



Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices
to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.

OMAHA COALITION MEETING
Wednesday, August 12, 2020
9 a.m.

A G E N D A

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review of the May 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes
(please contact PEM staff with corrections)
- III. Alcohol & Heart Health: Kristin Miles, DNP with CHI Health
- IV. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Local
 - i. Reign Lounge
 - ii. Infinity
 - b. Policy
 - i. ATOD letter
 - ii. Screening and Counseling Survey
 - iii. US Dietary Guidelines
 - iv. Legislative Tracking Sheet is available at www.projectextramile.org
 - c. Enforcement
 - i. July 23-24 Alcohol retail compliance checks
 - ii. Delivery Services
 - iii. Overservice Enforcements
 - d. Youth
 - i. Youth Leadership Retreat update
 - e. Awareness
 - i. June – August 2020 Research Summary available at www.projectextramile.org
- V. Additional Discussion/Announcements
- VI. Next Meeting Date: **September 9th, 9 am via Zoom**
Speaker: Christon MacTaggart with Women’s Fund of Omaha

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

Nebraska Liquor Control Commission Hearings – October 6 & 7, 2020

The mission of Project Extra Mile is to advocate for evidence-based policies
and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.

PROJECT EXTRA MILE

OMAHA METRO AREA COALITION MEETING MINUTES May 13, 2020

- I. Call to Order: Project Extra Mile Coalition Chair Jen Pollock called the meeting to order virtually via Zoom at 9 a.m.
- II. Welcome and Introductions: Welcome and introductions took place. Coalition members in attendance: Jeana Tortorilla, Jennifer Pollock, Rob Jones, Wendy Evans, Andrea Frazier, Mandy Peth, Clint Zost, Teri Mattran, Jona Beck, Jim Timm, Letha Feeney, Palistene Gray-Moore, Don Hoes, Carey Pomykata, Brenda McDonald, Nikki Carritt, Crystal Fuller, Kerry Kernan, Jason Thompson, and Sherri Cannon. Staff members in attendance: Chris Wagner, Liene Topko, Beatha Kliewer and Katy Kitrell.
- III. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the March 11, 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved. No additions or corrections were made.
- IV. COVID-19 & Alcohol The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major changes locally, nationally, and globally to alcohol markets. PEM staff discussed trends, data, and policy changes that have occurred over the past few months.
 - a. Coalition Updates
 - i. Brenda McDonald, Region One Behavior Health, noted the Panhandle has seen substance abuse rising and is concerned about the effects their office will see in later months.
 - ii. Don Hoes, Keystone Treatment, noted their facility is still open but with fewer clients. Hoes also mentioned the use of Zoom for NA and AA meetings with some being a hybrid of in-person and virtual.
 - b. Governor's Executive Orders 20-06 and 20-09
 - i. Chris Wagner outlined the changes implemented by the Executive Orders (EOs) to allow for beer, wine, and mixed drinks to be available for takeout to help support businesses. This decision was concerning, as the original policies were set in place to prevent drunk driving.
 1. Wagner also shared that OPD saw 150-160 DUIs the month prior to the EOs and a 50 percent reduction the month after the EOs passed. With bars closed to patrons, the decrease in alcohol availability was a likely factor in this reduction.
 2. Lt. Rob Jones, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, noted that his agency has seen a slight decrease in DUIs and a slight increase in domestic violence calls.
 3. Kerry Kernan with the Douglas County Health Department discussed TestNebraska efforts and how staff are working to address challenges seen in the first week of its implementation.
 4. Inv. Clint Zost, Nebraska State Patrol, noted there still are numerous liquor license applications despite COVID-19, but premise inspections have been delayed.

5. Douglas County Detox has been limited to 10 beds (usually 26) to comply with social distancing measures, however they have not had to turn anyone away as they have seen a drop in their clients by about half. Staff anticipate their numbers will decrease by month's end.
- c. International response
 - i. Liene Topko shared international response varies between countries regarding alcohol sales and policies, with only a few completely banning alcohol. Other countries chose to limit sales or use due to increases in crime and domestic violence.
 - d. UNL
 - i. UNL Athletic Director Bill Moos made a comment in a Lincoln Journal Star article on the possibility of alcohol sales at Memorial Stadium to increase revenue as the university system anticipates budget shortfalls due to the pandemic. PEM responded in an Op-Ed outlining the negative impacts on the community if alcohol sales were allowed at Memorial Stadium.
 - ii. ASUN was considering weakening enforcement of the Student Code of Conduct regarding off-campus incidents involving alcohol. PEM spoke with the Asst. Vice Chancellor overseeing potential changes and sent a letter to the student association to give them a community perspective on the matter. Eventually, ASUN opted against weakening the code of conduct on alcohol.
 - e. U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance Webinar
 - i. PEM staff learned about changes to alcohol policies across the country during this webinar. An overall trend is that substance use has been increasing. Most states have seen an increase in alcohol availability due to changes in policies. NABCA's website has helpful maps showing alcohol restrictions for bars and alcohols for each state at www.nabca.org/covid-19-resources.

