and specific requirements are tied to all temporary permits that are granted for alcohol sales and service

# Suggested Resources

## Supplemental Resources Related to this Strategy

1. Alcohol Risk Management Program.....	177
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©CD 3. Festival Planner Checklist.....	181
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©CD 6. Strategic Planning Guide.....	243-251

**Links** (A browser document called "Helpful Links" is located on the Resource CD for easier navigation.)

**<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1497703/>**

Article: Illegal Alcohol Sales and Use of Alcohol Control Policies at Community Festivals.

**[http://www.marinstitute.org/alcohol\\_policy/events\\_alcohol.htm](http://www.marinstitute.org/alcohol_policy/events_alcohol.htm)**

Article: Reducing Alcohol Problems at Community Events

**<http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/policy/atevents.shtm>**

Article: Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events

**[http://www.alcoholpolicymd.com/pdf/Restrictions\\_Community\\_Events2.pdf](http://www.alcoholpolicymd.com/pdf/Restrictions_Community_Events2.pdf)**

Article: Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events

# Alcohol Risk Management Program

## Risk Assessment

Conduct an on-site audit of potential alcohol-related trouble spots. Sample questions include:

1. Do your ticket sellers sell tickets to already intoxicated individuals?
2. Are servers of alcohol checking ID for everyone under the age of 30?
3. Can alcohol be brought to your event (or parking lot)?
4. Are intoxicated patrons staggering out of your facility? Is security intervening?
5. Where is the alcohol sold? Is the area separate from the event? Fenced off?
6. Is there accessibility for emergency personnel if needed?

## Written Policies and Procedures

Your event should have written policies and procedures regarding the sale of alcohol. Sample policies include:

1. Serving cup sizes (maximum of 14-16 ounces).
2. Number of drinks allowed per purchase (one or two is recommended).
3. Pricing of the alcohol (it should be more expensive than non-alcohol beverages).
4. Having non-alcoholic beverages available and promoted.
5. Establishing an "alcohol area", fencing to define the area.
6. Checking ID of everyone who enters into the "alcohol area."
7. Hours of sale.
8. Not permitting anyone under 21 in the "alcohol area."
9. To serve alcohol you must be 21.
10. Training all event volunteers in Responsible Alcohol Service.

## Training

Training servers is a priority for alcohol risk management, as well as developing alcohol policies and procedures that outline the responsibilities of the servers.

## Public Awareness/Community Relations

A comprehensive alcohol management program can create an appropriate environment leading into community events and provide a fall-back bargaining position. Being proactive is even better. Promote responsible alcohol service training. Erect signage and take out ads in the local media prior to the event announcing your alcohol policies and procedures.

Source: FACE – Resources, Training & Action on Alcohol Issues.

# Voluntary and Mandated Restrictions on Alcohol Sales at Community Events

## Planning and Set-Up

- Establish non-drinking areas for families and youth.
- Establish designated drinking areas where underage youth are not allowed; prohibit people from leaving these areas with alcoholic beverages.
- Limit alcohol sponsorship (see definition below) at public events.
- Designate certain times when alcohol is not sold or served.
- Establish enforcement procedures for all policies.

## Alcohol Providers and Sellers

- Require alcohol license holders to have liability insurance (check your state laws for specific legal requirements on liability).
- Require responsible alcohol sales service training for alcohol sellers and event coordinators.
- Require alcohol sellers to be at least 21 years old.
- Require a manager to be on duty at the alcohol vendor station at all times.
- Establish age identification checking procedures.
- Prohibit drinking by servers.
- Require signs indicating the illegality of providing alcohol to minors and obviously intoxicated persons.

## Security

- Establish procedures for handling intoxicated drinkers.
- Require that security staff be adequately trained.
- Ban alcohol consumption in parking lots and monitor the lots.

## Food and Beverages

- Limit the serving cup size of beer to 12 ounces and 5 ounces for wine.
- Use cups for alcoholic beverages that are easily distinguishable from non-alcoholic beverage cups.
- Limit the number of servings per person/per purchase to one or two at a time.
- Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before the event ends.
- Sell food and non-alcoholic drinks and provide free or low-cost water.

