



# Limiting youth access to alcohol from commercial establishments

*ATOD Planning & Implementation  
grantee progress report*

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progress report*

**April 2011**

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# Acknowledgments

In addition to the authors, the following Wilder Research staff contributed to the completion of this report:

Louann Graham

Monica Idzelis

Ron Mortenson

Special appreciation is extended to the Minnesota Department of Human Services staff, the Planning and Implementation grantees, and members of the Wilder Research consultant team who have assisted with the broader ATOD prevention project.

Funding for this evaluation and report was provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division.

# Introduction

## *Background*

As part of the Minnesota Department of Human Services Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division's statewide youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) prevention initiative, the Division contracted with nine Planning and Implementation (P&I) grantees from across Minnesota to help communities prevent underage use of alcohol. In order to assess the effectiveness of these efforts, the Department of Human Services contracted with Wilder Research in St. Paul to design an evaluation strategy and instruments to be implemented by each P&I grantee. This report summarizes the evaluation of two strategies designed to reduce access to alcohol from commercial establishments by underage youth: responsible beverage server trainings and alcohol compliance checks. All nine P&I grantees were required to implement these strategies as part of their contracts with the State. In addition to alcohol compliance checks, the grantees also coordinate tobacco compliance checks within their region. The focus of this report is limited to alcohol compliance checks and responsible beverage server trainings.

## *Description of strategies*

### **Responsible beverage server trainings**

Responsible beverage server trainings provide education opportunities to owners, managers, servers, and sellers at alcohol establishments on how to avoid illegally selling alcohol to underage youth. Depending on local ordinances and laws, the trainings may be required of alcohol establishments, used as an alternative to court proceedings, and/or required after an establishment violated the law. In addition, some individual establishments may voluntarily implement training policies in the absence of any legal requirements or incentives. In most cases, P&I grantees contracted with a trainer to provide brief, on-site trainings to local businesses. Trainings usually last approximately two hours.

A literature review conducted by the University of Minnesota found that in communities where no organized efforts have been made to reduce the sale of alcohol to underage youth, up to half of undercover youth were able to buy alcohol from commercial establishments.<sup>1</sup> Responsible beverage server trainings were designed to reduce sales of alcohol to underage youth. Evaluations of different responsible beverage server trainings have consistently demonstrated knowledge gains among participants. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> No author (2009). Responsible Beverage Service Training. University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program. <http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/policy/rbst.shtml>

degree to which servers alter their alcohol serving behavior upon completion of the training is more variable.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, research suggests that responsible beverage server training should augment other environmental interventions.<sup>3</sup>

### **Alcohol compliance checks**

Alcohol compliance checks are used as a tool to help identify licensed establishments that illegally sell alcohol to underage youth. In some locations in Minnesota, alcohol compliance checks are mandated by local ordinances; in other areas, they are voluntarily implemented by law enforcement or licensing authorities. Alcohol compliance checks can be used to enforce laws and/or to identify, warn, and educate establishments about the potential penalties of illegally serving or selling alcohol to underage youth. Compliance checks are usually conducted by a team of minor youth and adults, with the cooperation of law enforcement. The adults coordinate which businesses to check, and the youth visit each business and attempt to purchase alcohol without proper identification. If the business sells alcohol to the minor, they have “failed” the compliance check.

Previous studies suggest that compliance checks are effective in reducing the illegal sale of alcohol to underage youth.<sup>4</sup> Alcohol compliance checks encourage establishments to “police” themselves and to be accountable for complying with the laws regarding alcohol sales. Alcohol compliance checks are used to motivate citizen participation and support for underage alcohol prevention efforts.

### ***Relationship between the strategies***

Research has demonstrated that compliance checks and responsible beverage server trainings, in combination, can be part of an effective environmental approach to reducing youth access to alcohol.<sup>5</sup> However, it should be noted that approaches to enforce responsible service of alcohol laws and ordinances are more effective than server training alone.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stockwell, T. (2001). Responsible alcohol service: lessons from evaluations of server training and policing initiatives. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 20, 257-265; Treno, A.J., Gruenewalk, P.J., Lee, J.P., and Remer, L.G. (2007). The Sacramento Neighborhood Alcohol Prevention Project: Outcomes from a community prevention trial. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, March 2007, 197-207.

