

8302 Old Sauk Road, District 9

- *residential neighborhood, surrounded by several apartment complexes
- *several liquor outlets close by: Old Sauk Mobil (33 Junction Court—right across street), Barriques (next door), Target, Copps
- *already 47 liquor licenses in the district (4th highest out of all 20 districts)

7810 Mineral Point Road, District 9

- *another liquor store is not necessary in this area—
- *At least 13 other class A liquor outlets within a mile:
 - Mobil Mart, 8230 Watts Rd
 - PDQ, 7502 Mineral Point Rd
 - PDQ, 7717 Mineral Pt Rd (this is right across the street)
 - Silly Yak's Bakery, 7866 Mineral Pt Rd (right next door)
 - Steve's Liquor, 8302 Mineral Pt Road
 - Apollo Liquor, 7455 Mineral Pt Road
 - Target, 201 Junction Rd
 - Copps, 261 Junction Rd
 - Brennans, 8210 Watts Rd
 - Aldi Foods, 8222 Watts Rd
 - Mineral Point Quick Mar, 6702 Mineral Pt Rd
 - Swagat Indian Groceries, 6717 Odana
 - Tienda Los Gemelos, 6713 Odana
- * several of these are RIGHT NEXT DOOR
- *already 47 liquor licenses in the district (4th highest out of all 20 districts)

606 S Whitney Way, District 19

- * bus stop, west transfer point across street
- *Copps= immediately adjacent Class A outlet, also close by are: Swagat Indian Groceries and Tienda Los Gemelos on Odana, Mineral Point Quick Mart ... further away in the same district: Brennan's and Stop and Go on University, Knoche's Food Center on Old Middleton
- *Already 37 liquor licenses in district: 5th highest number in Madison

Dear members of the Alcohol License Review Committee,

I'm writing in opposition to the liquor licenses currently being sought by Madison-area Walgreens pharmacies. In whose interest is it to grant these licenses? Certainly, it's in the interest of Walgreens, who can expand their product range. Drinkers might perceive another liquor vendor to be in their interest—easier access, after all—but easier access to an addictive and harmful substance is in nobody's interest. True, centuries of social acceptance have made this particular vice legal, but we should not imagine that being able to buy alcohol is in the interest of people who want to do so.

I'm sure many have argued that more liquor licenses would harm small, local liquor stores, and have cited statistics that show a correlation between liquor stores per capita and crime rate. I'll simply say that I agree with those arguments and move on; I don't have the data to support those claims, so I'll leave them to those that do.

As a young Madisonian (18 this summer), I have mixed feelings about this on a personal level. Of course I don't want local businesses to be hurt or for crime to increase as a result of easier access to alcohol. I certainly don't want more drunk drivers out on the road. But at the same time, I already know where I can go for one-stop shopping when I need cigarettes, condoms and drugs: Walgreens. How much better would that mix get, from a teen's point of view, if booze were to be thrown into that mix? Yes, I'm underage, but hanging out with unscrupulous over-21s is just as good as being 21 myself for this purpose.

Walgreens is a *pharmacy*—it sells Tylenol and toothbrushes and tampons. Yes, it also sells many other things, and those contribute to its dual image as pharmacy and convenience store. That image, among teens, seems to be that a trip to Walgreens will fulfill any basic non-food need. Things I've bought at Walgreens recently, for example, include bugspray, razor blades, earplugs, a Snuggie, earbuds, batteries, candy, a pre-paid credit card... the list goes on, and becomes even more random. One trip to Walgreens can get a teen soda, snacks, cigarettes, condoms—the essentials for a party. If Walgreens sold beer, you could bet your bottom dollar that beer would make its way onto that underage-party shopping list as well.

Sincerely,
Tim Broman
16 N. Roby Rd.
Madison, WI 53726



Jim Doyle
Governor

Mark Seidl, WCHSA
Chairperson

Karen E. Timberlake
Secretary

Scott Stokes
Secretary

State of Wisconsin

State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

1 West Wilson Street, P.O. Box 7851
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851

June 2010

To Interested Parties:

On behalf of the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (SCAODA) I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the final report of the Alcohol Culture and Environment Workgroup Recommendations, *Changing Wisconsin's Alcohol Environment to Promote Safe and Healthy Lives*.

