

*Leadership and Networking...  
Toward A Safer Community*

**Police Executive Leadership:  
Managing the Problem of Youth Access to Alcohol**

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# Police Executive Leadership: Managing the Problem of Youth Access to Alcohol

## *Preface*

Access to alcohol by America's youth is a greater problem today than it has ever been. Youth alcohol abuse has risen to become the number one problem affecting the health and welfare of youth today. While this problem is nationwide, the leadership necessary to prevent youth alcohol use is in the hands of the nation's state and local police executives.

This guide has two objectives.

- First, it seeks to explain to law enforcement chief executives (including police chiefs, sheriffs, and state police superintendents) the benefits of taking a leading role in community programs and enforcement efforts to reduce the availability of alcohol to youth and resulting underage alcohol use.
- Second, this guide will describe several steps for accomplishing that objective.

The guide urges police executives to assume a more active role in prevention and enforcement, regardless of whether they serve as initiators, facilitators, or participants in the local effort to combat underage drinking. Police executives can apply the prestige and credibility of their office to win support for that effort. This guide encourages executives to do the following:

- Plan, develop, and implement enforcement efforts.
- Build positive public perceptions of the campaign.

- Explain the enforcement priority given to underage drinking laws and local underage drinking behaviors.
- Work with other agencies and community organizations to overcome common obstacles related to youth access to alcohol.
- Facilitate the cooperation of patrol officers; prosecutors; community leaders; bar, restaurant, and store owners; and others with the capacity to prevent underage access to alcohol and enforce alcohol laws.
- Develop long-term initiatives that result in true solutions rather than reactive, short-term responses.

Police leadership in this matter acknowledges the police executive's control over the level of law enforcement actions and when, where, and how to perform enforcement functions.

In *No Easy Victories*, John W. Gardner describes the critical role of leaders:

*Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols of the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important, they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.*

Indeed, police executives occupy positions in which they can assume that leadership role, directing society's state of mind and uniting people in pursuit of worthy objectives. For the most part, leading a community's efforts to prevent youth access to alcohol can be a win/win situation—a scenario that makes Gardner's idea a reality. Any increase in prevention and enforcement efforts will likely result in a decrease in alcohol-related incidents and other related crime in the community.

Like any police effort, preventing youth access to alcohol raises certain risks. This guide explains why and how the police executive should go about planning for and taking those risks.

## ***Why Chiefs Should Care About Youth Alcohol Violations***

Although drug abuse receives more attention from the government and media, studies show that youth alcohol use is a larger, more pervasive problem. Alcohol is correlated with many types of crime, unwanted pregnancies, school dropout rates, and other serious outcomes. For example:

- Nearly half of all college students—some 6 million—“binge drink” (i.e., five or more drinks at a time for men, four or more for women).<sup>1</sup>
- Underage drinking is associated with the leading causes of death among young people, such as car crashes, murder, and suicide.<sup>2</sup>
- Ten million American teenagers drink monthly, 8 million drink weekly, and over 500,000 teenagers go on weekly binges of five or more drinks in a row.<sup>3</sup>
- Alcohol is the preferred drug for young people, with earlier and earlier initiation of consumption, frequently as early as 11 or 12 years of age.<sup>4</sup>
- Alcohol use by youth is associated with poor performance in school, truancy, rape, drowning, fights, assaults, and vandalism.<sup>5</sup>

It is estimated that individuals under age 21 commit approximately 32 percent of murders, 45 percent of rapes, 44 percent of robberies, 37 percent of assaults, and 16 percent of child abuse incidents.<sup>6</sup> Numerous studies reveal that both perpetrators and victims of violence are often under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offense.<sup>7</sup> One study found that some types of youth homicide declined after states raised the minimum drinking age and that beer

consumption levels predicted youth homicide rates.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the human toll, youth alcohol use is costly in economic terms, too. The annual dollar costs fall into many categories; two examples include \$18 billion in traffic crashes and \$1 billion in treatment.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, because alcohol use is related to juvenile crime, and because juveniles commit a large percentage of all crime, underage use of alcohol may be related to a significant amount of a community’s crime problems. Police executives are responsible for the safety and welfare of the community. The prestige of the police executive’s office allows police executives to exert significant influence over the initiatives that could address these problems, as well as the factors working against recognition of the problem.

