



The Extra Mile

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

Going the Distance: Grand Island City Council Votes in Favor of Public Health & Safety



The Grand Island City Council voted 2-6-2 on November 9th to [reject an ordinance extending hours of sale of alcohol](#) from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. Mayor Roger Steele also indicated that he intended to veto the ordinance had it passed based on information provided by the Grand Island Police Department.

The ordinance was introduced on behalf of a handful of alcohol retailers located in the Railside Business Improvement District who claimed that expanding hours of sale would

attract younger professionals to the city and help an industry that has been “ravaged by COVID.” During debate, Councilwoman Guzinski even suggested that containing impaired driving within the city limits was preferable to intoxicated persons getting in their cars to travel to other communities that have sales until 2 a.m., prompting Mayor Steel to declare: “It needs to be said out loud that driving intoxicated is a deadly and dangerous crime, and it is illegal.”

The ordinance was opposed by the Grand Island Police Department, the Grand Island Fire Department, and the Prevention Project, a Grand Island coalition that meets monthly to prevent youth substance abuse in Grand Island.

The Grand Island Police Department told the council that call volume is high after bars close at 1 a.m. and usually it takes at least half of on-duty officers to deal with disturbances resulting from closing time. Police said they simply don’t have the resources to deal with all these calls and “numerous times we’ve not been able to go to a fight in progress because we have no manpower,” according to Sgt. Brandon Reilly.

Katie Usasz with the Prevention Project noted that nearby college towns also have 1 a.m. closing times and that extending the hours of sale in Grand Island would make Grand Island the destination of choice for intoxicated college students.

“Time and again, we’ve seen the alcohol industry try to capitalize on the goodwill that they’ve received as a result of COVID-19 in communities across the country. In most cases, they have been successful in rolling back decades of regulations put in place to protect public health and safety. However, the City of Grand Island was prepared and came with real data about how alcohol is negatively impacting their city and the

community backed them up. Kudos to those that opposed the ordinance and the City Council for basing its decision on the evidence,” said Project Extra Mile Executive Director Chris Wagner.

Public health research supports the council's decision. The [Community Preventive Services Task Force](#) has determined that maintaining existing limits on the hours during which alcoholic beverages can be sold is an effective strategy for preventing excessive alcohol consumption and the associated harms.

Statewide Effort to Track Cocktails-to-Go, Delivery, and Sales in a Vehicle

On November 10th, Project Extra Mile kicked off a project to track alcohol sales that became permanently legal in Nebraska this year because of policy changes implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. All Nebraska and Iowa adults ages 21 and older that use these new services to purchase alcohol are asked to help us track those sales.



Please take a few minutes to watch an [introductory video](#) that explains the rationale for the project.

WHAT: Cocktails-to-go, Curbside pickup (restaurant or grocery orders that are brought out to your vehicle), Alcohol deliveries to your home (wine clubs, DoorDash orders that include alcohol, etc.)

WHERE: Restaurants, Bars, Grocery Stores, Your home

WHY: Laws were passed that permanently expand access to alcohol with temporary and vague guidelines about how that should be implemented. Unfortunately, our state does not have the resources to enforce those regulations and so it is up to us to observe what is happening in our communities with regard to these services and report back how the implementation is progressing. Data will help identify areas that need stricter regulations.

WHEN: The first phase of data collection will last through December 31, 2021.

HOW: The survey can be found [here](#). The questions are straightforward and there are opportunities for you to write more about what you observed. You will also be able to upload any photos you may take. If you do not have a Google account, please use this [survey link](#) and you can e-mail info@projectextramile.org any photos that you took.

Once we have collected sufficient data, it will be compiled by Project Extra Mile and shared with law enforcement, the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, and the Legislature with the goal of making any needed improvements to prevent underage drinking and alcohol-impaired driving. A summary of the results will also be shared in a future newsletter article.

Looking Back at 2021



During 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact our communities despite the emergence of vaccines that allowed for a return to a new normal. Reports came out regarding increased alcohol sales and consumption throughout the pandemic

which strengthened Project Extra Mile's (PEM) commitment to working with partners across the state and nation to reduce-alcohol related harms from excessive consumption.

Highlights from 2021 are outlined below to provide an overview of the coalition's work during the past 12 months. We want to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our partners and supporters. You gave us hope as longstanding alcohol policies put in place to protect public health and safety were being dismantled.

Enforcement Collaborations: Throughout the year, PEM collaborated with nine law enforcement agencies to coordinate alcohol compliance checks. Two of these agencies conducted compliance checks for the first time in over a decade. PEM has coordinated checks at 668 businesses as of November 2021 in four Nebraska counties with 59 (9%) selling alcohol to the minor. Operations will continue throughout the rest of this holiday season. The results of these and other underage drinking enforcements can be found on our [website](#).

The organization also held a virtual law enforcement training to promote the use of compliance checks led by retired Special Agent Nancy McGee with the State of Missouri, as well as the Nebraska State Patrol, Attorney General's Office, and Omaha City Prosecutor's Office. Law enforcement agencies and community coalitions from across the state were in attendance. In addition, PEM continued efforts to encourage expanded enforcement efforts, including sobriety checkpoints, alcohol delivery compliance checks, and sales to intoxicated persons operations.

Policy Initiatives: Much of our energy during the 2021 Legislative Session was spent trying to slow down the runaway train of bad alcohol policy changes. Executive orders that temporarily allowed cocktails-to-go and sales of alcohol to persons in a motor vehicle were made permanent despite overwhelming evidence that expanding the availability of alcohol increases excessive consumption and its harms. Furthermore, the tax on ready-to-drink cocktails was cut by 75 percent. PEM worked with senators to mitigate the harms that could result from these new policies.

Sen. John Cavanaugh successfully amended the bill to require businesses to declare their intent to continue these new alcohol sales services to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) during their initial and renewal license applications. PEM also shared its suggestions with the LCC regarding packaging and drinks restrictions for cocktails-to-go, the age of persons delivering alcohol to individuals in their vehicles, and overall need to hold businesses accountable in following these new laws. As a result of states making these new services permanent, researchers and public health advocates from across the country came together to create a survey to collect data on the new services to ensure alcohol youth and intoxicated persons do not have easy access to alcohol.

Media Advocacy: Throughout 2021, PEM had 23 pieces of earned media on topics ranging from alcohol-involved crashes, concerns around increased availability of alcohol through cocktails-to-go, and alcohol compliance check results. We're grateful to our media partners for attending coalition meetings and sharing the information they learn with the greater public. Additionally, two op-ed pieces authored by Executive Director Chris Wagner were published in the [Lincoln Journal Star](#) and [Omaha World-Herald](#) focusing why cocktails-to-go are not needed in the community and the need for consequences for alcohol-selling businesses that break the law. All earned media can be found on our [website](#).

Education and Awareness: The coalition continues to disseminate education and awareness materials as part of the organization's *No Free Ride* and **we want you back** campaigns. In collaboration with the Nebraska Broadcasters Association, *No Free Ride* radio spots were re-recorded in English and Spanish and aired 10,113 times across the state between July and September. To order any materials, [please complete a request on our website using the available form](#).

Youth Leadership: In the wake of a virtual Youth Leadership Retreat that was held during the summer, two youth leadership groups in Nebraska were formed. The Youth Leadership Network is an Omaha area group that has been meeting since August in a hybrid format online via Zoom and in-person at the UNO Community Engagement Center. Students have begun an environmental scan to better understand the alcohol environment in their communities. Young people entering 8th – 12th grades are encouraged to register

at www.projectextramile.org/youth.

The Youth Leadership Council is a select statewide group of 8th – 12th grade students focusing on statewide policies and awareness campaigns to prevent alcohol-related harms. The YLC will also have an important role in planning upcoming Youth Leadership Retreats and Youth Advocacy Days. The YLC is currently in the planning process to host a townhall in the Omaha area in order to engage neighborhoods in solutions to prevent underage drinking and adult binge drinking.

Technical Assistance: PEM provided technical assistance on 31 occasions to citizens, neighborhood association, churches, and organizations on topics ranging from enforcement practices to the liquor licensing process to how to change the community's permissive attitude toward underage drinking. If you ever have questions or ideas for future initiatives, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at (402) 963-9045 or info@projectextramile.org!

Nebraska Epidemiological Profile Released

The [2020 Nebraska State Epidemiological Profile](#) was released by Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Behavioral Health in November. It is important to note that this report reflects 2019 data (prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic). Multiple reports have shown that both alcohol sales and consumption have increased during the pandemic. Highlights from the new profile:



- 7.4% **decrease** in young adults reporting alcohol-impaired driving (12.4%)
- 3.4% **decrease** in high school students reporting current alcohol use (21.0%)
- 2.3% **decrease** in high school students reporting current binge drinking (8.2%)
- 1.7% **decrease** in young adults (18-25 years) reporting current alcohol use (60.8%)
- 1.2% **decrease** in young adults reporting binge drinking (41.2%)

The report also highlights that Nebraska adults (18+ years) ranked as the 9th highest (59.5%) current alcohol use state in 2019 and 4th highest (20.9%) for binge drinking. Both of these figures are significantly higher than the national estimates (54.1% current & 16.8% binge drinking). In addition, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) is now reporting that current use in 2020 was 60.0% (5th highest) and 20.4% (4th highest) for binge drinking.

According to the Office of Vital Records, accidental poisoning by alcohol exposure to alcohol saw a **25% decrease** (8 in 2019 to 6 in 2020), alcohol-attributable deaths saw a **64% increase** (75 in 2019 to 123 in 2020). Previous state epidemiological profiles have detailed estimates on alcohol-related deaths (703 in 2015), which includes alcohol-attributable. However, the 2020 Epidemiological Profile shifted to only focus on alcohol-attributable deaths.

This is problematic because the public is not getting the full picture of how detrimental alcohol is to our state. Alcohol-attributable deaths are only those which are 100% attributable to alcohol use. "These are deaths which cannot occur without the consumption of alcohol and include conditions such as alcoholic liver diseases and alcohol poisoning. In addition to these 100%-attributable causes, however, alcohol consumption can also influence mortality risks for other causes, including accidents, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers," [writes Yana Vierboom](#).

For example, motor vehicle deaths resulting from alcohol are not included in the total because alcohol is not listed on the death certificate. According to the Nebraska Highway Safety Office, [there were 48 fatal crashes involving alcohol in 2019](#). Nor are deaths resulting from alcohol-fueled violence as well as other causes excluded in the limited alcohol-attributable statistic. The report also fails to mention the injuries sustained by people on the roadways due to alcohol – HSO indicates that that number was 637 in 2019, noting that "Since alcohol testing is only required in fatal crashes, the alcohol involvement

listed for injury and property damage crashes is probably understated.”

Clearly, alcohol has a tremendous impact on our state beyond what is included in this report. Policymakers and regulators that have the power to enact [proven, evidence-based strategies](#) to prevent excessive consumption and its harms need to take note.

Please join us for our Coalition meeting next Wednesday!



Project Extra Mile’s next coalition meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8, at 9 a.m. Please plan to join us as we reflect on 2021 and look forward to 2022.

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.

The 2022 coalition dates can be found below. We hope you'll join us in December and throughout 2022!

Coalition Meetings

Please join us in 2022 to help protect our communities from alcohol-related harms.



2022 Meeting Dates

January 19th
February 9th
March 9th
April 13th
May 11th
June 8th
August 10th
September 14th
October 12th
November 9th
December 14th



Meetings are held via Zoom and when possible at the National Safety Council 11620 M Circle, Omaha NE 68137

25
years

2022 Recognition Dinner

Tuesday, May 10, 2022 • Champions Run
6:00pm Welcome & Dinner • 6:30pm Program & Awards Ceremony