V. Focus Area Updates:

- a. Policy
 - i. Legislature will meet once safe to do so and will have 17 days that will go Monday through Saturday until completed. Staff will keep the coalition updated as more information is available.
 - ii. Liene Topko reminded the group that PEM Legislative Tracking Sheet is available at www.projectextramile.org and is updated daily.
 - iii. PEM wrote an Op-Ed to the Sheridan County Journal Star regarding a Sunday alcohol sales in order to inform the public on the harms that come with increasing alcohol availability.
- b. Enforcement
 - i. Alcohol compliance checks are on hold due to COVID-19 until further notice.
 - ii. The Douglas County DUI Task Force will be convened once an inter-agency MOU is signed and operations are deemed safe due to the virus.

- c. Youth
 - i. Youth Leadership Council meetings were canceled for April and May due to COVID-19. Staff is working on transitioning these meetings to an online platform and has been in contact with Boys & Girls Club Staff.
 - ii. The difficult decision to postpone the Youth Leadership Retreat to Summer 2021 was made due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- d. Awareness
 - i. The May Research Summary 2020 was provided in the meeting packets.

VI. Additional Discussions/Announcements

- a. Brenda McDonald asked if anyone had information on California Health Departments giving alcohol and drugs to the homeless population. Project Extra Mile will research this topic and provide additional information.

VII. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 10th at 9 a.m. virtually via Zoom call.

Omaha's Reign Lounge denied license by NE liquor commission

Written by Cecelia Jenkins & Michael Bell

OMAHA, Neb. (WOWT) - The Nebraska Liquor Commission on Tuesday denied the license to sell alcohol for Reign Ultra Lounge in the Florence neighborhood of Omaha, citing "way too many issues for police, surrounding businesses and the neighborhood," according to Omaha City Councilman Pete Festersen.

Pete Festersen Tweet: State liquor commission today affirmed the city council's recommendation to deny the liquor license of the Reign Lounge in #Florence. Presented way too many issues for police, surrounding businesses and the neighborhood.

In 2019, the Omaha City Council told the bar's owner, James Overton, he must reapply for the establishment's liquor license with the state.

Residents of the area complained to the council that Reign Lounge was a "bad neighbor," while the Omaha Police Department shared a number of incidents and complaints centered on the business.

Which included the 2018 murder of Sgt. Kyle LeFlore.

At the time, Overton responded saying he was working on making necessary changes.

"We made actual changes to keep the other individuals out. Like Matuza said, like I said, there's some gang affiliated people that we don't want in our business. All we want to do is run a good business," he said.

Festersen told 6 News, "I'm pleased the liquor commission agreed with the city council's vote to deny the liquor license. It has been a long-time problem for the neighborhood and surrounding businesses and it has consumed way too many police resources."

The owner may appeal the decision in court.

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND OTHER DRUG (ATOD) SECTION



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Governor Hogan:

As public health and substance misuse prevention experts, we are concerned about efforts to weaken and remove alcohol policies in states across the country. Many of these laws and policies regulating the availability and access of alcohol are based on years of scientific evidence and practice to reduce excessive alcohol consumption (binge, heavy, underage drinking, etc.), alcohol-related injuries, hospitalizations, and mortality. Unfortunately, many of them are being weakened and/or dismantled in response to the economic challenges that have accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. **We are calling on the National Governors Association to urge all governors to restore these policies at the earliest opportunity and strengthen the policies listed below to save lives.**

Excessive alcohol consumption is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States [accounting for 88,000 deaths per year](#). To make matters worse, the pandemic arrived on the heels of two decades of steady increases in alcohol consumption across the population (increases across racial/ethnic groups, women, and older residents), [a doubling of alcohol-related mortality, and a significant rise \(62%\) in alcohol-related emergency room visits](#), according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Reports from alcohol sales and government sources suggest that several months of lockdown, social isolation, and COVID-19 related fears have exacerbated alcohol problems.

As states begin to reopen, we urge states and local governments to strengthen the following alcohol policies to save lives and reduce alcohol-related harms:

- **Reduce alcohol availability** – As the concentration of alcohol retail outlets in an area increases--and they do so disproportionately in poor neighborhoods--[alcohol](#)

[consumption and related harms, such as injury, crime, and violence increases significantly](#). The pandemic may provide an opportunity to reduce concentrations by reducing the total number of available licenses as establishments close.

Immediate Action Steps:

- Do not extend home delivery, the hours during which alcohol can be purchased, or allow “to go drinks” to be purchased from on-premise locations.
 - Reduce the number of alcohol retail outlets -- This can be achieved by encouraging non-alcohol focused, small businesses to replace alcohol retailers that were forced to close due to the coronavirus or regulating outlet density.
 - Prevent permanent expansion of outdoor alcohol sales.
- ***Increase the price of alcohol*** – The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends state excise tax levels of at least: [\\$1 per gallon for beer, \\$2 per gallon for wine, and \\$8 per gallon for spirits](#). Studies have shown that not only does excessive alcohol consumption [cost the U.S. at least \\$249 billion annually](#), but also that [doubling alcohol excise taxes](#) would reduce alcohol-related mortality by an average of 35%, traffic crash deaths by 11%, sexually transmitted disease by 6%, violence by 2%, and crime by 1.4%. With state and local governments facing budget challenges due to the pandemic, long overdue increases in alcohol taxes will save lives and help governments offset some of these costs.

