

POLICY BRIEF

Safer Alcohol Sales



Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, full life — but not everyone in our country has an equal opportunity to achieve this. CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, promotes a package of tried and tested policies that ensure all people in our largest cities have access to healthy choices.

Together, with visionary city leaders, we can make sure that all people have access to a safe place to live, a healthy body and mind, and a thriving environment. Policy solutions like Safer Alcohol Sales can help make communities safer and resolve critical health disparities — now and decades down the road.

Where and how alcohol is sold plays an important role in family safety. Neighborhoods that have fewer alcohol stores experience significantly less crime. When communities have smart policies and practices around alcohol sales, we keep everyone safer — and physically and mentally healthier — by reducing excessive drinking and related violence.

THE ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE CHALLENGE

- Alcohol is responsible for nearly 100,000 deaths per year in the U.S. According to the CDC, the largest categories of alcohol-related deaths are liver disease, cancer, heart disease, motor vehicle crashes, poisoning, suicide, and homicide.
- Neighborhoods with high concentrations of alcohol sales are linked to an increase in individual drinking habits — including young people binge drinking — and higher rates of violence and driving under the influence.
- Multiple studies have found that more homicides, aggravated assaults, sexual assaults, and robberies are committed in areas with more alcohol outlets, even after accounting for other neighborhood characteristics, such as structural disadvantage and gang violence.
- Alcohol outlets are more likely to be located in low-income neighborhoods, despite that fact that alcohol consumption rises with income, and in majority non-white communities.

A HEALTHY SOLUTION: SAFER ALCOHOL SALES

- **Reduces Violence** — By limiting the density of alcohol outlets, research suggests that cities can reduce alcohol-related violence and binge drinking.
- **Falls Within City Authority** — Most cities have the authority to limit, suspend, revoke, or deny liquor or business licenses that can affect the number and location of outlets that sell alcohol. Cities can also use other local powers (such as zoning) to affect a wide range of service practices and activities in or near alcohol outlets.
- **Makes Communities Safer** — By taking straightforward actions, such as limiting hours and days during which alcohol sales are permitted or requiring minimum distances between alcohol outlets and sensitive land uses (like schools and parks), cities can help make neighborhoods safer for everyone.



AN INITIATIVE OF

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Going For Gold

CityHealth annually rates Safer Alcohol Sales policies in cities with criteria that set the “gold standard” in each policy area. These criteria were developed with input from national experts, are backed by evidence, and work to reduce or remove systemic barriers to health equity. Medals are awarded to cities that meet the elements necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good quality policy (silver), and a passable quality policy (bronze). Cities with no policy, or that don’t meet the minimum threshold for a bronze medal, receive no medal.

SAFER ALCOHOL SALES MEDAL CRITERIA



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| 1. City has a law that applies to all alcohol sales, addresses public health and safety, and authorizes the city to close an alcohol retailer for failing to comply with the law. | ⊗ | ⊙ |
| 2. City has a law that applies to some alcohol sales (such as only new retailers, or only retailers selling for off-premises consumption including grocery or convenience stores), addresses public health and safety, and authorizes the city to close an alcohol retailer for failing to comply with the law. | ⊙ | ⊗ |

NOTE: Safer Alcohol Sales only has gold and silver medal criteria.

ATLANTA REDUCES VIOLENCE WITH SAFER ALCOHOL SALES

From 2003 to 2007, Atlanta took advantage of its significant local control over alcohol outlets to intentionally decrease the number of both on- and off-premises outlets in its Buckhead neighborhood by 3%. In a peer-reviewed study that compared crime in Buckhead to similar Atlanta neighborhoods, Buckhead experienced a drop in crime that was two times greater than the decrease in comparable neighborhoods.