These recommendations are in response to requests for help in addressing concerns expressed by community alcohol and drug prevention coalitions around the state. These coalitions expressed interest in learning about strategies to address the prevailing alcohol culture in Wisconsin. Nationally, Wisconsin continues to rank high in its alcohol consumption as evidenced by 2008 data ranking Wisconsin first in adult binge drinking, percentage of current drinkers in the population, and in driving under the influence.

Community coalitions have been mobilizing to change Wisconsin's environment which has become too accepting of alcohol misuse. To assist the coalitions and others in these efforts, the Prevention Committee of SCAODA appointed the Alcohol, Culture and Environment (ACE) Workgroup to examine the elements that contribute to the state's culture of alcohol and to identify environmental strategies to positively impact these elements.

This report will be a valuable tool for those around the state who are interested in making a positive change to Wisconsin's alcohol environment. If you have any questions about the ACE Report please contact Julia Sherman at: jsherman2@wisc.edu. If you or anyone you know, would like additional copies of the ACE recommendations, the report is available online at: www.scaoda.state.wi.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Seidl / edl".

Mark Seidl
Chairperson

Charge to the Alcohol, Culture and Environment Workgroup



The consequences and costs of alcohol misuse in Wisconsin are staggering and have created a diverse range of problems. Changing Wisconsin's culture of alcohol will require an equally diverse set of solutions including new

policies and practices in all segments of the community, including local and state government.

The workgroup will examine the state laws, local ordinances and related policies that regulate the sale and serving of alcohol to identify legal, cultural and financial barriers to alcohol policy reform. The workgroup will also examine the role of Wisconsin's

culture and history as it may impact current alcohol related problems.

Wisconsin's framework for alcohol policy was established fifty years before research demonstrated that public policy and community practices have the ability to prevent and reduce illegal, inappropriate and dangerous alcohol use without significant impact on moderate drinkers over age 21. Accordingly, the workgroup will examine strategies and or options at the private, community, municipal and state levels in an effort to make alcohol less acceptable, available, attractive and affordable to vulnerable populations. Our goal is to reduce underage drinking, young adult binge drinking and alcohol-related vehicular crashes and death.

Alcohol, Culture and Environment Workgroup Membership

(Listed Alphabetically)

Blinda Beason

Wisconsin Department of Transportation,
Bureau of Traffic Safety

Lisa Berger

Helen Bader School of Social Welfare,
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

Barry Busby

Winnebago County Coroner, Oshkosh

Nina Emerson

Resource Center on Impaired Driving,
University of Wisconsin Law School

Greg Holding

Alderman of the 11th District City of Racine

Tracy Herlitzke

CESA #4, La Crosse County
Medical Health Science Consortium

Barb Hermann

Manitowoc County Public Health Department

Alan Iverson

La Crosse Police Department

Francie McGuire-Winkler

Focus on Community, Racine

Julia Sherman (Chair)

Wisconsin Alcohol Policy Project,
Resource Center on Impaired Driving
University of Wisconsin Law School

Annie Short

Northeast Wisconsin Area Health Education Center,
Manitowoc

Christopher Wardlow

ThedaCare, Outagamie County Department of Health
& Human Services, Wisconsin Prevention Network

Professional affiliations are listed only for purposes of identification and do not indicate an organizational endorsement of this report or its recommendations.

Background: Alcohol Use in Wisconsin



Alcohol has played an undeniable role in Wisconsin's history. Alcohol production was a factor in early economic growth while the temperance movement played a role in Wisconsin's early political history. In

1836, Wisconsin's territorial government authorized local alcohol licensure, presaging the current system of municipal licensure.¹ In the late 19th and early 20th century alcohol became a proxy issue for anti-immigrant sentiments and religious bias.² At one point, religious overtones in the alcohol debate led Archbishop Messmer of Milwaukee to ban prohibitionist sermons.³ After prohibition was repealed, Milwaukee became synonymous with beer and the brewing industry, an image reinforced through advertising and popular TV programs

Over time, nostalgia became denial. Like other people in different cultures and countries, Wisconsinites considered the favored alcoholic beverage a cultural virtue and not alcohol.⁴ The fact that more adults in Wisconsin drink alcohol and consume more alcohol than adults in other states may have masked the increasing occurrence of alcohol abuse and misuse. Over time, alcohol outlets proliferated to double the national average of alcohol outlets per capita.⁵ Wisconsin's rate of disorderly conduct arrests grew to five times the national average during the same period while similar arrest rates in other states were falling.⁶

