

Overview of Environmental Scanning

Assessing your community is a critical step in identifying potential issues contributing to underage alcohol use. Completing a comprehensive assessment involves utilizing many tools and methods. Environmental scanning allows you to observe what alcohol looks like in your community and how alcohol is advertised in your community. These observations take place at both on-premise and off-premise establishments that sell alcohol. On-premise retail locations are bars and restaurants where alcohol is consumed on-site. Off-premise retail locations includes liquor stores, grocery stores, gas stations, and big box stores. It is important to make visual observations regarding alcohol and advertising throughout your community by documenting, through forms and pictures, where alcohol billboards are located, how much and where alcohol-related window advertisements are located, and other observations such as bus wraps containing alcohol advertising.

Goals of Environmental Scanning

The goal of environmental scanning is to identify your community's risk factors that can contribute to underage or excessive alcohol consumption. Conducting a scan allows you to observe and document the 4 P's: Price, Product, Promotion and Place. Documenting these observations and pairing that information with other assessment data, such as youth survey data, allows you to create a clear picture of alcohol in your community. From that picture you then can identify strategies to reduce underage and excessive use of alcohol.

Why Environmental Scans are Important to Communities

Environmental scanning of your community is a vital step in assessing how alcohol is viewed, and more importantly how youth are exposed to alcohol. A study published in the May 2016 issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, found that kids ages 11 to 14 typically saw two to four alcohol ads per day. While television was often the source, outdoor ads, such as billboards and signs outside stores and restaurants, were even more prominent in kids' lives. In another study "researchers followed 3,111 students in South Dakota from seventh to ninth grade, and found that exposure to in-store beer displays in grade 7 predicted onset of drinking by grade 9, and exposure to magazine advertising for alcohol and to beer concessions at sports or music events predicted frequency of drinking in grade 9."

According to the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey, 19% of 12th graders who use alcohol obtained it from a retail source. Additionally, 5% of those same 12th graders and 6% of 10th graders took or stole it from a retail source. Scanning allows you to have open dialogue with businesses regarding the 4 P's of alcohol. Store owners may not realize that by having displays in certain locations, alcohol could be stolen more easily.

Considerations for Environmental Scanning

The 4 P's are the guiding factors when conducting an environmental scan. There are questions to answer for each of the 4 P's. Here are a few questions, but certainly not all, that could be observed when utilizing the 4 P's.

Price:

- ☆ Does the price change based on the time of day?
- ☆ Is alcohol cheaper than non-alcohol (water/soda)?
- ☆ How much tax is collected?
- ☆ Are larger quantities of alcohol cheaper than smaller quantities?

Product:

- ☆ Are single units sold?
- ☆ Is there a brand more popular with underage youth offered for sale?
- ☆ Are products with high alcohol content sold?
- ☆ Are caffeinated alcoholic products sold?

Promotion:

- ☆ Are they advertising drink specials?
- ☆ Are there displays related to holidays or events?
- ☆ Are there displays in non-alcohol related areas of the store?
- ☆ Are gifts attached to alcohol purchase?

Placement:

- ☆ Is alcohol in a cooler next to water/soda?
- ☆ Is alcohol by an entrance/exit?
- ☆ Is alcohol next to candy?
- ☆ Is alcohol available at the check-out counter?

Safety is also a consideration for your environmental scan.

- Always go in pairs or a group.
- Ask to speak with a manager to share the purpose of the scan.
- If the situation doesn't feel safe, then leave.

Helpful Tips and Suggestions

Mapping the liquor license holders in your local area is a great first step prior to the scan. You can search for license holders on the Illinois Liquor Control Commission website by county. Once you have created a map or list of establishments, you then can decide the percentage of licensees you will scan. Provide the team with a map or list of on-premise and/or off-premise locations you wish to scan. It is important to take a picture of the outside/store front prior to taking pictures inside. By doing so, you can catalog your pictures by location and match the digital data with your written documentation.

Once your scans have been completed, you will need to compile all your data. Be prepared to share the results with community stakeholders and your coalition. This data will help guide your strategy choices.

You should follow your scans up with letters to the businesses you visited. Let them know what your scan revealed and how they can implement changes to prevent retail underage access to alcohol.

Resources & Tools

[State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council Alcohol & Tobacco Audit Toolkit](#)

[CADCA](#)

[Illinois Liquor Control Commission – license lookup](#)

References

1. Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. "Middle-school kids see several alcohol ads a day." ScienceDaily, 17 May 2016.
2. P.L. Ellickson, R.L. Collins, K. Hambarsoomian, and D.R. McCaffrey, "Does Alcohol Advertising Promote Adolescent Drinking? Results From a Longitudinal Assessment," *Addiction* 100 (2005): 235-46.
3. Center for Prevention Research and Development. (2019). Illinois Youth Survey 2018 Frequency Report: State of Illinois. Champaign, IL: CPRD, School of Social Work, University of Illinois.

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