

Policy Options for Prevention: The Case of Alcohol

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ALCOHOL use is a major factor contributing to all of the leading causes of death in the U.S. population for the first half of the life span (1,2). A variety of approaches to reduce alcohol use and alcohol-related problems, including those targeting the individual and the environment, have been identified. Individual-level approaches try to educate or treat the individual to stop or reduce drinking. These approaches include treatment programs for those dependent on alcohol. While these individual-level approaches are valuable, they are unlikely to achieve measurable decreases in rates of alcohol-related problems. Strategies to reduce alcohol-related problems must focus on the broad population of drinkers, not only a small “high-risk” segment who are clinically dependent on alcohol, in order to effectively prevent or reduce social and health problems associated with alcohol use. A focus on the entire population is necessary because the majority of alcohol-related death, disability and damage is attributable to moderate drinkers who engage in occasional risky drinking, not those who are dependent on alcohol (3,4). Risk is not a dichotomy, such that some drinkers are “high-risk” and others are “safe.” Instead, risk is a continuum (5). Drinking patterns in the general population are often not reflective of addictive or psycho-pathological behavior, but rather are the results of social policies, institutional structures, and social norms concerning alcohol in our society (6).

Prevention efforts must address the conditions that give rise to risky drinking practices—changing the broader social structures and public policies that shape drinking attitudes and norms (7). If we only change knowledge, attitudes and perceptions (e.g., through educational and skill-building efforts among heavy alcohol users), benefi-

cial effects are temporary at best, because people continue to be exposed to a multi-dimensional environment that encourages risky alcohol use.

How do we change the social and institutional environment that facilitates or encourages behaviors that increase risk? The answer we propose here is that the social environment is shaped to a substantial degree by public and institutional policies, and that those policies can be modified to enhance the development of healthier and safer communities. For the purposes of this paper, we define policy as standards for behavior or practices that are formalized to some degree (i.e., written), and embodied in rules, regulations, or operating procedures. Diverse communities across the U.S. concerned about the burden on society of alcohol-related damage are organizing to change local, state/provincial, or national policies in ways to reduce the population-wide risk for alcohol problems. Our concern about health policies is not limited to formal public (or governmental) policies, but also includes the policies of a variety of institutions, including workplaces, colleges, schools, on- (i.e., bars and restaurants) and off-sale (i.e., liquor, convenience, and grocery stores), alcohol establishments, religious organizations, law enforcement agencies, alcohol producers, and insurance agencies.

In this paper we discuss a range of governmental and institutional policies that could be used to reduce the risk of alcohol problems by altering the way alcohol is sold, marketed, and consumed. Lists of alcohol control policies are included in Tables 1 and 2. Policies are divided into two categories—public and institutional. Some policies fit in both categories. For instance, bars and restaurants may require their employees to receive training in responsible beverage service (an example of institutional policy), or a state, county, or city may mandate server training for all establishments that serve alcohol (an example of public policy). Depending on local conditions, policies may differ in political feasibility, such that public policies in one jurisdiction (compulsory server training, for example) may be achievable only as institutional policies in other jurisdictions. Whether a particular policy is more effective as a public policy or an institutional policy has not yet been fully established for all policy options.

Alcohol control policies may also be differentiated along other dimensions. Public policies may be distinguished by the level of government jurisdiction at which they are implemented. For example,

alcohol excise taxes may be implemented at the national or state/provincial levels. In the United States, beer keg registration policies were first enacted by cities, which then led to the introduction of keg registration legislation at the state level in several states (8). Policies may also be classified by the sub-populations they target (such as youth, college students, or specific groups of employees). Finally, institutional policies may be classified by type of institution.

The goal of this paper is to provide researchers and public health advocates with a brief description of a wide range of alcohol control policies and a basic structure in which to place them. When available, a summary of research findings is also provided (see 9–12 for full reviews). Recommendations for specific alcohol policy changes should be guided by the type of alcohol problem being addressed and the scope of change needed (e.g., institutional versus local versus state level).

