



## The Extra Mile

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

### Going the Distance: CHI Health Hosts Training on Preventing Excessive Alcohol Use



In September, Project Extra Mile partnered with CHI Health to train family medicine residents on the [increasingly negative impact of excessive alcohol use](#) on Nebraska communities, as well as several opportunities for their involvement in the coalition's efforts. Alcohol is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States, and Nebraska ranks among the

worst states in the country for several alcohol-related problems, including binge drinking and self-reported drunk driving.

The voices of medical professionals are vital in promoting evidence-based policies at all levels of decision-making, including at local, state, national, and institutional levels, to promote the health and safety of their patients and the community. Physicians and other health care providers can play a crucial role in sustaining a strong public health focus on preventing alcohol-related harms in their communities.

During the training, Lincoln City Council Chair James Michael Bowers discussed the importance of health providers' involvement in advocacy and noted that physicians can make a difference by bringing credible information to health-related policy discussions.

"When you speak people listen. Your credential is powerful, and your words carry weight," Bowers said.

## Miles to Go:

### Crash Kills One Teen and Injures Five Others in Omaha Area

*Officers investigating the role of alcohol in several recent crashes*

Following several crashes in the Omaha metro area, officers are investigating the role of alcohol. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office has said that alcohol appears to have been involved in [a deadly crash involving five Omaha teens](#) in late September, where one teen died. Law enforcement told KETV that a vehicle traced to the teens had a bottle of liquor in it, and investigators have committed to investigating the source of the alcohol.

It has been disappointing in recent years to see those in a position to prevent underage drinking and its harms not do everything in their power to stop this dangerous behavior. The timeline below outlines some of these situations.

- **May 2019:** Kwik Shop 665 is given the minimum penalty (\$250 fine) by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission for selling alcohol to minors that contributed to the death of Elkhorn teenager George Gervase.
- **December 2019:** Sarpy County Sheriff Jeff Davis announces that the agency's investigation into how the Gretna teenagers obtained their alcohol is suspended because those with information aren't talking to investigators. As a result, adults who broke the law won't be held accountable for their role in the tragic deaths and injuries of five teenagers.
- **May 2021:** Omaha City Council decides not to pursue a hearing on whether to revoke the liquor license of The Good Life at 180th and Pacific despite hearing evidence that the bar sold alcohol to underage youth, one of whom later crashed his vehicle and broke three vertebrae. Omaha Police testimony also indicated that the bar likely deleted security footage of the crime. Nevertheless, the bar is allowed to continue selling alcohol because the council delays action.
- **May 2021:** The Nebraska Legislature passes a sweeping alcohol bill that makes permanent many of the temporary changes that were not allowed prior to the pandemic as well as cuts alcohol taxes on ready-to-drink cocktails by 75% despite research linking lower alcohol prices to an increase in alcohol-related harms.
- **July 2021:** News breaks that The Good Life at 180th & Pacific has been sold to new owners. The Nebraska Liquor Control Commission never holds a formal hearing on the sales to minors that led to the serious injury crash of an underage youth prior to the transfer in ownership of that business. As a result, the business was never held accountable for those illegal sales.

"This is something that is entirely preventable and as a community we need to do better," Chris Wagner, executive director for Project Extra Mile, told KETV. "The [industry makes billions of dollars from underage drinkers](#), so clearly there's no incentive on their part to fix this problem. It's really up to us to do it as a community," he said.

Several additional crashes were reported in late September. A motorcyclist was struck and in critical condition when a driver in an SUV failed to yield. Law enforcement said the [motorcyclist lost a leg resulting from the crash](#) and that the driver of the SUV has been arrested for drunk driving, according to media accounts. In Sarpy County, a witness [pulled an impaired driver from a burning vehicle](#) that crashed into another car. Following a separate crash resulting in [severe injuries to a motorcyclist](#), a local elementary school principal is on paid administrative leave pending a drunk driving investigation.

Research has shown that stronger state regulations for purchasing and consuming alcohol are associated with fewer motor vehicle crash fatalities

involving drunk drivers. A 2018 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report, *Getting to Zero Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities*, includes several [recommendations to prevent alcohol-impaired driving](#). Specific guidance includes significantly increasing alcohol taxes, strengthening policies to prevent illegal alcohol sales to people under 21 and already-intoxicated adults, and lowering the BAC for drunk driving to .05.