# Festival Planner Checklist

## Pre-Festival

### Security

- Hire adequate enforcement
- Make sure each security officer has a flashlight
- Assign a designated position to each officer

### At the entrance to beer garden

- ID checking guide
- Tally counter
- Wristbands
- Posters
- Policy manual

### Designated area

- Make sure fencing is secure
- Security at each entrance

### Festival grounds

- Make sure appropriate trash receptacles are available
- Make sure sufficient restrooms are available

### Parking lot

- Make sure adequate lighting is available
- Make sure sufficient parking is available
- Ensure safe walking paths

## At the Booth

### Behind beer booth

- Policy manual
- ID checking guide
- Incident report form
- Cash box
- Easily distinguishable 12 oz. cups
- Pens

### Signs and posters

- Post all signs for servers in visible location
- Make sure posters are visible for event attendees

### Servers

- Make sure all servers are over 21
- Remind servers that there is no drinking on the job
- Make sure servers are easily identified
- Make sure all servers have reviewed policy manual

Source: Alcohol Epidemiology Program, University of Minnesota.



# Sample Letter to the Editor – Alcohol Sales at Community Events

NOTE: Follow the instructions in the opinion section of your local newspaper for submitting a letter to the editor. Most newspapers print these instructions in the opinion-editorial section, or you can call the newspaper for instructions.

## **ISSUE: Alcohol Sales at Community Events**

Every year, I look forward to our community festivals here in [NAME OF YOUR COMMUNITY]. These events highlight the best that we have to offer in our community. However, I'd like to express my concerns about alcohol sales and the risks of underage drinking at these upcoming events.

It's clear that many aspects of these events are planned very carefully. I would like to encourage all of the sponsoring organizations to give equal thought and effort to preventing underage drinking at these events. Why? Because underage drinking is associated with car crashes, vandalism, assaults, date rape and many other tragedies. Organizations that sponsor our community events can be held liable for any tragedies that occur as a result of underage drinking at these events.

Let's work together to keep alcohol out of the hands of kids at our community festivals. Event sponsors and organizers can institute a plan to ensure the safe sale of alcohol by implementing the following action steps:

- Locate alcohol sales areas away from all family- and children-oriented activities.
- Sell a variety of non-alcoholic beverages as well.
- Limit the hours of alcohol sales.
- Require a photo ID.
- Limit purchases to one cup per person.
- Ensure that the maximum cup size is no more than 12-14 ounces.
- Train all server staff in Responsible Alcohol Service.
- Make sure that servers don't drink alcohol.
- Establish a responsible alcohol management plan for the event.
- Inform the community about your responsible alcohol management plan through the newspaper, radio and television interviews before the event.
- Place visible signage announcing your alcohol policies at the event.

The actions described above will greatly reduce the risk of underage drinking at this year's events. I hope others will join me as we work together to make this year's summer festivals both fun and safe for all of us.

Sincerely,

Include your name and group name, if applicable

Source: FACE – Resources, Training & Action on Alcohol Issues, 2010.

# Sample Letter to Sponsoring Organizations – Alcohol Sales at Community Events

Date

Include your name, group name and address

To Sponsoring Organization of Community Events

Dear [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]:

As our community looks forward to the [NAME OF EVENT], I'd like to express our organization's thoughts and concerns about the possibility of underage drinking and the impact it could have on all of us. I hope you will do everything possible to prevent any underage youth from purchasing or drinking alcohol at this event, especially since you could be held liable for any alcohol-related tragedies that might occur as a result.

Here is a basic alcohol management plan that we hope you will institute at this year's event:

- Locate alcohol sales areas away from all family- and children-oriented activities.
- Sell a variety of non-alcoholic beverages as well.
- Limit the hours of alcohol sales.
- Require a photo ID.
- Limit purchases to one cup per person.
- Ensure that the maximum cup size is no more than 12-14 oz.
- Train all server staff in Responsible Alcohol Service.
- Make sure that servers don't drink alcohol.
- Establish a responsible alcohol management plan for the event.
- Inform the community about your responsible alcohol management plan through the newspaper, radio and television interviews before the event.
- Place visible signage announcing your alcohol policies at the event.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions about how best to prevent underage drinking at [NAME OF THE EVENT]. I appreciate your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Include your name and group name here

Source: FACE – Resources, Training & Action on Alcohol Issues, 2010