PUBLIC POLICIES FOR PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL PROBLEMS

Public policies shown in Table 1 are categorized by the mechanism by which they affect drinking behavior. Such policies may alter drinking patterns by affecting the way alcohol is sold or distributed, where and when it is consumed, the price of alcohol, the social environment surrounding alcohol use, the manner in which alcohol-related laws are enforced, and the extent of underage access to alcohol.

Policies Affecting How, When and Where Alcohol is Sold. Laws or regulations govern the way in which alcohol is sold or served within a nation, state, province or city. Alcoholic beverage distribution systems are best characterized on a continuum from a state or national monopoly system (i.e., alcohol outlets owned by the government), to a limited, strictly regulated license system, to a fully privatized (i.e., alcohol outlets owned by private citizens or corporations), minimally regulated, market system. Monopoly systems also fall on a continuum, with some systems actively promoting alcohol sales while others do not. In a given jurisdiction, a monopoly system may exist for one type of alcoholic beverage (e.g., distilled spirits), and a license system for others (e.g., wine and beer), and these systems may vary at the wholesale or retail levels (13). In the United States, our legal research indicates that 18 states have changed some part of their beer, wine, or distilled spirits distribution systems from state-owned wholesale or retail systems to privatized systems in the past 27 years.

TABLE I

Public Policies Affecting How Alcohol is Sold, Where it is Consumed, Price, Social Environment, Enforcement Mechanisms and Underage Access

Affecting How, When and Where Alcohol is Sold

- Privatization of alcohol distribution systems
- Limiting hours of sale
- Limiting days of sale
- Banning or restricting home deliveries
- Restrictions at community events
- Density of alcohol outlets
- Restricting location of alcohol outlets
- Restricting types of alcohol outlets
- Server training
- Server licensing
- Dram shop or server liability

Affecting Where and When Alcohol is Consumed

- Parks, public spaces
- Cars: open containers
- Stadiums

Affecting the Price of Alcohol

- Excise taxes
- Licensing fees
- Restricting happy-hour sales

Affecting the Social Environment

- Mandatory warning signs
- Warning labels
- Location of alcohol advertisements
- Sponsorship
- Restrictions of alcohol advertisements on television and radio

Affecting Enforcement Mechanisms

- Administrative penalties
- Compulsory compliance checks
- Restricting open house assemblies

(Table 1 continued)

Affecting Underage Access

- Minimum drinking age
- Keg registration
- Enhancement of drivers license
- Penalties for false age identification
- Restricting sales of classes of alcohol
- Restricting age of seller

Privatization of distribution systems have typically led to a proliferation of retail establishments, increases in hours of sale, market competition, and more alcohol advertisements. Results from multiple studies using strong research designs replicated across numerous jurisdictions show that elimination of retail state alcohol monopolies and introduction of licensed private sales outlets substantially increases sales and consumption of alcoholic beverages (14-16).

Policies also regulate when and how alcohol is sold. For example, access to alcohol can be reduced by *limiting days or hours of alcohol sales*. Home deliveries of alcohol may increase availability of alcohol to underage, alcohol dependent, or intoxicated patrons (17,18). Because they are not subject to direct supervision, delivery people may be more likely than in-store clerks to make illegal sales or to be careless in checking age identification or looking for signs of intoxication. Jurisdictions may *prohibit or restrict home delivery* of alcohol to prevent unsupervised alcohol sales. Alcoholic beverages may be readily available to underage and intoxicated individuals at *community or special events*, since few controls may be placed on alcohol in these situations and alcohol servers may not be experienced or trained. To reduce the likelihood of underage drinking, unruly behavior, and other alcohol-related problems, restrictions can be placed on alcohol sales and consumption at these events. Such restrictions include limiting alcohol sales and consumption to a single area, limiting the number of servings per person, reducing serving sizes, selling low-alcohol beverages only, prohibiting individuals from bringing their own alcohol to the event, requiring wrist bands on all individuals over the legal drinking age, requiring server training, and increasing enforcement levels.