Clearly, reducing youth access to and use of alcohol can lead to an overall reduction in crime in the community. It is important for the police executive to win support from those who face this problem and to unite all efforts on a single front. The prescription for success is to provide strong, continuous, focused leadership and support for this issue.

Police executives who choose to make underage drinking prevention a priority will reap tremendous benefits, from community recognition to professional and personal satisfaction.

The significant harm caused by youth access to alcohol, and eventual alcohol use, demands that this issue be dealt with through proactive, sustained measures orchestrated in concert with all interested parties in the community.

### ***Role of Law Enforcement***

As noted above, law enforcement agencies are key players in combating youth access to alcohol. While enforcing laws is their primary re-

sponsibility, law enforcement professionals are also in a position to be involved in other aspects of underage drinking prevention that will further impact enforcement efforts and increase community support for underage alcohol enforcement initiatives.

When legislators pass laws regarding youth alcohol use, law enforcement agencies are tasked with enforcing the laws and citing infractions. When educators teach youth about alcohol-related responsibilities, prohibitions, and consequences, they trust that law enforcement agencies are enforcing the law and are willing to participate in school education and prevention programs.

When advocacy groups inform the public of health, safety, and welfare issues, they often use statistics gathered by law enforcement agencies and ask police executives to provide legitimacy to their efforts by participating in media events.

Police executives should embrace these responsibilities and take firm steps to ensure they are included in such events.

Law enforcement agencies can effectively prevent underage access to alcohol by:

- Ensuring that statutes are clearly explained, understood, and obeyed by working with various sectors of the community and other enforcement agencies
- Providing technical expertise for legislators, the public, and the media
- Working to reduce the undesirable outcomes associated with youth use of alcohol, such as automobile crashes, death, property damage, crime, and gang activity
- Working with prosecuting attorneys to ensure that underage drinking and alcohol-related violations are prosecuted

- Lending credibility to efforts to set societal standards
- Monitoring activities to ensure compliance with the law

The issue of *how* police should accomplish these tasks is becoming increasingly important. The expectations for law enforcement agencies demonstrate the critical need for police executives to shift their approach from only reactive enforcement to a combination of strategic and tactical planning, including both proactive and reactive enforcement. They must also realize that enforcement is only one tool for reducing youth alcohol use.

Historically, there have been two approaches to law enforcement where issues of public morality and safety are concerned. *Traditional* law enforcement approaches are reactive and focus on identifying when and where violations occur and apprehending the violators. By contrast, the *voluntary compliance and deterrence* approach, while using some of the same techniques, focuses less on apprehending violators and more on changing behavior. In a word, its goal is *compliance*. Both approaches can be done in ways that are consistent with community policing.

### ***Traditional Enforcement***

This approach relies on police being in the right place at the right time with sufficient resources to apprehend the violators. It hopes to deter crime by teaching the public that enforcement is taking place, and it shows violators and potential violators that they must

- Cease their illegal activity or be apprehended, and probably suffer administrative or judicial penalties,
- Move to a location where there is less chance of being apprehended, or

- Shift to a different, less visible method of committing the violation.

Those same messages are sent regardless of whether the enforcement is directed at impaired driving, youth attempting to purchase alcohol, distributors and vendors attempting to sell alcohol to youth, adults illegally providing alcohol to youth, or any other related alcohol violation.

The traditional enforcement approach only sends the above messages when it is vigorous, sustained, and widespread. It is usually hard to dedicate sufficient resources to maintain such an effort, especially without support from other key players in the community, starting with the prosecutor. The resultant retreat from enforcement tells the public that the police cannot ultimately change offenders' behavior, and that enforcement is not a continuing priority of the department.