Since 2000, Wisconsin has experienced among the highest rates in the nation of the following:⁷

- Binge drinking among adults
- Chronic heavy drinking among adults
- Underage drinking
- Underage binge drinking
- Self-reported drinking before driving

As a result, Wisconsin's alcohol-related law enforcement, medical and similar costs have soared. Even more concerning, the number of people who need but do not receive alcohol treatment has soared, especially among youth. In 2007, Wisconsin had an estimated 126,000 young people ages 12-25 in need of treatment for their alcohol dependence who did not receive care.⁸

Wisconsin's alcohol environment has evolved over many years. The result of Wisconsin's alcohol policies and practices were not intentionally malicious but instead were the result of unintentional consequences of community growth, isolated municipal control and the increasing influence of the alcohol and hospitality industries.

Fortunately, the experience of other states and nations suggests communities and institutions have the ability to reverse this situation. Change will take time and resources. Wisconsin's alcohol culture (also called the alcohol environment) can be improved through sustained effort among all segments of the community. In the long run, even difficult changes will be more cost-effective than the extraordinary amounts Wisconsin currently expends on alcohol related health care, emergency services, and treatment. Failure to create change will cripple the state's economic growth, limit our children's future and dishonor the efforts of earlier generations to build a strong and prosperous state.

This report is one step on the path towards a healthier, more prosperous Wisconsin. Subsequent groups should consider continued efforts to improve the alcohol environment, encourage employer efforts to support employees, provide treatment for the alcohol dependent and build communities which support recovery.

Alcohol, Culture and Environment Workgroup Final Report Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

LEGISLATIVE OR STATE ACTION

The Wisconsin Legislature should approve action promoting public health and safety, through an improved alcohol environment. Legislative action is recommended to restore local authority and policies that have been eroded over time. Also, licensure fees must be restored to a level needed to support the local regulatory responsibilities.

MUNICIPAL ACTION

The primary responsibility for alcohol licensure and control falls on local governments in Wisconsin. Municipalities can improve the alcohol environment through adoption and implementation of evidence-based practices. ACE recommends specific changes in municipal policy that are proven to reduce alcohol misuse.

EDUCATORS OR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Wisconsin's public and private schools, colleges and universities are the heart of Wisconsin's communities and key to future economic growth. These recommendations recognize the unique leadership role of educators. Broad-based community involvement in school efforts to reduce alcohol abuse by youth and young adults will create stronger, engaged communities and schools.

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The practices and policies of community groups are barometers of community norms. In some cases, an organization's long-standing alcohol policies unintentionally contribute to community alcohol problems even as these groups dedicate themselves to community improvement. When civic groups and faith communities review and adopt policies to discourage alcohol misuse, they improve the quality of community life and make a significant contribution to improving Wisconsin's alcohol culture.

EMPLOYERS

Individual alcohol use is influenced by employers' expectations as well as the community alcohol environment.⁹ Alcohol related problems impact worker productivity, workplace safety and, health care costs. The complex legal and health implications of the workplace alcohol environment suggest a need for alcohol policy and workplace work group composed of employers and employee representatives charged with developing private and public sector policies and practices.

Final Report Recommendations Introduction



For nine months, the Alcohol, Culture and Environment (ACE) work group of the Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Committee has examined the elements contributing to what many call the state's culture of alcohol or alcohol environment. While there is a widespread perception that the culture of alcohol contributes to injury, death and disease – there is no consensus in regards to how the alcohol culture developed or the factors that contributed to its development.

The ACE work group focused on the aspects of our alcohol environment that can be changed to exert a positive impact on Wisconsin's culture. To that end, ACE examined the public, organizational, and community policies and practices that could be changed to possibly improve the alcohol environment.

The problems associated with Wisconsin's culture of alcohol have been widely reported and discussed in the media, while a vision of a healthy alcohol environment in Wisconsin has remained unclear.

Therefore, we offer this broad vision of a healthy, vibrant Wisconsin with a balanced alcohol environment:

- All Wisconsin residents have the right to a family, community and working life protected from injury, harm and other negative consequences of alcohol misuse.
- All of Wisconsin's children have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol use, including overexposure to alcohol advertising.
- Wisconsin's residents have the right to complete, accurate and impartial information on the effects and consequences of alcohol use and misuse beginning at a very early age.
- Wisconsin residents who choose not to consume alcohol, for any reason, have the right to have their decision supported without judgment or pressure to consume alcohol.
- All Wisconsin residents experiencing the effects of dangerous drinking or alcohol abuse should have access to treatment and care.^a

Wisconsin's alcohol environment has evolved over time, community by community. Wisconsin residents are largely unaware of the significant power communities have over their alcohol environment. Since alcohol is regulated and controlled locally, changes must occur incrementally in each community. Local alcohol control gives individual citizens a significant amount of responsibility for control of the local alcohol environment.