The numbers and types of businesses that are allowed to sell or serve alcohol may be restricted. *The density of alcohol outlets* can be restricted to a certain number per population size, and the *location of outlets can be restricted* to certain areas. Studies of outlet densities, along with studies of privatization policies (which typically increase the number of outlets), indicate that increased outlet densities are associated with increased alcohol sales (19,20). The exact mechanisms by which the density of alcohol outlets affects individual drinkers are not known, but it appears that physical availability affects consumption through its influence on perceived availability (21), and on the total costs of obtaining alcohol (e.g., including travel time). Recent studies have found a significant association between density of alcohol outlets and rates of violence and other alcohol-related crime (22,23). Alcohol outlets are often concentrated in poorer neighborhoods (24), raising the issue that communities should assess the distribution and concentration of outlets across neighborhoods and assess existing zoning laws and economic development within poorer communities.

To reduce the association between drinking and driving, *concurrent sales of alcohol and gasoline may be prohibited*. Alcohol sales may also be prohibited in convenience or grocery stores. The availability of alcohol may also depend upon the type of alcohol sold at different types of businesses (i.e., wine, beer, or distilled spirits). For example, grocery and convenience stores in Minnesota are only allowed to sell low-alcohol beer (3.2%); full-strength beer is limited to liquor stores.

Restrictions or guidelines may be placed on alcohol servers and sales clerks and on how alcohol is served. Policies requiring *server training* have proliferated, with eight states and many local communities now mandating it (25). Alcohol servers are trained to: (1) refuse to sell alcohol to obviously intoxicated or underage patrons, (2) limit the number of alcoholic beverages sold per customer per hour, (3) promote the sale of food and non-alcoholic beverages, and (4) prevent impaired patrons from driving. Currently, no standard server training programs exist (25). Server training programs appear to improve server knowledge and attitudes, but only increase mild interventions (e.g., offering food and water, checking age identification, making comments about drinking quantity and/or driving) rather than more difficult interventions such as cutting off service of alcohol

(26–34). State-wide, compulsory server training may, however, help decrease traffic crashes (35). To increase the effectiveness of server training, changing outlet policies and norms surrounding alcohol service is necessary. Thus, when mandating server training, jurisdictions can also require alcohol managers and owners to be trained on how to establish responsible alcohol policies and practices. Mosher (36) provides practical guidelines for communities considering implementing responsible service training programs.

While server training policies usually put the burden of providing server training on alcohol establishments, *server licensing and certification laws* place the burden on alcohol servers or store clerks. Such policies can require alcohol servers and store clerks to meet certain requirements, such as receiving training and remaining violation-free, in order to obtain and maintain a license to serve or sell alcohol.

To increase incentives for alcohol merchants to avoid selling alcohol to underage or intoxicated patrons, *dram shop or server liability laws* have emerged through common law, case law, and statutory law. These laws establish the legal responsibility of an alcohol server for damage an intoxicated patron inflicts on him/herself or on others. Wagenaar and Holder found a small but statistically significant decrease in single-vehicle nighttime car crashes in Texas associated with a sudden change in liability exposure resulting from two well-publicized dram shop cases (37).

Policies Affecting How, Where, and When Alcohol is Consumed. Communities such as Bloomington, Minnesota, have prohibited or restricted alcohol possession and consumption in *public areas* such as parks, beaches, cemeteries, and parking lots (Bloomington Ordinance §13.79). These public areas are often sites for uncontrolled and underage drinking parties that may result in littering, vandalism, and violence. To reduce drink-driving rates, jurisdictions often *prohibit open containers* of alcoholic beverages in motor vehicles.

Policies Affecting the Price of Alcohol. Studies evaluating economic policies have shown a consistent, inverse relationship between alcohol price and alcohol consumption, and an inverse relationship between price and alcohol-related problems, such as motor vehicle fatalities, liver cirrhosis mortality, robberies, and rapes (38–41). *Excise taxes* may be applied to alcohol at the federal, state, and in some cases local level, in order to increase the price of alcohol and to generate revenue to pay for the amelioration of problems caused by

alcohol use. The effectiveness of excise taxes in reducing alcohol consumption appears to vary by beverage type and by characteristics of the population being studied, such as age, drinking level, and culture (41-45). The effect of increased alcohol prices on the heaviest drinkers is still being debated. However, higher alcohol prices are associated with lower liver cirrhosis rates and decreased alcohol consumption among heavy alcohol users who are educated about the risks of alcohol use (41,46). Despite the known effectiveness of excise taxes in reducing alcohol-related problems, increases in excise taxes are infrequent. In the United States, federal excise taxes have not been regularly adjusted for inflation; thus the "real," inflation-adjusted price of alcohol has decreased over time (47). Recommendations for future tax policies include equalizing tax rates across beverage types based on alcohol content, raising tax rates to adjust for past inflation, and indexing the tax rate to adjust for future inflation. A guide to alcohol excise tax policy is provided by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (47). Substantial *annual fees for licenses* to sell alcohol are another less direct means to increasing the retail price, and is a policy option available to many localities.

"*Happy-hours*" and other such price promotions (two drinks for the price of one; women drink for free) may increase alcohol consumption by drastically lowering alcohol prices for a short period of time (48). Happy-hour and other reduced-price promotions can be banned or restricted to free food rather than lowered prices on alcohol.

Policies Affecting the Social Environment. Certain alcohol policies may not directly affect how alcohol is sold, but rather influence the normative environment surrounding alcohol. *Warning sign* and *warning label* policies may require educational warnings to be placed as signs in alcohol establishments or on alcoholic beverage container labels. Warnings may range from informing customers about the dangers of alcohol use (e.g. risks of traffic crashes, fetal alcohol syndrome) to informing customers of policies at alcohol establishments. Beginning in 1989 in the United States, alcoholic beverage containers were required to have warning labels about drinking and driving and drinking during pregnancy (Public Law 1000-0690 of 1988). Studies indicate that warning labels increase awareness (49-54). However, effects of the current warning labels on risk perceptions and drinking practices are modest, no doubt due in part to poor label designs and weak wording (55-57).

Restrictions may also be placed on the types and placement of *alcohol advertisements*. For example, communities such as Baltimore, Maryland, have prohibited billboards in residential areas and near schools. Communities may also limit the amount of advertisements in windows of alcohol establishments or in media with a large youth audience. Restrictions may also be placed on *sponsorship* of community events. Sponsorship of community events by alcohol producers may increase the visibility of alcohol promotions and alcohol-related images that appeal to youth attending these events (58). Federal and state regulations can be used to limit advertising in the electronic media and to restrict product packaging that may appeal to youth (e.g., cartoon characters). Research on the effect of advertising on consumption and alcohol-related problems faces methodological challenges.

Policies Affecting Enforcement Mechanisms. Public policies may also be enacted to increase or enhance enforcement campaigns at local and state levels. For example, jurisdictions may mandate *compliance checks* by law enforcement agencies to determine whether individual alcohol establishments will sell alcohol to underage individuals (59) or intoxicated individuals (60). Studies of compliance checks indicate that these enforcement campaigns substantially decrease illegal alcohol sales (59,60). Routine enforcement actions against alcohol license holders increases the likelihood that establishment owners and managers will supervise their employees to ensure that they do not make illegal or unsafe alcohol sales. The deterrent affect of compliance checks are increased when combined with *administrative or civil penalties*. These penalties are applied against license holders, shifting responsibility for illegal alcohol sales from solely the alcohol servers and store clerks to also include management. (See <http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol> for a comprehensive manual on conducting compliance checks to reduce alcohol sales to youth.)

Policies restricting *open-house assemblies* and noise also can facilitate enforcement of alcohol control regulations. These policies enable law enforcement agents to enter houses or property where uncontrolled drinking parties, typically involving teenagers, are in progress. Such policies have been enacted in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Minneapolis Ordinance §385.110), and Farmington Hills, Michigan (Farmington Hills Ordinance §80.455).

Policies Affecting Underage Access. Six of the public policies listed in Table 1 specifically target alcohol consumption among a sub-group of the population—those under age 21 who are not legally permitted to purchase or consume alcohol. The *minimum drinking age* may be the most well-known policy to reduce youth access to alcohol. Research shows that the minimum legal drinking age of 21 in the United States has prevented thousands of deaths, including those resulting from traffic crashes, suicides, pedestrian deaths, and other unintentional injuries (see Wagenaar (61) for a review).