### ***Voluntary Compliance and Deterrence***

The dual voluntary compliance and deterrence approach aims not merely to arrest offenders but also to change the behavior of the wider public. The message it tries to send is:

- Compliance with these important laws is required, not just desired.
- Compliance should be the accepted norm for the majority of the population, especially youth.
- Allowing underage youth to obtain alcohol is inappropriate and illegal.
- Protecting youth is a civic duty that creates a safer community.
- Community members should combat efforts by groups that wish to circumvent the laws or force governing bodies to withdraw support for alcohol law enforcement.

- Those who violate the laws should be held responsible and accountable.

- Violators are likely to be caught and punished.

- Police care about the issue, give alcohol-related crime a high enforcement priority, and allocate adequate resources to enforcing these laws.

In the voluntary compliance and deterrence approach, police executives and their agencies can:

- Apply the positive levers of traditional law enforcement.
- Increase the impact of enforcement efforts by promoting them in the media, public forums, and other community settings.
- Create the perception among the general public and potential violators that there is an inherent risk of being apprehended and prosecuted.
- Make the case that alcohol law enforcement protects the entire community by reducing many types of risks to life and property.
- See that information distributed by educators is consistent with enforcement efforts and outcomes.
- Show that community leaders, including parents, educators, and law enforcement agencies, are working as a team toward the same goals.
- Involve governmental bodies and the public so they stay interested in maintaining such efforts over long periods.
- Work to reduce claims of neighborhood, ethnic, or economic bias—reduce actual instances of such bias, if they exist—which

are sometimes used to convince elected bodies to reduce or stop enforcement efforts.

- Develop relationships with other parties working to reduce youth access to alcohol so that a united front may be presented in response to any potential political backlash.

The combination of active enforcement, educational programs, and advocacy for the proper use and distribution of alcohol can create a strong deterrent and change community beliefs and behaviors related to youth alcohol use.

In summary, enforcement of alcohol laws is critical to the demonstration of effective leadership on this issue, but it is also necessary for a police executive to realize the importance of police working in concert with others outside of policing in order to achieve long-term community behavioral change.

Community and law enforcement collaboration is the only realistic way to bring about the change in attitudes and behaviors that will result in a genuine reduction of youth alcohol-related problems. Although law enforcement represents only one element in the effort, its role is the most critical.

Youth alcohol prevention programs using the combined efforts of traditional enforcement and the voluntary compliance and deterrence approach have demonstrated that they meet the goal of preventing youth access to alcohol. These enforcement techniques also help develop strong and trusting relationships with the community, a primary goal of community policing.

### ***Working with Elected Leaders***

As governmental leaders are elected to represent the community, there may be instances when violators or special interest groups turn to their elected officials to question the “new” en-

forcement actions of the police—enforcement actions that may not seem favorable to the alcohol industry or those wanting to violate alcohol laws.

As part of an enhanced and progressive enforcement initiative, the police executive should be prepared to inform and answer to the community and elected officials. Police executives can prepare for this step and minimize criticism by informing key elected leaders and other local policymakers of new enforcement efforts—and the basis for these new initiatives. It may also be beneficial to involve these leaders in the program initiative in order to build “ownership.”

Informing and involving governmental leaders can be accomplished simply by inviting them to the initial planning meetings or by sending them a newsletter outlining the project and asking for input. These actions will go a long way toward creating and maintaining a good working relationship with local leaders and will help facilitate their support for enforcement actions. Furthermore, government leaders appreciate a police executive’s efforts to keep them well informed and prepared to answer constituents’ questions.

By taking on the responsibility of involving elected and other leaders in the process, the police executive will open doors of political support and pave the way for future enforcement initiatives that may require similar broad-based support in order to succeed.

### ***Leading the Effort Against Youth Access to Alcohol***

To prepare for leading the effort against youth access to alcohol, the police executive should take advantage of the current situation, resources, and challenges. For instance, he or she should consider the following local factors:

- Level of community awareness of the issue and the associated problems caused by alcohol, such as violence and impaired driving
- Importance of the issue to community members
- Existing coalitions dealing with the issue
- Key community players already publicly involved in the issue
- Governmental leaders' involvement in the issue
- Recent incidents and trends that have received media attention, such as alcohol-related fatal auto crashes involving youth, crime involving youth and alcohol (rapes, burglaries, violent crimes, etc.), unwanted teen pregnancies related to alcohol, and high school dropout rates related to alcohol
- The police department's current practices used in addressing the issue
- View of the police department held by local governmental leaders and community members
- The community's previous experiences in addressing the problem

The police executive has the potential to assert significant influence over the community's perception of law enforcement issues. It is important for police executives to use their influence and take the lead in preventing underage alcohol use. Equally important is learning when and how to use this influence effectively.

An effective police executive knows that by providing strong, focused leadership, he or she can better address the issues and influence decisions on key matters surrounding the issue and ultimately reduce the negative outcomes of youth access to alcohol. To do so, the police

executive must accept this lead role. Others may have instituted programs to reduce youth access to alcohol, but these efforts may not address all the technical and legal concerns that need law enforcement oversight and participation. The police executive is the technical expert on the use of enforcement techniques, the legal ramifications of enforcement, and the effectiveness of various enforcement strategies. As an expert in this area, the executive has the knowledge and resources to implement effective alcohol control programs.

The best strategy is for the police executive to take the lead in programs to reduce youth access to alcohol. However, if a group or organization in the community has already developed a leadership role in this area, the police executive should initiate a partnership with the leader to demonstrate law enforcement's commitment and set the standard that underage alcohol use will not be tolerated in the community and alcohol laws will be enforced.

Police executives may also choose to team with others involved in community underage drinking enforcement and prevention efforts, such as a mayor, local prosecutor, superintendent of schools, or prominent citizen. Teaming with these community leaders will rally support for enforcement and prevention efforts and ensure continuity of the message to youths and alcohol retailers in the area.

The police chief executive can initiate the process by performing the assessment described above and then taking three major steps:

- Identifying the players
- Predicting reactions and preparing staff for this assignment
- Building and lending support to the local and departmental effort

## ***Step 1: Identifying the Players***

The first step in the process is identifying key individuals and organizations. They fit into four categories:

- *Economic*: those with a vested interest, such as alcohol retailers, distributors, manufacturers, related businesses, and stockholders of those companies
- *Philosophical*: those with a deeply felt moral commitment, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), prevention coalitions, religious organizations, and youth alcohol and drug rehabilitation services
- *Governmental*: those with a political interest, such as elected officials, candidates, appointees, school officials, and their staffs
- *Community*: those concerned about safety and quality-of-life issues (especially parents and neighborhood associations)

Some of the individuals involved in the process might fit into more than one of the categories. It is important to know what category those individuals will fit into and the types of influences and pressures they may face.

## ***Step 2: Predicting Reactions and Preparing Staff***

After identifying the players, it is beneficial to predict how each might react to enforcement efforts applied to reduce youth access to alcohol. For example, when decoy efforts are undertaken, retail alcohol outlets may not be supportive of such enforcement. This is especially true of retail outlets cited for violations.

A common reaction is for the proprietor to complain to the city manager or administrator or an elected official in the hope of having the enforcement efforts stopped and the citation withdrawn. The contacted official may then

ask the police chief executive why the enforcement was undertaken, why the particular retail outlet was chosen, and other particulars. When the enforcement efforts generate numerous complaints, the official's requests for explanations become much more intense. This is the unfortunate start of the politicization of enforcement.

Recognizing various parties' interests and anticipating their reactions prepares the police chief executive to decide, in advance, how to respond, and more importantly, what actions to take prior to implementing any enforcement initiative. These actions include, but are not limited to, meeting with key governmental and community leaders, holding press conferences, and meeting with alcohol industry associations in an effort to educate and involve them. Such planning may reduce his or her anxiety and enable the police executive to prepare other members of the department to respond to inquiries and questions in an accurate and professional manner. Planning also helps reduce the politicization of enforcement.

## ***Step 3: Building and Lending Support***

In the effort to reduce youth access to alcohol, police chief executives can develop and offer support in many ways and with many other community leaders.

### **Governmental Support**

Legislators, local elected officials, and advocacy groups often view police executives as technical experts who can lend credibility and status to an issue. If police chief executives want to participate in the legislative process, they should develop positive relationships with local, state, and federal legislators.

Over time, when developing new legislation, legislators and their staff may ask police executives for advice, statistics, and anecdotal infor-

mation about youth access to alcohol and may also ask those executives to testify when appropriate. By answering these needs, the police executive builds a relationship with the political leadership.

To build relationships and receive support from political leaders, police chief executives can take some of the following actions:

- Produce and distribute monthly crime reports and periodic briefing papers.
- Make presentations to elected officials.
- Invite elected officials to conferences and other meetings where youth access to alcohol will be discussed.
- Provide information from other government agencies that study youth access to alcohol, such as the following:
  - U.S. Department of Justice, especially the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
  - U.S. Department of Transportation
  - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
  - State and county alcohol and drug services agencies
- Meet with governmental leaders individually to brief them on the teen alcohol issue and recommended approaches for addressing it.
- Invite other relevant agencies to assist in briefing local leaders.

### **Community Support**

Police executives should make special efforts to inform the media, community groups, and interested citizens once they begin to focus en-

forcement efforts on reducing youth access to alcohol.

The media can help inform and convince the community that complying with the law is the best approach to reducing the negative outcomes of youth access to alcohol. Police chief executives should provide the media with statistics and research studies to show the rationale for greater involvement by law enforcement agencies. Although the media may at times seem to be pulling for its own agenda rather than the department's, they are a powerful tool for changing public opinion. It is worth the effort to win them over.

To educate community groups and interested citizens, police chief executives and their staffs may find it useful to do the following:

- Openly explain how and why the agency is initiating enforcement efforts.
- Brief the community often, through public meetings, community events, interviews with the media, and press conferences.
- Designate staff to attend community meetings on such topics as youth and alcohol, crime, youth welfare and safety, and quality-of-life issues.
- Help educational institutions that are responding to the youth alcohol problem. Police chief executives can assist by:
  - Periodically expressing support for educational efforts
  - Participating with educators in private discussions and public forums,
  - Providing crime statistics and other pertinent data
  - Offering the services of articulate law enforcement staffers to serve as presenters and partners

Police chief executives themselves should oversee the content and distribution of any brochures, news releases, or presentations produced by their agencies regarding youth access to alcohol.

### **Coalition Support**

To retain credibility, police executives should be cautious in how they approach advocacy. When advocating for any issue, including the reduction of youth access to alcohol, it is generally better for those executives to speak out independently of outside advocacy groups than to belong to them. Police executives may still publicly support such groups, but independence generally serves the cause better and protects the executives' credibility.

These cautions notwithstanding, important local coalitions can help police chief executives maintain both community and political support. Their members are often willing to attend community and council meetings and to offer support when enforcement efforts receive criticism.

Coalitions usually consist of organizations that have agreed to work together toward a common goal. Member organizations may include government agencies, religious organizations, treatment and rehabilitation service providers, educational organizations, and others. This multifaceted membership helps deflect criticisms that are intended to put the police chief executive on the defensive and force withdrawal of, or a reduction in, enforcement activities.

### ***Resources to Consider***

The effort to reduce youth access to alcohol requires the pooling of many resources. Police chief executives can begin their analysis of what is needed to accomplish the goals by examining their own skills, the capabilities of their staff, resources within their agencies that might be reallocated to the task, and possible

additional financial resources that might be acquired.