<sup>3</sup> No author (2009). Responsible Beverage Service Training. University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program. <http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/policy/rbst.shtm>

<sup>4</sup> No author (2009). Compliance Checks. University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program. <http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/policy/compchks.shtm>

<sup>5</sup> Stockwell, 2001; Treno et. al, 2007

<sup>6</sup> Stockwell, 2001.

Although these strategies represent two unique activities required of P&Is under the ATOD prevention initiative, there is some overlap in their goals and objectives. Both activities are related to minors' ability to access alcohol through formal sources (businesses, bars, and restaurants). In addition, the provision of quality training to people in any alcohol service industry about the laws and risks associated with serving alcohol to minors should lead to increased compliance with laws related to serving alcohol to minors. For this reason, this report includes outcome data collected from each P&I site related to each of these strategies. However, the report does not link the training outcomes of individual participants or establishments with individual outcomes of compliance checks, as training feedback was anonymous.



# Methods

In 2008, Wilder Research staff designed a set of evaluation instruments to help P&I grantees collect information about responsible beverage server trainings and alcohol compliance checks conducted in their area. All instruments were to be used by grantees starting in fiscal year 2009 (July 2008-June 2009). This report reflects data collected about these activities during fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

## *Description of data collection instruments*

### **Responsible beverage server training survey**

The goal of this survey is to assess participants' satisfaction with responsible beverage server trainings. It is a brief, one page survey to be administered to participants at the end of each training. The survey includes questions related to the quality of the training, current practices of businesses, and characteristics of the people participating in the training. P&I grantees were responsible for administering the survey and compiling the results. To assist grantees with data analysis, Wilder staff developed a data entry spreadsheet to auto-generate summary results of survey data. Each site included this summary of survey results in their annual reports to the Department of Human Services.

### **Compliance check tracking sheet**

The purpose of the tracking sheet is to help grantees collect information required for reporting to DHS, including the name of the establishment being checked, the location of the establishment, the date and time of the check, the outcome of the check, and the consequences to the establishment. The sheet is to be completed by the adult and youth who are conducting the compliance checks. Grantees were not required to use this tracking system if they had already developed their own system, but were encouraged to collect this information in order to complete the summary form (described below).

### **Compliance check summary form**

The summary form is used to record information about a completed compliance check, including when and where the compliance check was conducted, the total number of alcohol licenses, the total number of establishments included in the compliance check, the number of establishments that passed the compliance check, the type of establishments included in the compliance check, reasons why not all establishments with an alcohol license were included in the compliance check (if applicable), and the consequences for establishments that fail the compliance check (if applicable). The data summary form is to be completed after each round of compliance checks by the compliance check coordinator, who is usually the P&I grantee.

# Findings

## *Responsible beverage server training*

As part of their contracts with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, each P&I grantee was required to host at least two responsible beverage server trainings each grant year. Data are available for two fiscal years, covering the time period of July 2008 through June 2010. In all, 618 individuals participated in 41 trainings during this two year time period. All grantees hosted at least one training per year, and one community hosted as many as six during a year. The following tables show the number of trainings conducted in each grantee location (Figure 1), and the number of persons trained in each location (Figure 2).

### 1. Number of responsible beverage server trainings conducted by grantee location

<b>ATOD Planning &amp; Implementation Communities</b>	<b>Number of responsible beverage server trainings conducted in FY 2009</b>	<b>Number of responsible beverage server trainings conducted in FY 2010</b>	<b>Total number of responsible beverage server trainings conducted in FY 2009 &amp; 2010</b>
Roseau County	2	2	4
Chisholm	1	2	3
Pine River-Backus	6	2	8
Wadena County	1	2	3
Kanabec County	2	2	4
Morrison County	4	1	5
Renville	1	4	5
Yellow Medicine	3	3	6
South St. Paul	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>41</b>

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## 2. Number of persons receiving responsible beverage server training by grantee

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities	Number of persons trained in FY 2009	Number of persons trained in FY 2010	Total number of persons trained in FY 2009 & 2010
Roseau County	34	27	61
Chisholm	65	86	151
Pine River-Backus	35	10	45
Wadena County	23	31	54
Kanabec County	43	30	73
Morrison County	39	30	69
Renville	10	42	52
Yellow Medicine	28	29	57
South St. Paul	49	7	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>618</b>

Following their participation in the training, participants were asked to complete a brief survey to assess their satisfaction with the training, participant characteristics, and knowledge gained from the training. Selected findings from these surveys are presented below.