Immediate Action Steps:

- Increase state alcohol excise taxes to the levels recommended by the Community Preventive Services Task Force (see above).
 - Establish/increase alcohol sales taxes.
 - Create a minimum unit price for alcohol.
- ***Enforce underage drinking laws*** – The Minimum Legal Drinking Age of 21 is estimated to save 1,000 lives per year. One of the most effective ways to prevent underage access to alcohol is through regular (quarterly) alcohol compliance checks to ensure illegal sales to minors do not occur. While the social provision of alcohol is the predominant way in which young people access alcohol, retail access is still a source for youth access and requires routine monitoring that evidence suggests is key to preventing these sales. Research suggests that when enforcement efforts are limited, non-compliance rates increase. Protocols must be altered to continue these effective operations to maintain social distancing requirements; however, they must continue and we recommend the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association and regulatory bodies be encouraged to create these protocols based on best practice.

Immediate Action Steps:

- Work with the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association to adjust regulations and guidelines for conducting compliance checks on alcohol retailers given the new reality of COVID-19.

- Ensure that state and local enforcement are able to conduct compliance check operations on transactions involving alcohol delivery.
- Resist efforts to allow amnesty from liquor law enforcement and prosecution.
- ***Strengthen regulations related to alcohol advertising*** –The industry has been allowed to regulate itself and it is not working. The industry’s own advertising standards were [violated billions of times between 2005-2012](#), which is troubling given that for each additional advertisement a young person saw (above the monthly youth average of 23), [they drank 1% more](#). Advertising takes shape in many forms and states, and some localities can adopt policies that restrict window signage of advertisements and ban alcohol billboards in residential areas to reduce youth exposure to alcohol advertising.

These policies will save lives, increase workplace productivity and reduce taxpayer costs. Furthermore, they are recommended by organizations such as the American Medical Association; the American Society of Clinical Oncology; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America; the Community Preventive Services Task Force; the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; the Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance; and the World Health Organization.

We have formed a small advisory group of top scientists and local public health professionals to help assess options and make recommendations for your state. If you would like assistance, please contact Dr. Sean Haley at leadership@apha-atod.org. Additionally, we have compiled resources regarding examples of industry-promoted deregulation and the risks it presents for public health and safety. [They are available here.](#)

Respectfully,



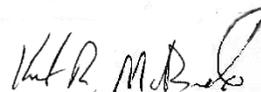
Sean J. Haley PhD, MPH
 Chair, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Section
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Nicole Holt, BA
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Bruce Lee Livingston, MPP
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Kurt R. McBride, Esq.
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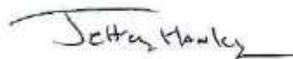
Mike Tobias
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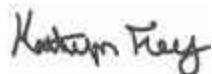
John Marshall
President, Executive Board
Monument Prevention Coalition
Nebraska



Board Chair, Hillsborough County Anti-Drug
Alliance
Chair, Tampa Alcohol Coalition
Florida



Jeff Hanley
Executive Director
Commonwealth Prevention Alliance
Pennsylvania



Kate Frey
Kathryn (Kate) Frey
Vice President of Advocacy
New Hampshire



Matt Walz, MPA
Co-Chair, Board of Directors
South Dakota Alcohol Policy Alliance

CC: Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
National Association of Counties
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Conference of State Legislatures
National League of Cities
National Conference of State Liquor Administrators

Project Extra Mile, a network of community partnerships across Nebraska working to prevent excessive alcohol consumption, including underage drinking and its tragic consequences, strongly supports the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's statements related to recommended drinking limits, which include:

- Do not start drinking alcohol or continue to drink based on the notion of potential health benefits.
- If you drink alcohol, less is generally healthier than more.
- For those who choose to drink, recommended limits are no more than one drink per day for both women and men.

Nebraska has historically had higher levels of underage alcohol use, binge drinking, and alcohol-impaired driving than the rest of the nation. Binge drinking is defined as consuming 4 or more drinks on an occasion for a woman or 5 or more drinks on an occasion for a man. Nebraska ranks as the fifth-worst state in the country for its adult binge drinking rate (21.2%), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹ Two Nebraska communities (Lincoln and Omaha) are among the 25 worst binge drinking cities out of 136 cities indexed across the U.S.²

Nebraska also ranks as the fifth-worst state nationally in terms of its excessive alcohol consumption rate (22.3%).³ Excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking, heavy drinking, and any alcohol use by pregnant women or anyone younger than 21. Heavy drinking is defined as consuming 8 or more drinks per week for a woman or 15 or more drinks per week for a man.