Historically, police executives have tended not to ask for assistance, except for additional funding. However, other resources are available. After looking at resources within the department, the executive should consider expanding cooperation with other agencies. Such cooperation does the following:

- Gains additional resources for the agency, which are available when needed
- Reduces the amount of resources that the agency must reallocate to undertake the enforcement efforts
- Reduces the need for additional funding or grants in order to proceed
- Adds diverse skills to the project
- Develops a mutual commitment for the desired enforcement efforts by participating agencies
- Can be sustained over much longer periods because of the reduced costs to each agency involved
- Provides a higher profile for enforcement efforts, increasing the likelihood of positive media coverage
- Tends to be viewed favorably by government leaders
- Helps create more consistency in enforcement approaches across the region
- Promotes a singular set of messages from law enforcement agencies to the affected communities in the region
- Promotes more consistent perceptions on the part of community members as to the types and frequency of enforcement

- Helps law enforcement agencies obtain better cooperation from such parties as the state alcohol beverage control agency, local prosecutors, and the judiciary

Within the local jurisdiction, several official resources may be helpful:

- Planning and zoning offices, which decide whether to approve new permits to sell alcoholic beverages and also regulate existing ones
- Health agencies
- Education officials and institutions, as well as state or regional offices of education that have influence over the school curriculum

Looking to regional, state, and national sources of technical and financial support, police chief executives may wish to consider contacting the following:

- State highway patrol or state police
- State or county alcohol and drug treatment or services agencies
- State alcohol beverage control agency
- State juvenile justice and delinquency prevention agency
- State highway safety agency
- State gaming and lottery agencies
- U.S. Department of Justice, especially the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- U.S. Department of Transportation, especially the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

## *Taking the Lead Role*

Making a decision to lead the effort to reduce youth access to alcohol necessarily involves risk. Police chief executives may experience a backlash from businesses cited, persons arrested, alcohol producers and distributors, the media, politicians, and others. Such pressure has the potential to make some police executives wary of taking the lead role in this important effort.

Omitting efforts to prevent underage drinking in your leadership agenda deprives the community of services and increases the potential for problems associated with underage drinking, perhaps even with devastating results. Furthermore, others may take the leadership role, omitting police involvement in developing community responses.

It is better for police executives to lead than to be pulled into issues. That is especially true with the issue of underage drinking. Responsible retailers and clerks want fair enforcement of the law; they do not like to be at a disadvantage to competitors who sell alcohol to minors.

## *Reaping the Rewards*

Underage drinking laws, at times, are ignored by many jurisdictions. However, they are overwhelmingly supported by almost all interested parties. Underage drinking is one issue through which police chief executives can reap great rewards for their agencies and the community they serve.

What can be gained by taking the lead role? Rewards include the following:

- Stronger public belief in community policing
- Improved agency image
- Improved quality of life for the entire community

- Reductions in crashes, deaths, property damage, crime, school dropout rates, assaults and other forms of violence, and unwanted teen pregnancies related to alcohol
  - A safer community that ensures youth the opportunity to grow and achieve
  - Increased public confidence in the police chief executive and the law enforcement agency he or she heads
  - Increased support for future agency initiatives on the part of other government agencies and the public
  - Establishment of a network of individuals and organizations that can continue to help the police chief executive and agency in future efforts
  - Improved relationships with other law enforcement agencies
8. *Do* serve as a facilitator or obtain help from someone who can.
  9. *Do* respect all parties involved, even if they are not actively participating.
  10. *Do* set timelines and targets.
  11. *Do* use parallel processes—where several important activities can be ongoing at the same time—whenever possible. Avoid processes that rely on sequential steps (such that step 4 cannot proceed until step 3 is completed, for example).
  12. *Do* expect turnover among participants.
  13. *Do* decide which participants need additional training and education, and ensure that adequate time and resources are available to provide it on an ongoing basis.
  14. *Do* seek and consult technical support when dealing with participants who handle technical aspects of youth access to alcohol, such as judges, prosecutors, and educators.
  15. *Do* ensure that similar enforcement efforts are applied with equal vigor to all portions of the community.
  16. *Do* design enforcement efforts that reduce opportunities for accusations of ethnic, economic, or neighborhood bias on the part of the law enforcement agency.
  17. *Do* consult county, state, and federal resources for technical support and research data.
  18. *Do* recognize that in the law enforcement agency's effort to reduce youth access to alcohol, additional financial resources may facilitate the effort.
  19. *Do* respect and cultivate local political relationships.