In the 2009 and 2010 grant years, 55-59 percent of attendees reported that they were participating in training for the first time. Almost all participants (95-97%) felt the training should be required of all alcohol beverage servers, and about half (49-51%) reported an increase in their knowledge of laws and policies following their participation (Figure 3).

There was notable variability across sites with regard to the percent of respondents who were participating in training for the first time (33%-79% across years) and those who were required to participate in the training (19%-100% across years). However, most participants across all sites agreed that the training should be required of all beverage servers (90%-100% across years). The percent of respondents who reported an increase in their knowledge about alcohol server laws and policies ranged from 23 percent to 88 percent across sites, but on average remained steady at about half of respondents over the two year time period.

### 3. Evaluation of responsible beverage server trainings conducted in 2009 by grantee

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities and Regions	Attending training for first time		Required to attend training		Felt training should be required of all alcohol beverage servers		Increased knowledge about alcohol beverage server laws and policies	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Roseau County (N=18)	7	39%	11	61%	18	100%	12	67%
Chisholm (N=60)	39	65%	41	69%	58	97%	31	52%
Pine River-Backus (N=12)	4	33%	12	100%	12	100%	7	58%
Wadena County <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kanabec County (N=43)	21	49%	31	72%	41	95%	18	42%
Morrison County (N=15)	9	60%	7	47%	14	93%	5	33%
Renville (N=34)	26	76%	15	44%	31	91%	16	47%
Yellow Medicine (N=16)	10	63%	3	19%	15	94%	14	88%
South St. Paul (N=10)	6	60%	4	40%	9	90%	4	40%
<b>Total (N=208 )</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>51%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Training was conducted before evaluation form was developed.

### 4. Evaluation of responsible beverage server trainings conducted in 2010 by grantee

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities and Regions	Attending training for first time		Required to attend training		Felt training should be required of all alcohol beverage servers		Increased knowledge about alcohol beverage server laws and policies	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Roseau County (N=26)	14	54%	13	50%	26	100%	12	46%
Chisholm (N=79)	45	57%	66	84%	76	96%	51	65%
Pine River-Backus (N=9)	4	44%	9	100%	9	100%	3	33%
Wadena County (N=22)	8	36%	11	50%	22	100%	5	23%
Kanabec County(N=30)	14	47%	26	87%	30	100%	15	50%
Morrison County (N=28)	15	54%	10	36%	27	96%	18	64%
Renville (N=20)	10	50%	17	85%	19	95%	5	25%
Yellow Medicine (N=29)	23	79%	19	66%	27	93%	16	55%
South St. Paul <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total (N=243)</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>49%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Evaluations were not done at this training because the training occurred before the new coordinator was in place.

## *Alcohol compliance checks*

### **History and background**

Grantees were required to conduct two compliance checks in their community each year. Planning and Implementation grantees used several common strategies to carry out this requirement. In general, the following strategies were used across all sites:

- **Partnerships with law enforcement.** Grantees partnered with local or county level law enforcement agencies to conduct the alcohol compliance checks. This included working together to select and train youth in the proper procedures for conducting the compliance check. The level of involvement by law enforcement varied across the different locations.
- **Notification to businesses.** Prior to each check, grantees mailed a letter to all local establishments with liquor licenses indicating that alcohol compliance checks would be completed in their area soon. Some locations published a notice in the local newspapers.
- **Server training.** Because grantees were also required to host responsible beverage server training as part of their grant, many were able to offer the training as an alternative to court proceeding for establishments who failed their compliance check.
- **Recognition.** Grantees sent letters of congratulations to the business owner and employees of establishments who passed their compliance check. In most places, a notice was also published in local newspapers congratulating the business on passing the compliance check.

Despite these common elements, there was also a lot of variability across sites with regard to their implementation of compliance checks. For this reason, Figure 5 provides a brief summary of each site's history of conducting compliance checks as well as their individual challenges and successes related to this work. This information was reported by individual P&I grantees to DHS and was derived from annual reports originally submitted to the State at the end of each grant year.