Wisconsin's elected and appointed officials have the responsibility and authority to regulate the community alcohol environment, but often lack the information and support needed to understand the legal and municipal issues of alcohol policy. Elected and local officials need an ongoing independent source of information and training on alcohol policy with the tools for municipalities to create a moderate alcohol environment and police protocols that remediate alcohol related problems economically and without disruption to the community at large.

There is no single cause or remedy for Wisconsin's alcohol-related problems. Action by both the Wisconsin Legislature and municipal government is needed to successfully make the changes that will improve the state's alcohol environment. The 49 unanimous recommendations included in this report begin with legislative support for actions which enable municipalities and communities to create a positive alcohol environment. Recommendations are categorized by the organization responsible for implementing the recommendation. Every level of government and community institution has a role in reforming our culture of alcohol.

^a Modeled upon the Ethical Principles and Goals of the European Charter on Alcohol adopted December 1995.

Final Report Recommendations Recommendations Requiring Municipal Action



The primary responsibility for alcohol licensure and control falls on local governments in Wisconsin. Municipalities can improve the alcohol environment through adoption and implementation of evidence-based practices. ACE

recommends these specific changes in municipal policy that are proven to reduce alcohol misuse:

1. The sale of alcohol and gasoline at the same location is incompatible and continues to pose a serious threat to public safety. Municipalities should cease to issue and, when appropriate, revoke or decline to renew alcohol licenses to establishments that sell gasoline.
2. Municipalities should adopt procedural guidelines and policies to govern all local deliberations and decisions on whether to issue, renew or revoke licenses to sell or serve alcohol (see example in Appendix 1).
3. Municipalities should consider using detailed license conditions, appended to pending alcohol licenses and renewals, to address specific concerns about the operation of the establishment and neighborhood concerns such as traffic, noise or sidewalk congestion (see example in Appendix 2).
4. Municipalities should regulate alcohol tasting in Class A establishments. The scope of regulations should include:
 - Cordoned, attended sampling area,
 - Require ID check limiting sampling to persons age 21 and older,
 - Locating the sampling area away from child-oriented products,
 - Require alcohol advertising for tastings to be at least 36 inches off the floor,
 - Presence of licensed operator within the sampling area.
5. Municipalities should adopt an ordinance establishing significant forfeitures for adults who provide a safe haven for underage drinking, pour or provide alcohol for three or more nonrelated youth on their property (see example in Appendix 3)
6. Law enforcement agencies should establish ongoing liaison with the owners and managers of rental property to prevent party or nuisance houses. These individuals should also establish a protocol for securing and dispersing unruly gatherings and evicting tenants in violation of the lease as a result of alcohol related problems.
7. Municipalities individually, or as part of a multi-jurisdictional task force, should operate well publicized saturation patrols to discourage drunk driving.
8. Municipalities should append the following conditions to all Class "B" Temporary [picnic] licenses (beer gardens, festivals, etc.) to reduce alcohol related injuries, disturbances and prevent underage drinking:
 - Create a secure perimeter around the licensed area with a double fence (with a minimum 7 foot gap), a single entrance and photo ID check,
 - Use wrist bands and hand stamps in rotating patterns to identify customers age 21 and older for alcohol purchase,
 - Require a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) not greater than 0.04 and ban alcohol consumption while serving and mandate that alcohol RBS or local RBS alternative training be completed by all servers,
 - Mandate a minimum of one licensed bartender (operator) on site whenever alcohol is sold or served,
 - Allow only 12 oz (or smaller) clear or opaque cups with sale limited to two cups per purchase,
 - Stop serving alcohol one hour before closing the area,



Final Report Recommendations

Recommendations Requiring Municipal Action--*con't.*



- Require vendors to offer food or allow food purchased from vendors into the licensed area,
- Nonalcoholic drinks be priced less than alcohol beverages,
- No one under age 21 will be served alcohol even when accompanied by a parent, guardian or spouse of legal drinking age.