Project Extra Mile also supports a reference to warn consumers of the strong link between alcohol use and cancer risk. Alcohol has been identified as a causal factor for seven types of cancer.⁴ The less alcohol consumed, the lower the risk for the disease. Research indicates there is no amount of healthy or safe alcohol use to avoid cancer risk, yet public knowledge of the link between alcohol and cancer is low.⁵ Health and safety organizations across the country need support from federal partners such as the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to increase awareness of these alcohol-related harms.

While numerous studies point to detrimental health outcomes of alcohol consumption, there is no research that concludes improved health outcomes are due to moderate alcohol consumption. According to the CDC, differences in behaviors or genetics between people who drink moderately, and those who don't drink may be a factor.⁶ Further, research has indicated selection biases (in observational studies) may lead to systematic overestimate of protective effects from 'moderate' alcohol consumption.⁷

A study published in *The Lancet* in 2018, indicated that "the safest level of drinking is none." The authors noted that "the widely held view of the health benefits of alcohol needs revising, particularly as improved methods and analyses continue to show how much alcohol use contributes to global death and disability."⁸

Excessive alcohol consumption cost the citizens of Nebraska over \$1.1 billion in 2010, and taxpayers paid approximately \$491 million of these costs.⁹ Seventy-five percent of these costs are attributed to binge drinking. In Nebraska, alcohol misuse places a significant strain on the health care system, the criminal justice system, and the substance abuse treatment system. Chronic diseases lead to substantial health and economic costs in the U.S. as well, with 90% of health care costs attributable to chronic diseases and mental health.¹⁰ More prevention efforts are needed to reduce these costs, and decreasing alcohol use

is one way to lower these health risks.

We urge USDA and HHS to adopt the Committee’s updated recommendations, which will improve public health and safety. There is no evidence to support relaxing current drinking guidelines. Instead, taking measures to help reduce the occurrence of high-risk, excessive alcohol use among Nebraskans and across the country is needed, particularly when alcohol claims more than 93,000 lives in the U.S. each year.¹¹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (2018)

² CDC (2017). SMART: City and County Data - Prevalence Data & Data Analysis Tools, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, data for 2017. Retrieved on November 20, 2018 from <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/Behavioral-Risk-Factors/BehavioralRisk-Factors-Selected-Metropolitan-Area/j32a-sa6u>

³ United Health Foundation (2019)

⁴ World Health Organization. Global status report on alcohol and health. Available at: https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/en/. Accessed August 2020.

⁵ American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). National Cancer Opinion Survey. <https://www.asco.org/research-guidelines/reports-studies/national-cancer-opinion-survey>. Accessed August 2020.

⁶ CDC. Facts about moderate drinking. <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/moderate-drinking.htm>. Accessed August 2020.

⁷ Naimi TS, Stockwell T, Zhao J, et al. Selection biases in observational studies affect associations between 'moderate' alcohol consumption and mortality. *Addiction*. 2017;112(2):207-214.

⁸ GBD 2016 Alcohol Collaborators. (2018). Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories: 1990-2016: A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study. *The Lancet*, 392(10152):1015-1035.

⁹ Sacks et al. (2015). 2010 national and state costs of excessive alcohol consumption. *Am J Prev Med*, 49:e73–e79.

¹⁰ CDC. Health and economic costs of chronic diseases. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>. Accessed August 2020.

¹¹ Esser MB, Sherk A, Liu Y, et al. Deaths and years of potential life lost from excessive alcohol use — United States, 2011–2015. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*, 69:981–987.

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YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT

2021

June
14th-16th

**What: Project Extra Mile's 2021 Youth Leadership
Retreat**

**Where: Lutheran Church of the Master, West Campus
1200 N 181st Ct., Elkhorn, NE 68022**

For more info and to apply online visit www.projectextramile.org by June 4th

Questions? Call (402) 963-9047 or email us at youth@projectextramile.org

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PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

Project Extra Mile Youth Leadership initiative is supported in whole or in part by Grant #93.243 under the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnership for Success Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare.



RESEARCH SUMMARY
Date Compiled: June 2020

Key takeaways from included research:

- The experience of the Russian Federation in reducing the burden of disease caused by alcohol is a strong argument that effective alcohol policies are essential for improving the prospects for long and healthy lives.
- A novel conceptual framework proposes that counts of alcohol outlets measure availability, proximity to the nearest outlet measures accessibility, and spatial access measures measure access, which comprises both availability and accessibility. Researchers should consider using proximity and spatial access measures when possible to quantify the alcohol environment.
- Alcohol outlet and advertising density, particularly off-sale outlet density within one-quarter mile of the home, increased the risk of hospital admission for alcohol withdrawal syndrome.
- Alcohol advertisements visible outside off-premise outlets were associated with increased violent crime over and above the association between the outlets themselves and violent crime.
- Although alcohol use can increase suicide risk, emergency department patients with acute use appear to receive less thorough suicide risk assessments.



