

Overview of Event Restrictions

Alcohol restrictions at community events include policies that control the availability and use of alcohol at public venues, such as concerts, street fairs, and sporting events. Such restrictions can be implemented voluntarily by event organizers or through local legislation. Efforts include total bans on alcohol consumption at certain times or places, designated drinking and alcohol-free areas, prohibition of alcohol beverages in open containers, limits on the number of alcohol beverages per sale, and establishment of standard enforcement procedures for monitoring and violation.¹

The Goal of Event Restrictions

Event restrictions are implemented to address easy social access by underage youth and permissive community norms.

Event restrictions can reduce youth access to alcohol by making alcohol difficult for youth to purchase directly or for underage youth to obtain alcohol indirectly from adults at the event.

Event restrictions also send a clear message that consumption of alcohol by underage youth at community events is not acceptable.¹

Why Event Restrictions are Important to Communities

In 2016, 78% of high school seniors in Illinois reported that during the past year they usually got their own beer, wine, or liquor from a social source.³

States and/or local governments typically issue special, temporary licenses for alcohol sales at special events such as music concerts, community fairs and celebrations, and sporting events. Alcohol sales at community events create a high risk of underage drinking and related problems, including assaults, drinking and driving, and vandalism.²

Other issues of concern for communities are problems associated with alcohol being sold by untrained staff, volunteers, or vendors who are not invested in the health and well-being of the local community. These variables put youth at risk for problems associated with underage drinking.

Considerations for Event Restriction Policies and Ordinances

Event organizers must provide thorough communication and signage on the policies, procedures, and locations as to how and where alcohol can and will be sold.

Event organizers should ensure that all staff, paid and voluntary, are aware of event policies and are trained to comply with these policies.¹

States and communities should review and reform their licensing practices for special events. Regulations should strictly limit alcohol sales and alcohol company sponsorships at youth and family oriented events.³

Many local community groups, non-profits, and churches use alcohol sales as a revenue source to raise money for charitable purposes. Since taking this revenue source away from local groups may not be a feasible option, imposing new restrictions on these sales and focusing on policies to make alcohol sales safer, may help reduce underage drinking.

The following is a list of policies that may be implemented to restrict the availability and use of alcohol by underage youth at community events:¹

- ☆ 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 alcohol beverages
- ☆ Limit alcohol sponsorships
- ☆ Have alcohol-free days/nights
- ☆ Establish enforcement procedures for all policies

Lastly, data and evidence are vital to event restriction efforts. Gathering information about community events where alcohol is served and any alcohol-related problems, can set the stage for beginning the conversation and addressing the steps to initiate or strengthen event restrictions at future community events.

Helpful Tips and Suggestions

Establishing support and creating partnerships is an important step before working on event restrictions. Focus on the people (neighborhood residents, community members, event participants) and agencies (city cleanup, insurance companies, law enforcement, emergency room/medical personnel, governing body that grants temporary sales permits) negatively impacted by unrestricted sales. Gather their support for initiating or strengthening alcohol event restrictions in the future.

Resources and Tools

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Environmental Prevention of Underage Drinking – Restricted Sales of Alcohol at Public Events. Town Hall Meetings Resources.

University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program - <http://www.aep.umn.edu/aep-tools/underage-access/>

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility (2004).

References

1. University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program. Policies to Reduce Social Access to Alcohol. Web. August 2017
2. Pratt, L., Rothstein, C., Meath, J., Toomey, T. (1997). Keeping alcohol away from underage youth: Policy solutions. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, School of Public Health, Alcohol Epidemiology Program.
3. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. Regulatory Strategies for Prevention Youth Access to Alcohol: Best Practices. May 2011. Web. August 2017.
4. Center for Prevention Research and Development. (2017). Illinois Youth Survey 2016 Frequency Report: State of Illinois. Champaign, IL: CPRD, School of Social Work, University of Illinois.

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