If additional security is required, municipalities may consider the following:

- Search all bags and backpacks of individuals entering the licensed alcohol area for alcohol and other contraband,
 - Make toilet facilities available within the secure perimeter
9. Municipalities should limit alcohol advertising to prevent youth overexposure to alcohol advertising. Municipalities should consider:
- A ban on alcohol advertising within 500 feet of a school, church or park,^{11 12}
 - Banning single serving alcohol products where possible,
 - Banning alcohol advertising on public property,
 - Limiting alcohol banners over streets,
 - Establishing rules for tastings,
 - Limiting the portion of a window that can be covered in advertising viewable from the exterior,
 - Raising alcohol displays to above 36 inches from the floor.¹³
10. Municipalities should adopt ordinances prohibiting those who sell or serve alcohol from drinking while on duty or having a BAC above a 0.04 while working (commonly called sober server ordinances).

11. Municipalities should adopt ordinances banning the use of beer bongs and similar devices in addition to competitions and games designed to force the rapid consumption of alcohol in licensed establishments.
12. Municipalities should establish ongoing, comprehensive alcohol age compliance checks for both on and off premise licensees with citations issued to vendors and/or employees for noncompliance.
13. Municipalities should adopt ordinances placing significant restrictions on the sale of alcohol at public events including:
- Prohibiting alcohol sales at youth events and youth oriented events such as interscholastic sports or children's entertainment,
 - Mandated on or off-duty officers retained for security, wrist bands and hand stamp to confirm security and the diligent monitoring for intoxicated/ incapacitated persons,
 - Non-alcohol beverages that cost less than alcohol,
 - Seating within fenced and gates alcohol serving and consumption area,
 - Limiting the number of alcohol beverages one individual may purchase at a time,
 - Schedule saturation patrols to coincide with the anticipated conclusion time of the event.
14. Municipalities should prohibit consumption-based drink specials such as time limited pricing, specials which increase drink volume without increasing the price and all-you-can-drink flat fee specials.
15. Municipalities should adopt beer keg registration ordinances as an effective tool to apprehend adults who provide alcohol to underage youth and to deter such purchases in the future (see example in Appendix 4).

Nina J. Emerson
137 S. Brittingham Place
Madison, WI 53715

July 21, 2010

Mr. David Hart, Chairperson
Madison Alcohol License Review Committee
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Walgreens Liquor License Applications

Dear Chairperson Hart and Members of the ALRC:

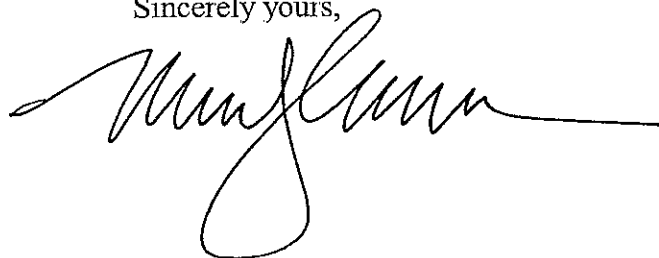
The state statutes give municipalities the authority to grant liquor licenses. The authority is discretionary, not mandatory. A liquor license is a privilege, not a right. The legislative intent of Chapter 125 is “for the benefit of the public health and welfare and this states’ economic stability.” The ALRC’s Mission includes enhancing public safety & quality of life...and reducing expenditures on alcohol-related issues.

From this backdrop, I urge the ALRC to deny the three Walgreens liquor license applications (Agenda Nos. 12, 13, 14) for the following reasons:

1. The sale of alcohol is incompatible with the sale of prescription and over-the-counter medication. Most pharmacists believe alcohol should not be sold at pharmacies. (See *J. of Community Health*, 2003.)
2. Wisconsin already leads the nation in per capita alcohol outlets. Any additional licenses will increase alcohol outlet density, which will lead to increased levels of crime and violence. (See “*How Alcohol Outlets Affect Neighborhood Violence*,” *PIRE*, a copy is attached.)
3. Walgreens should stick with being the largest pharmacy chain in the United States. Its success is reflected in the increased dividends it has had in each of the past 35 years.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,





Pacific Institute
FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

PIRE

Translating Science into Practice

How Alcohol Outlets Affect Neighborhood Violence

Kathryn Stewart



Prevention Research Center
PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

www.resources.prev.org

Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation is one of the nation's preeminent independent, nonprofit organizations merging scientific knowledge and proven practice to create solutions that improve the health, safety and well-being of individuals, communities, nations, and the world

Introduction

Neighborhoods where bars, restaurants and liquor and other stores that sell alcohol are close together suffer more frequent incidences of violence and other alcohol-related problems, according to recent research by the Prevention Research Center and others. The strong connection between alcohol and violence has been clear for a long time – but now we know that this connection also relates to the location of places that sell alcohol.