RESEARCH SUMMARY

Date Compiled: July 2020

Key takeaways from included research:

- Higher alcohol taxation is protective against alcohol-related morbidity and mortality. The value of alcohol excise taxes has declined since 1970 from both insufficient tax increases and later infrequent tax increases.
- Public awareness of alcohol as a risk factor for breast cancer is low, and public health measures to increase that awareness are warranted.
- In addition to the well-established behavioral risk factors of smoking, alcohol abuse, and lack of physical activity, economic (e.g., recent financial difficulties, unemployment history), social (e.g., childhood adversity, divorce history), and psychological (e.g., negative affectivity) factors were also among the strongest predictors of mortality among older American adults.
- Moderate drinkers “are not immune” from injury and their risk increased at low levels of exposure, measured by number of hours of having a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08 or higher. This risk was greatest for white drinkers compared to black and Hispanic drinkers, according to Alcohol Research Group’s *Policy Research Roundup*.
- Increasing the price of alcohol products may delay alcohol initiation among young people in Chile. Chilean youth who start drinking alcohol later may engage in less harmful drinking practices.



RESEARCH SUMMARY

Date Compiled: August 2020

Key takeaways from included research:

- Excessive alcohol use contributes to an average of 93,296 alcohol-attributable deaths (255 deaths per day) and 2.7 million YPLL (29 years of life lost per death, on average) in the United States each year.
- Three more risk factors for dementia with newer, convincing evidence are excessive alcohol consumption, traumatic brain injury, and air pollution. Researchers completed new reviews and meta-analyses and incorporated these into an updated 12 risk factor life-course model of dementia prevention.
- There are many implications for research on alcohol consumption, harms, and policies related to rapid changes in the alcohol supply, demand, marketing, drinking contexts, associated risks, and other environmental factors during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Factors that were associated with an increased likelihood of severe injuries for both single- and multi-occupant crashes included circumstances like rural area, road with downward grade, and dark and unlit roadway in a review of drunk driving crashes and the presence of passengers.
- Monitoring consumption levels both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic will be necessary to better understand the effects of COVID-19 on different groups, as well as to distinguish them from those arising from existing alcohol control policies.
- Applying new alcohol warning labels (AWLs) including a cancer warning (Ca), low-risk drinking guidelines (LRDGs) and standard drink (SD) messages was associated with reduced population alcohol consumption in Yukon, Canada.

New guidelines on cancer prevention recommend cutting out alcohol completely

Written by Madeline Farber

The American Cancer Society (ACS) on Tuesday made a major change to its guidelines on cancer reduction and prevention, now saying it's best to cut alcohol completely out of one's diet.

"It is best not to drink alcohol," said the ACS in the new guidelines.

Previously, the society recommended limiting alcohol consumption to one drink a day for women, and no more than two a day for men. A drink is defined as 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits. These amounts are still recommended for those who choose to not totally eliminate alcohol from their diet.

In the United States, the ACS estimates that alcohol use accounts for about 6 percent of all cancers and 4 percent of all cancer deaths.

"Alcohol use is one of the most important preventable risk factors for cancer, along with tobacco use and excess body weight," according to the ACS.

Other significant changes included more physical activity and eating less processed and red meat — although the ACS also now recommends completely cutting processed and red meat from one's diet, as well as sugar-sweetened beverages and "highly processed foods and refined grain products."

For physical activity, the ACS previously recommended adults do at least 150 minutes of "moderate-intensity" or 75 minutes of "vigorous-intensity activity" each week. Now, however, "Adults should engage in 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week; achieving or exceeding the upper limit of 300 minutes is optimal," the ACS said in the updated guidance.

The new guidelines reportedly mark the first time in eight years the organization has released new guidance.

You can read more about the changes [here](#).

There's now progress on alcohol in the dietary guidelines

Written by Thomas Gremillion

In their recent public meeting, members of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory (DGA) Committee forecast changes to the prevailing advice on alcohol. Long instructed to limit consumption to no more than two drinks per day, “if they choose to consume alcohol,” American men will now be told to cut themselves off after just a single serving of beer, wine, or liquor. The new guidelines also have advice for anyone drinking to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease or achieve other health benefits: don’t. According to the Committee, “at all levels of consumption, drinking less is generally better for health than drinking more.”

The committee deserves credit for helping to clear the air on a topic of considerable consumer confusion. For decades, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans have helped to fuel the myth that moderate alcohol consumption contributes to a longer life. As recently as 2010, the DGA’s said things like “Strong evidence from observational studies has shown that moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.” The more recent guidelines dropped that statement, but they also stopped referring to the research linking alcohol and cancer. Undoubtedly, many readers were left wondering whether health benefits associated with light drinking outweigh cancer and other risks.

Our best evidence indicates that they do not. All of that “strong evidence” demonstrating the cardiovascular benefits of the occasional drink has not aged well. Researchers have documented a number of biases in the old observational alcohol studies.