## 5. History of compliance checks by P&I community

Planning & Implementation Community	Year compliance checks began	Agency(s) responsible for checks	Successes	Challenges
Chisholm	2006	Chisholm police department	<p>The P &amp; I coordinator and coalition worked to educate the Chisholm Police Department and City Council about the importance of performing alcohol compliance checks</p> <p>The coalition also worked with the police commission and city council to approve citations for offenses and administrative fines.</p>	Getting law enforcement to routinely conduct checks between 2006 and 2009
Kanabec County	2007	Kanabec Sherriff's Office and Mora Police Department	Coalition assisted law enforcement by helping to recruit and train youth for compliance checks	The Mora Police Department reported they could not find students in the community to conduct the alcohol compliance checks
Morrison County	2006 (but not enforced)	Pierz Police Department and Morrison County Sherriff' Office	<p>Pierz Area Coalition used the results of the responsible beverage server training with both the Pierz Police Department and the Morrison County Sherriff's Department to build support and buy in.</p> <p>As of 2010, the Sherriff and the Chief of Police appear to be willing to look at new strategies to address teen drinking.</p>	During the 2009 and 2010 grant years, the Pierz Police Department and the Morrison County Sheriff's Department remained committed to only conducting alcohol compliance checks when a complaint was received. They remain apprehensive about how the County Board and bar owners would respond to routine alcohol compliance checks.
Pine River-Backus	2007	Pine River Police Department and Cass County Sheriff's Office	<p>Alcohol compliance checks were not completed prior to the P&amp;I Grant. At the beginning of the grant, the businesses who failed compliance checks were given a warning. In 2008, the coalition leaders and law enforcement and County Attorney determined that failed establishments should be prosecuted.</p> <p>Coalition and law enforcement worked with the Cass County Board and County Attorney to make a policy to establish penalties for businesses related to their liquor license, this was completed in August of 2009. In 2010 the Sheriff's Office decided to expand the efforts of Alcohol Compliance checks done in Pine River-Backus to two other school districts. This was done in Collaboration with the Coalition with the Drug Free Communities grant funding.</p>	There has been some interest to institute this initiative county-wide, however at the present time it is not a top priority.

**5. History of compliance checks by P&I community (continued)**

Planning & Implementation Community	Year compliance checks began	Agency(s) responsible for checks	Successes	Challenges
Renville County	2009	Renville Sheriff Department	<p>The P &amp; I coordinator and coalition worked to educate all 10 local police departments and the Sheriff's Department about how to conduct alcohol compliance checks and the importance of the checks.</p> <p>The coalition encouraged the Sheriff's Department to be more positive in their messaging about the outcomes of compliance checks, concentrating on the majority of establishments who passed.</p>	<p>Local police departments were initially resistant to the idea of "busting" local businesses. They felt that it would be difficult to charge someone who failed a compliance check because they had established relationships with many of the business owners.</p>
Roseau County	2006	Warroad Police Department, Roseau County Sheriff's Department	<p>As an alternative to charging establishments who failed their check during the first year, they were offered the option of attending responsible beverage server training. Since then, law enforcement has become more comfortable with conducting the checks.</p> <p>The coalition has worked with others to pass ordinances in Greenbush, Roseau, and Roseau County regarding failing compliance checks.</p> <p>The Chief Deputy of the Roseau Sheriff's Department has stated that he wishes to continue the alcohol compliance checks after the P &amp; I grant ends in 2011.</p>	<p>Law enforcement agencies were initially resistant to conducting routine alcohol compliance checks</p>
South St. Paul	Prior to 2006	South St. Paul Police Department	<p>The P &amp; I coordinator and Coalition met with the South St. Paul Police Department to determine what their role might be in assisting with compliance checks. The police department reported that they had their own youth volunteers, and had a well-established system to schedule and conduct the alcohol compliance checks. They agreed to send the results of the checks to the coalition two times per year. The coalition's role in alcohol compliance checks has been minimal.</p>	

**5. History of compliance checks by P&I community (continued)**

Planning & Implementation Community	Year compliance checks began	Agency(s) responsible for checks	Successes	Challenges
Wadena County	2009	Wadena Police Department and Wadena County Sheriff's Department	Law enforcement trained youth and scheduled compliance checks. Coalition provided assistance as needed and requested by law enforcement.	Compliance checks are assigned to one officer whom has other responsibilities, creating some difficulty in regularly scheduled checks.
Yellow Medicine County	2009	Yellow Medicine County Sheriff's Office	Alcohol compliance checks were not conducted before the P & I grant. The coalition coordinator met with the County Sheriff's Office regarding completing the alcohol compliance checks. From there, one officer took the lead and contacted individual cities within the county to find out if they were interested in completing the checks. Every city and the Upper Sioux Agency agreed to allow the Sheriff's Office complete the checks.	



## Compliance check results

The following tables show the number of compliance checks conducted by location in the 2009 and 2010 grant years (Figure 6), as well as the number of establishments who were checked and passed in the 2009 grant year (Figure 7) and 2010 grant year (Figure 8).

Across all P&I communities, 83 percent of establishments passed their alcohol compliance check in 2009 and 87 percent passed in 2010. These findings are encouraging, and suggest that most businesses that sell alcohol are refusing to sell to minors. Passing rates were lower for Renville County in 2009 and Chisholm in 2010. Otherwise, rates were fairly consistent between sites and within communities over time (Figures 7-8).

### 6. Number of alcohol compliance checks conducted by grantee location

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities	Number of alcohol compliance checks in 2009 FY	Number of alcohol compliance checks in 2010 FY	Total number of alcohol compliance checks in 2009 & 2010 FY
Roseau County	2	2	4
Chisholm	4	2	6
Pine River-Backus	2	2	4
Wadena County	2	1	3
Kanabec County	2	2	4
Morrison County <sup>a b</sup>	-	-	-
Renville	1	2	3
Yellow Medicine <sup>a</sup>	-	2	2
South St. Paul	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>

<sup>a</sup> Law enforcement in these regions did not conduct any alcohol compliance checks in 2009.

<sup>b</sup> Law enforcement in this region did not conduct any alcohol compliance checks in 2010.

## 7. Number of establishments checked in 2009 by grantee location

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities	Number of establishments checked	Number of establishments passing the compliance check	Percent of establishments passing the compliance check
Roseau County	66	60	91%
Chisholm	47	40	85%
Pine River-Backus	16	12	75%
Wadena County	33	24	73%
Kanabec County	25	24	96%
Morrison County <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
Renville	28	15	54%
Yellow Medicine <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
South St. Paul	36	30	83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>83%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Law enforcement in these regions did not conduct any alcohol compliance checks in 2009.

## 8. Number of establishments checked in 2010 by grantee location

ATOD Planning & Implementation Communities	Number of establishments checked	Number of establishments passing the compliance check	Percent of establishments passing the compliance check
Roseau County	60	56	93%
Chisholm	22	9	41%
Pine River-Backus	22	19	86%
Wadena County	9	7	78%
Kanabec County	50	47	94%
Morrison County <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
Renville	25	22	88%
Yellow Medicine	45	40	89%
South St. Paul	31	30	97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>87%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Law enforcement in this region did not conduct any alcohol compliance checks in 2010.

# Issues to consider

Overall, Planning and Implementation grantees have made significant efforts to implement responsible beverage server trainings and compliance checks within their communities. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, current P&I grantees, and future P&I grantees may wish to consider the following as they move forward in future planning related to these strategies:

- The degree to which individual sites successfully implemented these strategies appears to greatly depend on the interest and cooperation of other community stakeholders, particularly business owners and law enforcement. Similar to much of the other work of the P&I grantees, developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders will be critical to the ongoing success of these efforts. In particular, communities that have support from law enforcement were better able to carry out compliance checks as well as enforce the sanctions imposed on establishments who fail a check.
- Where responsible beverage server trainings and compliance checks are being routinely conducted, they appear to be having some of the intended benefits with regard to increasing knowledge of laws and policies related to serving and selling alcohol to minors. Data from compliance checks conducted from 2009 to 2010 suggest that there may be a slight increase in overall success rates of compliance checks conducted in these communities over time, which indicates that serving and selling behaviors may be changing as well. Grantees should continue to monitor compliance check passing rates over time to see whether behavior changes are sustained.
- The beverage server training survey currently measures the short-term knowledge gains of training participants, but does not measure whether the information obtained during training influences servers' decisions about whether to serve minors in the future. In the upcoming grant cycle, it may be worthwhile to compare compliance check outcomes of establishments that had staff attend responsible beverage server trainings within the past year with those that did not have staff attend a training to see whether training participation has a lasting effect.