Government agencies with authority over land-use and/or liquor licenses can help fight crime and blight and improve quality of life by controlling licenses to sell alcohol and the location of licensees. Governments can make rules that set minimum distances between alcohol outlets; they can limit new licenses for areas that already have outlets too close together; they can stop issuing licenses when a particular location goes out of business; and they can permanently close outlets that repeatedly violate liquor laws.

This paper presents some of the questions and answers about alcohol sales outlets and alcohol problems – especially the relationship between outlet location and violence.

What is the relationship between outlet density and violence?

A number of studies have found that in and near neighborhoods where there is a high density of places that sell alcohol, there is a higher rate of violence. That is, when bars, liquor stores, and other businesses that sell alcohol are close together, more assaults and other violent crimes occur.

Some of the important findings about outlet density and violence are described below.

- In a study of Camden, New Jersey, neighborhoods with alcohol outlet density had more violent crime (including homicide, rape, assault, and robbery). This association was strong even when other neighborhood characteristics such as poverty and age of residents were taken into account.¹
- In a study of 74 cities in Los Angeles County, California, a higher density of alcohol outlets was associated with more violence, even when levels of unemployment, age, ethnic and racial characteristics and other community characteristics were taken into account.²
- In a six-year study of changes in numbers of alcohol outlets in 551 urban and rural zip code areas in California, an increase in the number of bars and off-premise places (e.g., liquor, convenience

and grocery stores) was related to an increase in the rate of violence. These effects were largest in poor, minority areas of the state, those areas already saturated with the greatest numbers of outlets.³

- Violence committed by youth was more common in minority neighborhoods where there are many outlets that sell alcohol for consumption off the premises (such as liquor and convenience stores).⁴ This finding makes sense because underage drinkers are more likely to purchase alcohol in a store than in a bar or restaurant.
- In neighborhoods where there are many outlets that sell high-alcohol beer and spirits, more violent assaults occur.⁵
- Large taverns and nightclubs and similar establishments that are primarily devoted to drinking have higher rates of assaults among customers.⁶

A larger number of alcohol outlets and a higher rate of violence might be expected in poorer neighborhoods or in neighborhoods with a larger population young people. But as the research described above shows, even when levels of poverty and the age and the ethnic background of residents are taken into account, a high density of outlets is strongly related to violence regardless of a neighborhood's economic, ethnic or age status.

All of the characteristics of alcohol outlet location can be important. It is easy to see that a town with many bars, restaurants, and stores that sell alcohol could be different from one that has fewer outlets. It is also easy to see that a neighborhood that has a bar on each corner and a liquor store on each block has a completely different environment than one that has few outlets or none at all. Other characteristics of the environment make a difference, too. For example, a strip of bars near a college campus presents a different environment from a similar density of bars in an upscale city center and also different from a similar density in a poor neighborhood. But in each case, some form of increased violence would be expected as compared to comparable areas with fewer alcohol outlets. A study of changes in outlet density over time as related to violence in California found that regardless of other neighborhood characteristics, an increase in outlets increased violence. In neighborhoods with a high minority population and low incomes, the effect was more than four times greater than for the statewide sample of communities.

What accounts for the relationship between outlet density and violence?

The research that has been done so far cannot pinpoint exactly why having more outlets in a small area seems to result in more violence. Various explanations have been proposed. One is that alcohol outlets can be a source of social disorder. A liquor store parking lot full of people drinking in their cars or on the curb and broken bottles littering the area outside a bar may send a message that this is a neighborhood in which normal rules about orderly behavior are not enforced. Another possible explanation is that a neighborhood with a large number of outlets acts as a magnet for people who are more inclined to be violent or more vulnerable to being assaulted. It is also possible that a high number of outlets results in a large number of people under the influence of alcohol – which makes them both more likely to be violent and less able to defend themselves.⁷ It is most probable that all of these factors come into play.