New “Mendelian randomization” studies, which compare populations with genetic variants associated with lower alcohol consumption — and are not susceptible to these biases — tell a different story. Comparing these “alcohol allergic” subjects to those with more conventional genotypes, alcohol actually appears to increase the risk of some cardiovascular diseases. All of this has led experts like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conclude that “it’s impossible to conclude” whether the observed benefits in the studies “are due to moderate alcohol consumption or other differences in behaviors or genetics between people who drink moderately and people who don’t.”

By contrast, the link between cancer and “alcohol use — whether light, moderate, or heavy” is “firmly established.” The Dietary Guidelines for Americans should reflect this scientific reality.

Unfortunately, the upcoming recommendations, while a significant improvement, may fall short of their potential if, like the 2015 Guidelines, they omit a frank discussion of alcohol’s contribution to cancer. Popular media has bombarded us with click-able stories on the potential health benefits of alcohol. But alcohol’s link to cancer, although long-established and significant, has flown under our collective radar. According to recent surveys, less than half of adults identify alcohol as a cancer risk. Indeed, even among cancer survivors, awareness of the risks associated with alcohol is far from universal.

The lack of awareness reflects not just media bias but also public policy. We are warned that all kinds of substances cause cancer. Under California’s Proposition 65, retailers briefly had to include a cancer warning on coffee, not for the coffee itself but for a chemical called acrylamide

that forms during the roasting process. However, because of an outdated federal law, which my group Consumer Federation of America and other public interest groups are trying to change, alcoholic beverages do not carry a cancer warning.

That is ironic, and unfortunate because alcohol is not like coffee. It significantly contributes to cancer risk. Researchers estimate that drinking alcohol is the third most important cause of cancer that is within a person's control, behind smoking and obesity; each year alcohol consumption causes more cancer deaths than exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Alcohol's cancer risk increases with heavier levels of consumption, but the science shows that even "moderate" alcohol consumption — no more than one drink per day — increases the risk of developing several different types of cancers. The evidence linking moderate drinking and breast cancer is particularly longstanding.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans should present this evidence, and include a statement such as: "For cancer prevention, the safest level of alcohol consumption is zero." This would help Americans to understand recommendations to drink less, and persuade many not to start a drinking habit in the first place. With accurate information, consumers will take better action to protect their interests, including their health, and public health across the board will improve.

Thomas Gremillion is the director of Food Policy at the Consumer Federation of America.

Iowa makes to-go cocktails permanent during COVID-19

Written by KWWL

DES MOINES, Iowa (KWWL) — The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) is reporting that cocktails to-go are permanent. Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed legislation HF 2540 to make permanent the temporary economic relief measure to respond to COVID-19. Iowa is the first state in the country to do this.

“Iowa’s hospitality businesses have suffered greatly due to the harsh financial impacts of COVID-19. Making cocktails to-go permanent provides a much-needed source of stability and revenue for local bars, restaurants and distilleries as they begin to recover. We thank Governor Reynolds and the legislature for supporting local businesses and their employees by making Iowa the first state to make a temporary cocktails to-go measure permanent. Iowa is leading the way and serving as a model for other states looking for innovative ways to boost struggling hospitality businesses.”

Dale Szyndrowski, DISCUS Vice President of State Government Relations

Over 30 states (and the District of Columbia) are permitting restaurants and/or bars to sell cocktails to-go, bottled spirits to-go or both. Other states which includes Florida, Ohio, Texas, Oklahoma and the District of Columbia are considering making their policies permanent during COVID-19.

Parents of four Gretna girls killed in crash file tort claim against Sarpy County

Written by Reece Ristau

The parents of four Gretna High School teenagers who were killed in a crash last year have filed a tort claim against Sarpy County, alleging that poor roadway design and “negligent, reckless” actions by the county contributed to their daughters’ deaths.

The claim, provided to The World-Herald through a county records request, focuses on the roadway and a guardrail near 180th Street and Platteview Road, the site of a single-vehicle crash on June 17, 2019, that killed 16-year-olds Abigail Barth, Kloe Odermatt and Addisyn Pfeifer and 15-year-old Alex Minardi.

The girls’ parents allege that Platteview Road near the crash site, as well as a guardrail along the south side of the road, were “negligently designed, engineered, constructed and/or maintained,” according to the claim.

The claim was delivered to the county June 12, days before the one-year anniversary of the girls’ deaths.

The parents also allege that the county failed to warn motorists of the dangerous nature of the road and failed to prevent or mitigate crashes.

In a statement issued Wednesday after the story was published by The World-Herald, the families said the tort claim is not a lawsuit against Sarpy County and was filed to preserve their legal options. Their goal is to make Platteview Road safer.

"We believe improvements can be made to that section of the road that will avoid these types of accidents in the future, and if we can spare other families from suffering this same anguish, we intend to explore all options to make that happen," the statement said.

