



## San Diego County Binge and Underage Drinking Initiative

### July 2021 Update

**Media Advocacy Efforts** – Efforts have focused on the significant changes that have occurred regarding alcohol-related harms since the pandemic began and to raise awareness about proposed changes to permanently increase alcohol availability, includes:

- [Increasing alcohol access and consumption have been shown to decrease quality of life](#) while increasing health disparities – [especially among minorities](#), lower income residents, youth and [other vulnerable populations](#).
- [2020 saw a record number of DUI fatalities](#).
- [one expert's concern](#) on the increase in access to alcohol during the pandemic that has contributed to the 14 percent increase in alcohol consumption and how a higher density of liquor stores in a neighborhood contributes to high-risk drinking.

**Status Report Summary** – The [annual status report](#), which tracks county data related to alcohol and its usage among youth and young adults. Underage drinking was lower or stable among the three tracked age groups. Perceived access to alcohol increased for seventh-graders while dropping slightly for all other tracked grades. The San Diego County medical examiner, however, reported a sharp increase in 2020 of the number of deaths with alcohol in their system for 14-25 year olds. These highlights suggest that while many trends continue to show improvement, there may be subgroups of youth and young adults that were deeply impacted by both the stress of the pandemic and alcohol-related harms.

**Responsible Beverage Service Training** – The Responsible Hospitality Coalition has reached out to business improvement districts (BIDs) regarding the implementation of [State Bill AB 1221](#) – a bill signed into law that requires all bars and restaurant workers in the State of California to receive [Responsible Beverage Service \(RBS\) training](#). This training is designed to provide servers, bartenders and others involved in alcohol service with the skills necessary to more safely serve alcohol to the public, with an emphasis on including additional training topics above the minimum state requirements such as sexual assault training.

**Overconcentration Mapping** – Research indicates that [increasing access to alcohol within a neighborhood is associated with increased drinking](#), domestic violence and child neglect as well as criminal and nuisance activities. Of particular concern are liquor stores as well as convenience stores with an alcohol license. It is common for these businesses to be located in high numbers within lower income neighborhoods and minority neighborhoods. To better understand alcohol's role in these disparities, we have developed an [online map](#) using census track data and licensing information from California Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). The map notes whether the number of alcohol licenses in a census track exceeds ABC's recommended levels and if so, by how much. The map can showcase data on both off-sale licensees (liquor stores and convenience stores) as well as on-sale licensees (bars and restaurants). Just recently, a version of this map was provided to community groups in Spring Valley and Lemon Grove. They have since used these data in their strategic plan for revitalizing their area.



**Alcohol and Mental Health in Adolescents and Adults** – The [Alcohol Policy Panel of San Diego County](#) (APP) hosted a quarterly breakfast and workshop featuring [Dr. Aaron White](#), the senior scientific advisor to the director and chief of the Epidemiology and Biometry Branch at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Dr. White covered the trends that were emerging before the pandemic began as well as trends that arose during the pandemic itself. For example, for the first time ever, the number of underage drinking females exceeded the number of underage drinking males.

**ISSUE OF CONCERN: Third-party delivery of alcohol** – Initial compliance checks by ABC at the start of the pandemic noted that 79 percent of delivery drivers completed a transaction with someone who is underage. More recent compliance checks by ABC have seen the rate drop to 18 percent, which is still higher than the 13 percent failure rate seen in brick and mortar liquor stores. We’re working with regional providers and local municipalities on having all delivery drivers receive Responsible Beverage Service training. This will help drivers with no experience in serving alcohol learn basic skills critical for preventing underage individuals from purchasing alcohol.

**ISSUE OF CONCERN: Restaurant Expanded Footprints** – Another part of ABC’s temporary regulatory changes allowed restaurants and some bars to serve food and alcoholic beverages in outdoor areas such as sidewalks, parking lots, and streets. While public and business support for this has been strong, there are risks that these setups could increase access to alcoholic beverages by underage individuals and serial inebriates passing through areas as well as increase noise, criminal and nuisance activities that would lower the quality of life experience for local residents.

**ISSUE OF CONCERN: Cocktails to go** - This option for accessing alcoholic drinks was created by ABC as part of its COVID-19 regulatory changes. It allows for cocktails to be added to any to-go food that is purchased by someone age 21 or older. It has been plagued with compliance challenges. Bars and restaurants often fail to place the drink in container with a lid that prevents consumption of the drink unless the lid is first removed as required by ABC. ABC also requires that these containers be stored in the trunk of a vehicle when transported by the purchaser. However, there is no means to ensure this is happening – increasing the risk that the drink is consumed while driving. Last year, San Diego saw a [record number of DUI fatalities](#) so anything that could increase DUIs further is of high concern. There is currently state legislation which proposes to make this temporary regulatory change permanent.

**APP Challenge** – BUDI finished its work on the [San Diego APP Challenge](#), an app design competition developed to engage youth in alcohol-harm prevention and foster healthier lifestyles during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Winners](#) of the competition were announced and were featured at the latest PDATF/MSF quarterly meeting.

**Social Host** – Social Host Ordinances (SHOs) are designed to decrease underage drinking by holding adults accountable for providing alcohol to underage individuals or a location for underage individuals to consume alcohol. While usage of these ordinances is currently low by law enforcement, preventing underage drinking is important and many municipalities have recently expanded their ordinance to include other controlled substances such as marijuana.