What is the relationship of outlet density to other alcohol problems?

The density of alcohol outlets has also been found to be related to other alcohol problems such as drinking and driving, higher rates of motor vehicle-related pedestrian injuries, and child abuse and neglect.⁸⁹

How do governments regulate outlet density?

States and communities can regulate the number of bars, restaurants, and stores that sell alcohol in a given area. Sometimes the number and location of alcohol outlets is not limited at all. In some jurisdictions, the number of alcohol outlets is limited based on the population of the area – only so many outlets per thousand residents, for example. In other cases, the location of outlets is regulated – for example, some states or communities set minimum distances from schools or churches. Research increasingly finds, however, that geographic density is the key aspect of outlet location – that is, the distance between outlets. Where over-concentrations of outlets occur, greater problems arise.

Governments can use their regulatory powers to reduce violence by:

- Making rules that set minimum distances between alcohol outlets;
- Limiting new licenses for areas that already have outlets too close together;
- Not issuing a new license when a particular location goes out of business;
- Permanently closing outlets that repeatedly violate liquor laws (such as by selling alcohol to minors or to intoxicated persons or allowing illicit drug sales or prostitution on the premises).

What implications do these findings have for state and local licensing policies?

The research strongly suggests that limits on outlet density may be an effective means of reducing alcohol problems, especially violence. States and communities can use controls on the number and location of alcohol outlets as a tool for reducing violence, creating a safer and healthier alcohol environment, and improving the quality of life of a community.

What other alcohol policies are important?

Alcohol is a legal and widely consumed commodity; but it is also a commodity that can create a variety of serious health and social problems. Alcohol policies are an important tool for preventing these problems. Every day, states and communities make decisions about the sale of alcohol: who can sell it, when and where it can be sold, who it can be sold to. State and local laws and policies control many aspects of the system by which alcohol is manufactured, marketed, sold, purchased, and consumed.

Regulations serve a variety of purposes, for example, they help ensure that tax revenues are collected. But the regulation of the business of selling alcohol goes beyond economic concerns. Each element of the regulatory system provides opportunities for creating a healthier social environment with respect to alcohol. For example, regulations can prevent unsafe sales practices – such as prohibiting all-you-can-drink specials that encourage intoxication. Regulations can control advertising and promotion that appeals to minors and establish the minimum age and training qualifications for people who sell and serve alcohol. Each type of regulation has the potential to ensure that alcohol is consumed in a safe and healthy manner.

What aspects of alcohol availability can be regulated?

The regulation of alcohol sales can have an impact on the availability of alcohol – that is, how easy and convenient it is to buy. Some states and communities try to make alcohol less available by selling it only in limited places – for example, state liquor stores. Other communities sell it more freely – making it available in grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, laundromats, drive-through windows, and so forth. States and communities can also limit the hours and days of sale, and other aspects of the conditions of sale. The regulation of availability is important because research generally shows that when alcohol is more easily available, people drink more and more alcohol problems occur.

References

- ¹ Gorman, D., Speer, P., Gruenewald, P., and Labouvie, E. (2001) *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 62: 628-636.
- ² Scribner, R. et al. (1995) The risk of assaultive violence and alcohol availability in LA County, *American Journal of Public Health*, 85:335-340.
- ³ Gruenewald, P. J. and Remer, L. Changes in outlet densities affect violence rates. In review, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 2004.
- ⁴ Alaniz, M., Cartmill, R., and Parker, R. (1998) Immigrants and violence, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 20, 155-174.
- ⁵ Stevenson, R., Lind., B. and Weatherburn, D. (1999) The relationship between alcohol sales and assault in New South Wales, Australia, *Addiction*, 94(3):397-410
- ⁶ Stockwell, T. et al. (1992) Levels of drunkenness of customers leaving licensed premises in Perth, Western Australia: a comparison of high and low "risk" premises. *British Journal of Addiction*, 87: 873-881
- ⁷ Gorman, et al (2001).
- ⁸ Freisthler, B., Midanik, L. I. and Gruenewald, P. J. Alcohol outlets and child physical abuse and neglect: Applying routine activities theory to the study of child maltreatment. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65, 586-592, 2004
- ⁹ Stockwell, T. and Gruenewald, P. (2001) Controls on Physical Availability of Alcohol, in Heather, N., Peters, T., and Stockwell, T. (eds), *International Handbook of Alcohol Dependence and Problems*, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd