

Using Place of Last Drink (POLD) Data to Save Lives

Reducing excessive alcohol consumption due to over-serving is a public health and safety issue. Alcohol misuse causes a variety of harms to others including fatal car crashes and pedestrian injuries due to impaired driving, domestic and other interpersonal violence, shootings, and homicide. In 2020, alcohol caused over 3,100 deaths in Wisconsin, of which 167 were from motor vehicle crashes involving alcohol. Since approximately half of those arrested for operating while intoxicated (OWI) came from licensed premises, reducing over-serving at establishments licensed to serve alcohol on-premises (such as restaurants, bars, and taverns) could substantially reduce drunk driving and other harms caused by excessive alcohol use.

What is POLD? The Place of Last Drink (POLD) is the last place that a person drank alcohol before being issued a citation by a law enforcement officer for an alcohol-related incident. Information gathered during alcohol-related arrests and included in the police report can be used to identify alcohol on-premises establishments that have a pattern of overserving.

Why compile POLD data? Compiling POLD information is an effective, low-cost method to identify local licensees that demonstrate a pattern of over-serving alcohol to its customers. Knowing which licensees consistently serve alcohol to intoxicated customers allows communities to focus resources on establishments with a documented over-serving problem. When patterns of over-serving are identified, licensees and law enforcement can work together to reduce over-serving without imposing extra restrictions on compliant licensees.

Who compiles POLD data? In the absence of a state coordinated POLD initiative, law enforcement agencies should collaborate regionally, with support from prevention professionals (public health, human services, and/or community coalitions) to compile and utilize POLD data.

How should POLD data be used? A clear pattern of over-serving is sufficient cause for a serious discussion with a licensee or to initiate an investigation. Local law enforcement can use POLD data to initiate remediation efforts with the over-serving licensee. If the licensee does not cooperate to reduce its over-serving pattern, the data can be shared with the alcohol licensing review committee, city or town council, or village board, and used during the decision-making process for suspensions, revocations, or non-renewals.

If you would like to learn more about the Place of Last Drink project, please contact Maureen Busalacchi at mbusalacchi@mcw.edu. For more information about WisAPP, please see www.mcw.edu/wisapp.