## *Inventory of Do's and Don'ts*

### *Do*

1. *Do* gather relevant statistics and information.
2. *Do* establish guidelines and be sure all involved parties know them.
3. *Do* establish a vision, in writing, and share it everyone involved.
4. *Do* set short- and long-term goals, including near-term achievements that everyone can share.
5. *Do* listen to all who participate.
6. *Do* communicate well and often with participants.
7. *Do* build consensus.

20. *Do* keep the city manager or administrator and elected officials informed (through, for example, newsletters and e-mails).
21. *Do* regularly monitor and evaluate progress and publish results.
22. *Do* expect success.

### ***Don't***

1. *Don't* expect immediate results.
2. *Don't* assume everyone is operating with the same level of understanding of criminal and regulatory enforcement.
3. *Don't* micromanage the project and tell others how to do their jobs.
4. *Don't* create win/lose situations for participants.
5. *Don't* become discouraged if crime statistics initially increase.
6. *Don't* give up if parts of the strategy appear not to be working.
7. *Don't* expect the same level of commitment from everyone.
8. *Don't* expect everyone to follow through on commitments; it is up to the police chief executive to ensure that participants follow up and to see that commitments are honored.
9. *Don't* expect everyone to take on new responsibilities willingly. The executive must use effective leadership skills and provide a clear understanding of the benefits.
10. *Don't* have all the answers. Let others help develop ideas and solutions.
11. *Don't* dominate. Share responsibilities and tasks.

12. *Don't* fail to let others know the negative consequences and significance of youth access to alcohol.
13. *Don't* fail to celebrate successes.
14. *Don't* fail to give credit to all involved.
15. *Don't* become discouraged if political pressure is applied.
16. *Don't* fail to prepare yourself and your staff for tough questions and criticism.

### ***Conclusion***

By taking the lead in reducing youth access to alcohol, police chief executives gain the opportunity to frame the issue, select enforcement and prevention methods, and ensure the best for all members of the community.

Anytime police executives take a lead role and act to solve an underage drinking problem, they must ensure that all members of the community, including political leaders, the alcohol industry, and the community, become a part of the program. By not involving these important entities, the police executive may be placed in the position of reacting to the issues instead of leading and directing the effort.

Fortunately, the fight against underage drinking is popular with most sectors of the community. For police chief executives, the many benefits of taking the lead role in this issue are well worth the effort. Police executives who take the lead role in this issue will continue to reap benefits in other enforcement initiatives and community programs.

Reducing youth access to alcohol is an opportunity for police executives to help reduce the rates of crime, injuries, death, unwanted teen pregnancies, school dropouts, and other problems. It provides an excellent chance to make the community safer, improve its quality of life, reinforce the value of community policing,

enhance the image of the law enforcement agency, and establish the police chief executive as one of the key leaders in the community.

## *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> See Wechsler et al., "Health and Behavioral Consequences of Binge Drinking in College," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1994, 272:21, 1672-1677.

<sup>2</sup> American Council on Alcohol Problems, March 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, "Costs of Underage Drinking," prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Leadership Conference, July 11-14, 1999, Sheraton Reston Hotel, Reston, VA. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 11140 Rockville Pike, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20852.

<sup>7</sup> See D. Murdoch, R. O. Pilh, and D. Ross, "Alcohol and Crimes of Violence: Present Issues," *International Journal of Addiction*, 1990, 25: 1065-1081.

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<sup>8</sup> See R. N. Parker and L. Rebhun, *Alcohol and Homicide, A Deadly Combination of Two American Traditions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> See David T. Levy, Ph.D., Ted R. Miller, Ph.D., Rebecca Spicer, and Kathryn Stewart, "Underage Drinking: Immediate Consequences and Their Costs," Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation working paper, June 1999.