Despite the minimum drinking age, 18- to 20-year-olds still have relatively easy access to alcohol. Several studies have shown that those under age 21 can easily purchase alcohol from retail establishments without age identification (62–65). In addition, youths report that alcohol is also readily available from other sources such as friends, co-workers, parents, and siblings (66,67). One reason that youth can easily obtain alcohol is the low level of enforcement of the minimum legal drinking age laws (68–70). A number of public policies beyond minimum age-of-sale laws may further restrict youth access to alcohol.

Keg registration laws require alcohol retailers to affix unique identification numbers to beer kegs, which are then recorded along with the name and address of the keg purchaser. This policy enables law enforcement officers to identify and cite adults who purchase kegs and allow underage individuals to consume alcohol from the kegs. To deter adults from providing alcohol to youth, keg registration laws may also require keg purchasers to read and sign a statement with information about criminal and civil penalties that may result from providing alcohol to underage persons. Keg registration policies were first initiated at the local level (8). Although anecdotal evidence indicated that these policies helped to identify illegal suppliers of alcohol, the policies were viewed as limited because buyers would often go to an adjacent community to purchase kegs. As a result, advocates have pursued state-level keg registration policies.

One difficulty in preventing youth purchases of alcohol may be the use of false age identification, although few youths report use of false age identification (66). To reduce use of false age identification, states and provinces may *enhance the design of drivers licenses* (e.g., use holographic images or different colors and picture placement/profile for underage drivers), so that alterations or unofficial replications are

difficult to achieve and easier to detect. States may also increase penalties for producing, selling, or using false age identification.

Young alcohol servers and sellers are apparently more likely than older outlet staff to sell alcohol to underage persons (62,63). Policies may specify a *minimum age for alcohol servers and store clerks* to prevent individuals who are under the legal drinking age from selling or serving alcohol.

Concern has been raised about certain types of beverages that may be targeted and marketed toward youth. Alcopops are alcoholic beverages that have sweet flavors that appeal to youth (e.g., lemonade flavored). Non-alcoholic malt beverages may be targeted toward youth. Jurisdictions can choose to restrict certain types of products from being sold. For example, New Brunswick, Canada, enacted a policy to prohibit sales of near-beer (alcohol content 0.5%) to individuals age 18 and younger, believing that such sales encourage youth to move to regular beer (71).

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES FOR PREVENTION

In addition to public or governmental policies, alcohol outlets and other businesses, law enforcement agencies, colleges, schools, work-sites, media, insurance agencies, religious institutions, and alcohol producers can implement policies to affect drinking patterns among youth and the general population. These institutional policies may range from formal written policies to more informal practices or standards. While institutions are often regulated by public policy, institutional policies also help define norms and expectations for behavior within an organization (12). The institutional policies in Table 2 are organized by the type of institution that can implement the policy.

Alcohol Merchant Policies. Alcohol merchants can implement a number of internal policies to prevent alcohol sales to underage youths. Studies indicate that youthful-appearing buyers can purchase alcohol in half or more of purchase attempts, and that two-thirds to three-quarters of all alcohol outlets tested sell to underage youths (62–65). Underage access to alcohol through commercial outlets may be greatly reduced by establishments requiring employees to check age identification of anyone who appears under age 30. Improvements in the design of drivers licenses or other methods to reduce false age identification documents are useless if youths can purchase alcohol without showing any identification. In addition to establish-

TABLE 2

Institutional Policies that Can be Implemented
by Particular Community Sectors

Alcohol Merchants

- Check age identification
- Post warning signs
- Provide incentives for checking age identification
- Implement secret shopper program
- Distribute warning fliers
- Restrict sales to those accompanied by individuals under age 21
- Eliminate drinking competitions and drink specials
- Server drinks in standard sizes
- Promote food and non-alcoholic beverages
- Train servers/sellers