In the tort claim, each family refers to wrongful-death damages related to emotional distress, loss of financial support and the loss of each girl, as well as expenses related to funerals and services, medical care, the past and future loss of each girl’s earning potential and the pain and suffering experienced by each parent.

The claim does not assign a monetary figure to those damages. It names as plaintiffs Bradley and Amy Barth; John and Tonja Minardi; Julie Odermatt; and Justin and Wendy Pfeifer.

A fifth girl who was in the car that crashed, Roan Brandon, was hospitalized with burns and a broken collarbone afterward. She and her family are not named as part of the tort claim.

Megan Stubenhofer-Barrett, a Sarpy County spokeswoman, said county officials cannot comment on pending legal matters. The guardrail has been replaced because it was damaged in the crash, she said. No other changes to the roadway have been made.

The tort claim does not specifically describe any alleged deficiencies of the road or guardrail. Mike Coyle, an attorney representing the families, responded to questions about the claim with an emailed statement.

“On June 17, 2019, four exceptional high school students needlessly lost their lives,” Coyle wrote in part. “Details as to the specific issues related to the cause of the crash, as well as the identity of other responsible parties, will be forthcoming.”

The four girls — all soon-to-be juniors at Gretna High — met up that night in the high school’s parking lot and took off in Barth’s 2017 Ford Fusion, authorities have said. Barth was driving.

The vehicle was headed east when it veered off Platteview Road just west of 180th Street, came to rest in a creek and caught fire. Investigators have said the car was traveling over 90 mph at the time of the crash, which was reported about 11:10 p.m.

The posted speed limit on Platteview Road is 55 mph, as it was at the time of the crash.

Four of the five girls had alcohol in their systems, the Sarpy County Sheriff’s Office has said. Barth had a blood alcohol reading of .09, a forensic examination found.

The passengers in the vehicle had the following blood alcohol readings, according to authorities: Brandon, .05; Minardi, .02; Odermatt, .10; and Pfeifer, .00.

In Nebraska, it’s illegal for anyone to drive with a blood alcohol content of .08 or higher. The legal drinking age in the state is 21. It’s illegal for people in the state who are younger than 21 to have a blood alcohol reading above .02.

Coyle did not address a question about what role the girls’ alcohol consumption may play in the tort claim.

The girls’ deaths led to an outpouring of grief and support while also prompting tough community conversations about underage drinking and driving.

But despite pleas from the Sheriff’s Office and other county leaders, the person who provided alcohol to the girls has not been publicly determined, and no arrests have been made.

The case remains open, but authorities say they need more information in order to hold someone responsible.

Lawsuits can be brought against local governments only in certain cases. The filing of a tort claim against a local body is the first step a private citizen must take to bring a lawsuit against the government.

The county has six months to respond to the claim.

Conviction upheld in 2018 murder of Army sergeant outside Florence area bar

Written by Paul Hammel

LINCOLN — The Nebraska Supreme Court on Friday upheld the murder conviction of Jason Devers, who was found guilty in connection with the slaying of a serviceman outside a Florence-area bar two years ago.

Devers, now 37, is serving a life sentence for instructing a cousin to rob Kyle LeFlore at gunpoint after he had left the Reign Lounge at 8919 N. 30th St.

LeFlore, a 27-year-old sergeant in the U.S. Army, was on leave after serving tours in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Devers, according to court records, told the cousin, Larry Goynes, that he knew a good “lick” (someone to rob). But LeFlore fought back when Goynes confronted him at gunpoint, and was shot and killed.

Murder charges against Goynes were dropped after a key witness, who said her life was in danger, backed out from testifying. The case prompted calls to increase criminal penalties for witness tampering.

Devers had appealed his convictions for first-degree murder and use of a firearm to commit a felony, challenging the admission of evidence at his trial and claiming that his lawyer was ineffective.

But the Supreme Court rejected his claims, saying the evidence was sufficient to support a guilty verdict.

The Reign Lounge is currently fighting to keep its liquor license.

The Omaha City Council has recommended that the bar’s license be revoked after complaints from neighbors.

The Nebraska Liquor Control Commission held a hearing on the future of the Reign Lounge on Tuesday, then took the case under advisement. A decision is expected at the commission’s August meeting.

In March, bar owner James Overton said he was looking at changing the focus of the “urban, hip-hop” establishment to avoid disturbances.

“I really want to provide a service,” he said. “There’s really not many places that cater to the North Omaha community.”

Liquor license expansion will allow more drive-in concerts at Event Center

Written by Margaret Reist

The Lancaster Event Center's ability to hold more events such as the drive-in Garth Brooks and Blake Shelton concerts just got easier.

The Lincoln City Council on Monday approved an expansion of the event center's liquor license to include the entire 127 acres — excluding the parking lot — at 4100 N. 84th St.

Event Center officials told the council Monday that they'd like to hold additional events, which would help generate tourism dollars. The number of special designated licenses that the Event Center had to ask for previously for such events is limited to 12.

On June 27, hundreds of concertgoers attended the Brooks concert, one of the first large-scale events in Lincoln since the start of the pandemic. The Omaha-based Silas Creek Band warmed up the crowd, and a dozen food trucks served food.

