

ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

I. What are alcohol restrictions at community events and how do they work?

- 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. These restrictions may reduce alcohol-related problems such as traffic crashes, vandalism, fighting, and other public disturbances.^{1,2,5,6}
- Alcohol restrictions at these events can range from a total ban on alcohol consumption to the posting of warning posters that detail the risks associated with consuming alcohol. The following is a list of policies that may be implemented to restrict the availability and use of alcohol by underage youth and obviously intoxicated attendees at community events: 1-3.

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 particular areas with alcoholic beverages
- Limit alcohol sponsorship
- Have alcohol-free days/nights
- Establish enforcement procedures for all policies

Alcohol providers and sellers:

- Require alcohol license holder to have liability insurance (check your state laws for specific legal requirements on liability)
- Require responsible beverage 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 booth at all times
- Establish age identification checking procedures
- Prohibit drinking by servers
- Require signs indicating the illegality of providing alcohol to minors
- 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/Beverage:

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

II. Why alcohol restrictions at community events are important for your community

- **At community events, underage youth may easily get alcohol by buying it directly or by having friends over 21 buy it for them.**
 - One study showed that youth were able to purchase alcohol in 50% of attempts at community festivals.⁷
 - Banning alcohol or restricting alcohol sales (through policies such as age-ID checking or limiting number of servings per person) at community events can reduce these sources of alcohol for youth.
- **Individuals who are already intoxicated may easily get alcohol at festivals and sporting events.**
 - In one study of 50 festivals, individuals appearing obviously intoxicated were able to buy alcohol in 89% of attempts.⁷
- **At community and sporting events, alcohol use may fuel outbreaks of fighting and other forms of disruptive behavior among patrons and fans.**
 - These problems were seen at a professional basketball game in 2004, where drunken fans threw beer at players on the court, and a brawl ensued.¹⁰
 - Policies such as discontinuing alcohol sales during the last half or final hour of the event or limiting the number of servings per person can reduce alcohol-related problems. Stadiums can also prohibit the sale of alcohol in the stands. ^{1,2,5}
- **Alcohol consumption at community events may also cause other types of disturbances within the community.**
 - Possible disturbances include noise level issues, litter and trash on property surrounding the event, traffic and parking issues, property damage or vandalism and public urination.
- **Alcohol consumption at community events may increase the risk of alcohol-impaired patrons driving after an event.**
 - Policies such as banning the sale of alcohol at an event, prohibiting sales to intoxicated customers or restricting the hours during which alcohol can be sold may reduce the likelihood that patrons will drive drunk after an event. ⁶ Two recent deaths were attributed to serving patrons who were already intoxicated at sports stadiums. In both cases, the intoxicated patron was the driver in a fatal traffic crash after leaving the stadium. ^{11,12}

III. Why festival alcohol policies need to be changed

- A survey of 45 community festivals in the summer of 2000 found that: 7
- 62% allowed individuals under age 21 into designated drinking areas
- 53% did not limit the number of alcoholic drinks purchased per sale
- 33% received at least some 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.

IV. Considerations for establishing this policy in your community

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ISSUE: Stadium owners and other event organizers may oppose bans or restrictions on the sale of alcohol for fear that such restrictions would reduce participation in events or reduce profits because revenue from alcohol sales would be eliminated.^{1,5}

RESPONSE: *A national survey of adults showed that over 80% of respondents were in favor of alcohol restrictions at concerts and stadiums. 8 Although some events may draw smaller crowds as a result of alcohol bans or restrictions, many events would not likely lose a significant number of participants. 5 Events with alcohol bans or restrictions could also draw more families and other patrons who want to enjoy an event that is safe and free from alcohol-related problems.*

ISSUE: Some community members may think that restrictions will be more effective when implemented voluntarily by the event organizers.

RESPONSE: *Community members can first ask and encourage event organizers to voluntarily implement their own alcohol restrictions. If the event organizers do not comply, concerned community members may want to take the following steps: 1*

- Gather information about any problems associated with specific events (contact: police department, licensing agency, managers of facilities, security personnel, event coordinators, business and property owners near event).
- Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and enforcement of existing alcohol control policies for community events.
- Identify alcohol policies that address the problems associated with community events and encourage event organizers to adopt policies or attempt to pass local ordinances requiring such policies.

Note: Community members are strongly urged to consult with a local attorney to learn about state law requirements before attempting to pass a local ordinance on restricting alcohol at community events.

V. Considerations for implementation 3

- **Event organizers should ensure that all staff, paid and voluntary, are aware of event policies and are trained to comply with these policies.**
- **Mechanisms need to be in place to enforce event policies.**
 - As with any policy, alcohol restrictions at community events must be enforced to be effective.
 - A monitoring system, such as security guards, management spot-checks, or surveillance cameras, can ensure that employees are complying with event rules.

VI. How alcohol restrictions at community events fit into a larger context

- Youth obtain alcohol from commercial and social sources. Effective alcohol restrictions at community events can reduce youth access to alcohol from both types of sources by making it difficult for teens to purchase alcohol themselves (commercial source) and for them to obtain it from other people (social source).
- Alcohol restrictions send a clear message that consumption of alcohol by underage youth at community events is not acceptable.
- Communities also need to implement and enforce policies such as:
 - Restrictions on sponsorship of events by alcohol producers and sellers. (see alcohol sponsorship)
 - Zoning ordinances to restrict alcohol outlets.
 - Bans and restrictions on alcohol billboards and other advertising. (see alcohol advertising restrictions)
 - Restrictions on alcohol use in public places such as parks, parking lots and streets.

VII. What other communities have done

California's Licensee Education on Alcohol and Drugs program (LEAD), administered through the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, provides free training for event leaders and staff in a two-hour voluntary session. During this program, leaders learn effective strategies to deal with underage and irresponsible drinking concerns, as well about California laws on alcohol control. 9

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