Other Businesses

- Media
 - Ban alcohol advertisements
 - Prioritize stories about alcohol issues
 - Limit pro-alcohol use images
 - Place warnings on alcohol advertisements
 - Portray responsible alcohol use
- Hotels/motels
 - Restrict age of room renters
- Sport stadiums
 - Ban alcohol advertisements
 - Restrict sales and consumption to specific areas
 - Limit sales to low-alcohol products
 - Stop alcohol sales before end of event
 - Prohibit individuals from bringing in own alcohol

Worksites

- Restrict alcohol at work events
- Prohibit use of alcohol as bonus

Schools

- Ban alcohol on school property
- Ban alcohol at all school events

*(Table 2 continued)**Colleges/Universities*

- Restrict sponsorship
- Prohibit beer kegs
- Establish alcohol-free dormitories
- Ban alcohol on campus

Law Enforcement Agencies

- Walk through alcohol outlets
- Conduct compliance checks
- Prioritize enforcement against adults who illegally provide alcohol to youth

Insurance Industry

- Provide premium discounts for:
 - Outlets that train servers
 - Individuals who sign waivers of coverage if they have alcohol-related crashes

Religious Institutions

- Restrict access to alcohol at social events
- Prohibit use of alcohol as a prize

Alcohol Industry

- Eliminate use of advertisements appealing to youth

ing an age identification policy, alcohol merchants may need to develop other policies and practices to ensure that employees comply with the policy. Server training can teach employees how to *check age identification*. *Warning posters* may remind employees and prospective underage purchasers that age identification will be checked. Alcohol establishments may offer *monetary or other incentives* to their employees for checking age identification and confiscating false identification. Managers may implement systems to monitor employees' compliance with store policies and public policies concerning sales to underage persons. Using a large sample of outlets in the upper Midwest, Wolfson et al. (72) found that off-sale (i.e., grocery and liquor store) alcohol merchants who reported having such a system were less likely to sell alcohol to youthful-appearing purchasers than merchants who did not report having such a system. The Super-

American convenience store chain in the upper Midwest has developed a *secret shopper program* to monitor alcohol and tobacco sales to youth. Similar policies and systems can be developed to prevent alcohol sales to intoxicated patrons as well.

Alcohol merchants can also develop policies that will affect behaviors outside the establishment, such as adults providing alcohol to underage youth. A recent analysis based on a survey of 9th graders, 12th graders, and 18- to 20-year-olds in Minnesota and Wisconsin indicates that social contacts (e.g., friends, family, co-workers) are the most common source of alcohol (66). Many alcohol establishments in communities participating in the Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol project *distributed fliers* to alcohol purchasers warning of the criminal and civil liabilities for providing alcohol to individuals under the age of 21 (73). A number of alcohol establishments have a policy of *not selling alcohol to patrons over the legal drinking age if they are accompanied by underage individuals* (72).

In addition, alcohol merchants can also implement other policies to reduce customer intoxication levels and decrease illegal alcohol sales to obviously intoxicated patrons. Merchants can *eliminate drinking competitions* and *drink specials*. Servers can count the number of standard alcoholic drinks consumed in a given time period, thereby allowing an estimation of intoxication level. Counting drinks is nearly impossible unless establishments only *serve drinks in standard sizes*. To discourage excessive drinking, merchants can promote food and non-alcoholic beverages. Finally, merchants can make sure all servers and clerks receive *training* on how to recognize underage and intoxicated customers and to gain skills to refuse alcohol service to these individuals.

Other Business Policies. Other types of businesses also can develop policies to reduce alcohol-related problems in the community. Mass media outlets can choose not to accept alcohol advertisements and to focus attention on alcohol-related problems and issues in the community. If media outlets choose to accept alcohol advertisements, they could place alcohol *warning labels in those advertisements*. Media can also routinely report the involvement of alcohol in specific crimes or traffic crashes in news stories. In addition, non-news media outlets can choose to portray only responsible alcohol use on television and in films. *Hotels and motels* can restrict the age of individuals renting rooms to those over age 18, particularly at times when stu-

dents may be having celebrations such as graduation and prom. Hotels and motels can also monitor youths for parties in their establishment. *Sports stadiums* may ban alcohol advertisements, restrict alcohol sales and consumption to specific areas, stop alcohol sales before the end of an event, limit sales to low-alcohol products, and not allow individuals to bring their own alcohol into the stadium.