Following the success of that concert, the event center staged a Shelton show on July 25.

Attendees were able to watch the shows from their vehicle or lawn chairs, as long as social distancing guidelines were followed.

Parents with children forced to do school at home are drinking more

Written by Elyse R. Grossman

The big idea

We found that parents who are stressed by having to help their children with distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic drink seven more drinks per month than parents who do not report feeling stressed by distance learning. These stressed parents are also twice as likely to report binge drinking at least once over the prior month than parents who are not stressed, according to our results. Binge drinking, which varies by gender, is when women consume at least four, or men have at least five alcoholic beverages (which includes beer, wine, or liquor) within a couple hours of each other.

We learned this from our online survey, which 361 parents with children under 18 years old currently living with them completed in May 2020. Seventy-eight percent of the parents had children who did distance learning in the Spring of 2020. Of those, 66% reported that the experience caused them stress because they were not sure how to help.

We sent the survey out through social media sites and listservs to people throughout the U.S. However, this is not a nationally representative sample. As is common with such surveys, most of the parents who responded were middle-income or higher. The results of the study have not yet been published.

Why it matters

While many people joke about how booze is getting them through the COVID-19 pandemic, drinking can be harmful. More people die each year from drinking alcohol than from motor vehicle crashes, guns or illegal drugs. Increased drinking is also related to many public health problems, such as violence, crime, poverty and sexually transmitted diseases.

Drinking alcohol is especially dangerous during COVID-19 because alcohol use weakens your immune system. Drinking increases your likelihood of getting COVID-19 and, if you do get it, of having worse outcomes.

People increase their alcohol consumption after stressful times, such as tsunamis and hurricanes. Research has shown that this pattern has held before during disease outbreaks, including SARS in 2003, and following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

COVID-19 is another stressful situation. One study in Poland with over 1,000 participants found that people are currently drinking more wine, beer and liquor than before the pandemic.

Given that distance learning is going to continue for the near future, we believe it is warranted to decrease stressors that lead to parents' drinking.

What other research is being done

Parents are drinking more during the COVID-19 pandemic than people without children. Our survey is the first one to look at the relationship between alcohol use and the stress caused by distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What still isn't known

School systems throughout the U.S. currently are planning for the upcoming year. In many cases, that will require more distance learning. For distance learning to be successful for children and parents, more needs to be known about what makes it stressful.

Another study of ours, currently underway, suggests that one reason that parents are stressed is that they are not getting enough guidance from teachers or schools. This is a particular concern for low-income families whose children, in general, already fare worse in school than more affluent children.

It is important to realize that teachers and other school staff are also experiencing stress and not getting enough guidance on how to do distance learning.

Our results were collected in May 2020. As distance learning becomes the new normal, at least for now, it is important to see what, if anything, changes in how well schools provide distance learning and how it affects parents.

Susan Sonnenschein received funding from the Montgomery County, Maryland Alcohol Beverage Services for this study. However, it should be noted that the content of this study is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Montgomery County, Maryland Alcohol Beverage Services. The funders had no role in the design of the study, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

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Excessive drinking responsible for 255 deaths per day in U.S.

Written by Unknown

(HealthDay)—Excessive drinking was responsible for an average of 255 deaths per day in the United States during 2011 to 2015, according to research published in the July 31 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Marissa B. Esser, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues estimated national and state average annual alcohol-attributable deaths and years of potential life lost (YPLL) during 2011 to 2015, including deaths from one's own excessive drinking and from others' drinking.

An average of 93,296 alcohol-attributable deaths (255 per day) and 2.7 million YPLL (29 years of life lost per death, on average) were identified in the United States each year. The researchers found that 54.7 percent of all alcohol-attributable deaths were caused by chronic conditions and 56.0 percent involved adults aged 35 to 64 years. Per 100,000 population, age-adjusted alcohol-attributable deaths ranged from 20.3 in New Jersey and New York to 52.3 in New Mexico. Per 100,000 population, YPLL varied from 613.8 in New York to 1,651.7 in New Mexico.

"The implementation of effective population-based strategies for preventing excessive drinking, such as those recommended by the Community Preventive Services Task Force (e.g., increasing alcohol taxes and regulating the number and concentration of alcohol outlets), could reduce alcohol-attributable deaths and YPLL," the authors write. "These strategies can complement other population-based prevention strategies that focus on health risk behaviors associated with excessive alcohol use."

Teen driver pulled over for excessive speed, driving under influence on Interstate 480

Written by Paul Gutierrez

OMAHA, Neb. (FOX42KPTM) - The Nebraska State Patrol is now urging people to make smart choices while on roadways.

The call comes as troopers pulled over a teen driver for speeding. They say he was traveling 90 miles per hour in a 65 mile per hour zone. He ended up getting arrested for DUI with a breathalyzer registering a .160. That's twice the legal limit.

Troopers say the arrest was made on Interstate 480.