

Health Impact Assessment of Alcohol Outlet Density in Mendocino County
January, 2013
Executive Summary

The number of alcohol outlets per community (outlet density) is an indicator of readily available alcohol to the public and an indicator of overall alcohol consumption. While local governments may be inclined to grant approval to alcohol license applicants in attempts to bolster local business and the economy, the evidence shows that a high density of outlets corresponds with a proportional increase in alcohol related violence, underage drinking, unprotected sex and driving after drinking.

The number of alcohol outlets in Mendocino County per capita is over twice the average in the State of California. To conform to the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) standards, there would only be 35 off-sale outlets in the county instead of 168 off-sale outlets. Off-sale outlets are where the alcohol is taken elsewhere to drink.

On January 1, 1998, the ABC amended Business & Professional Code Section 23817.5 to permanently establish a moratorium on the issuance of off-sale beer and wine licenses (Type 20) in cities and counties where the ratio of Type 20 licenses exceeds one for every 2,500 inhabitants. Mendocino County continues to be classified as a moratorium county due to the high number of alcohol outlets. Yet, new licenses are still granted.

The Public Health Prevention & Planning Unit looked at the relationship between the number of outlets and four measures of crime and harm in Mendocino County as well as 19 other counties with similar populations and the State of California as a whole.

The following results were noted:

1. In 2010 there were 793 arrests for Driving Under the Influence (DUI) in Mendocino County. The analysis of the data estimated that every off-sale outlet per 10,000 residents was associated with almost 7 DUI arrests per 10,000 residents. This finding suggests that decreasing the number of off-sale outlets will correspond with decreased DUIs.
2. In 2010 there were 46 arrests for underage drinking in Mendocino County. The analysis of the data estimated that every off-sale outlet per 10,000 residents was associated with almost 3 arrests for underage drinking per 10,000 underage residents. This finding suggests that decreasing the number of off-sale outlets will correspond with decreased underage drinking arrests.
3. The most frequently reported consequence of high alcohol outlet density is alcohol-related collisions. Mendocino County has been consistently higher than the State of California over the past five years in percent of all collisions resulting in an injury or fatality that are alcohol-related. In Mendocino County the percent of collisions resulting in an injury or fatality that were alcohol-related was almost double that of the State of California in 2010 (20% versus 11%).
4. Compared to California, Mendocino County has had alarmingly higher rates of aggravated assaults. In 2009 and 2010, the rate in Mendocino County was nearly twice that of the State of California.

Recommendations

There are many steps communities can take to reduce the harms associated with high alcohol outlet density. Success stories from other communities can help lead the way to implement tools and policies at the local level.

For instance:

- ▶ A Conditional Use Permit is a zoning tool that gives municipalities the authority to locally regulate the number, location and operational practices of new alcohol outlets by setting conditions the outlet must meet.
- ▶ Responsible Beverage Service training has been shown to lower the number of underage youth who are served alcohol as well as decrease the number of intoxicated patrons at bars, restaurants and liquor stores.
- ▶ Deemed Approved Ordinances (DAO) ensure that alcohol sales occur in a manner that protects the health, safety and welfare of communities. The DAO sets performance standards for existing alcoholic beverage outlets.
- ▶ Requests for Letters of Public Convenience or Necessity are filed with law enforcement when there is an application for an alcohol license in an over-concentrated area. Jurisdictions can adopt criteria that guide the decision regarding whether or not to approve the license, or under which conditions to approve it.

For more information, and assistance in drafting local policy to reduce harm throughout Mendocino County to create safer, stronger and healthier communities, contact Meredyth Reinhard @ 707.472.2614 or reinharm@co.mendocino.ca.us.