Worksite Policies. Employers can adopt policies that affect drinking and alcohol-related problems among their employees. Preliminary studies suggest that drinking is routinely accepted in some worksites, particularly in those that do not have formal, written policies (74–76). Written policies that clearly state that drinking on the job is unacceptable and that reduce the availability of alcohol at worksites (e.g., prohibiting alcohol at work-related events), accompanied by active enforcement by supervisors, may reduce alcohol-related problems on and off the worksite. In addition, worksites can prohibit the distribution of alcohol products as a bonus or reward.

School and College/University Policies. Schools and colleges can create policies to reduce alcohol use and related problems. *Elementary and secondary schools* typically prohibit alcohol on school grounds or at any school-related event (77). *Some college and university campuses* in the United States have restricted sponsorship of campus events by the alcohol industry, prohibited beer kegs, created alcohol-free dormitories, and banned alcohol on campus (78–80). To make such policies effective, campuses need to clearly explain the policies to students, to involve students in their design and implementation in order to build acceptance and support for the policies, and to develop mechanisms to actively enforce them.

Law Enforcement Agency Policies. Although institutions can actively enforce their own policies, actions by law enforcement agencies are typically needed to enforce public policies. Community pressures or strong direction by local governing bodies may be needed to influence law enforcement agencies to make alcohol control enforcement a priority (68). Law enforcement agencies can develop policies to *routinely walk through alcohol establishments*. Visibility of law enforcement agents may deter alcohol store clerks and servers from making illegal alcohol sales, increase the level of vigilance of management, and help prevent and/or control alcohol-related problems such as fights. Agencies can be more proactive and conduct undercover *compliance checks* to identify and penalize establishments that

are making illegal alcohol sales. Finally, law enforcement agencies can *prioritize enforcement against adults* who illegally supply alcohol to underage youth. In the United States, youths are much more likely to be cited for underage consumption or possession than are adults for selling or providing to minors (69).

Insurance Industry Policies. Insurance agencies can provide premium discounts for alcohol establishments that provide documentation that they have trained all managers and staff on establishment policies and responsible service of alcohol. In addition, agencies could also lower insurance premiums for individuals who agree to sign waivers of coverage if they participate in alcohol-involved situations such as being in a traffic crash following drinking and driving (12).

Religious Institution Policies. Religious institutions can establish policies that either no alcohol will be served or alcohol will be served only by trained servers at social events connected to that institution. In addition, use of alcohol as a door prize could be prohibited (12).

Alcohol Industry Policies. Producers of alcohol products can adopt policies to ensure their products are marketed and distributed responsibly. All advertisements and product labeling that appeal to underage individuals should be strictly prohibited (12).

CONCLUSION

Preventing alcohol problems requires efforts to change the political, economic, social and normative environment that fosters risky drinking practices. While we as a nation continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually on alcohol prevention programs, with few demonstrated effects on drinking or alcohol-related problems (81), dozens of policy options for prevention remain underutilized. Prevention advocates and public health professionals should continue to accelerate the movement from individual-level program implementation to organizing for public and institutional policies that will help create safer and healthier communities.

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ABSTRACT

Reducing the availability of alcohol through alcohol control policies such as excise taxes and the minimum legal drinking age has been effective in reducing a wide range of alcohol-related problems, including traffic crashes, liver cirrhosis, and violence. Alcohol control policies may be classified into two overlapping categories—public and institutional policies. Some policies such as alcohol server training may be either mandated by governmental jurisdictions or voluntarily adopted by individual institutions, which include alcohol retail establishments, other businesses, worksites, schools, colleges/universities, law enforcement agencies, religious institutions, insurance agencies, and alcohol producers. Public policies may be mandated by national, state/provincial, or local governments to regulate where, when, and how alcohol is sold and consumed. This paper describes the wide array of public and institutional policies available to reduce alcohol-related problems. Summaries of research evaluating specific alcohol control policies are provided when available.