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## Research Brief



A study published in *The Lancet Regional Health - Europe* concluded that [doubling current alcohol excise duties could avoid 10,700 cases and 4,850 deaths of new alcohol-attributable cancers](#) within the World Health Organization's (WHO) European Region. The

study authors noted that increasing alcohol excise duties is a "best buy" to reduce alcohol use and the alcohol-attributable health burden, yet it is the least implemented alcohol control policy in the Region.

WHO has indicated that increasing taxes on alcoholic beverages, enacting and enforcing bans or restrictions on alcohol advertising across multiple types of media, and restrictions on the physical availability of retail alcohol are the [most cost-effective actions or "best buys" to reduce the harmful use of alcohol](#).

Last year, researchers at Boston Medical Center and Boston University published a study on the [relationship between stronger alcohol policies and the number of alcohol-related cancer deaths](#) per state from 2006 to 2010, specifically cancers of the esophagus, mouth, and throat, liver, prostate (among men) and breast (among women).

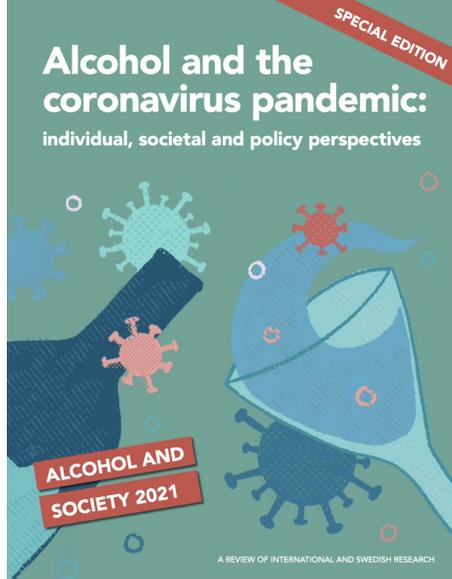
Researchers assigned each state an Alcohol Policy Scale score based on twenty-nine different alcohol regulations in the United States, including restrictions on the physical availability of alcohol (outlet density), state alcohol tax laws, and other policies. The study found that more restrictive policies were associated with a reduced risk of cancer mortality for all cancers combined. A 10 percent increase in the strength of alcohol policies based on their Policy Scale Scores was associated with an 8.5 percent relative decrease in cancer deaths.

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## Did You Know?

### **Report on alcohol and COVID-19 points to policies to reduce alcohol-related harms**

A [new report](#) summarizes what international researchers have learned about alcohol consumption and related outcomes during the coronavirus pandemic. Recommendations for action include several alcohol policies, which the authors note "have a crucial role to play



and policy perspectives  
Andreasson et al., 2021

both in reducing alcohol-related harms and controlling transmission of the virus.”

Policy changes during the pandemic that have resulted in increased access to alcohol or lowered prices should be reversed, according to the report.

**"COVID-19 has affected alcohol consumption, and alcohol consumption has played a crucial role in the transmission and propagation of the pandemic. In short, alcohol and COVID-19 has been and continues to be, a lethal interaction."**

*Alcohol and the Coronavirus Pandemic: Individual, societal*

## New Resource for Local Action

Project Extra Mile’s next coalition meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 13, at 9 a.m. Please plan to join us as Dr. Julia Dilley of the University of Washington shares a new resource for community member engagement to support local action for monitoring policies impacting alcohol availability.

Your input and involvement are a key part of the process as we assess recent changes to alcohol policies in our community. If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like more information, please reach out to us!

The coalition will meet via [Zoom](#). You can join the meeting directly from Project Extra Mile’s website page located [here](#). For more information, please get in touch with us at 402-963-9047 or [info@projectextramile.org](mailto:info@projectextramile.org).



### Omaha Metro Coalition Meeting

Wednesday, **October 13, 2021**

9:00 a.m.

Please join us **via Zoom**  
**as we welcome**

**Dr. Julia Dilley with the  
University of Washington to discuss the  
Alcohol Availability Assessment Tool.**

Thank you for your involvement!

*Jennifer Pollock*  
Jennifer Pollock, Coalition Chair

