



## Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol



CMCA is a community organizing effort designed to change policies and practices of major community institutions in ways that reduce access to alcohol by teenagers. CMCA was developed and evaluated in a 15-community randomized trial by the Alcohol Epidemiology Program at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, under the direction of Professor Alexander C. Wagenaar. The intervention approach involves activating the citizenry of communities to achieve changes in local public policies and changes in the practices of major community institutions, such as law enforcement, licensing departments, community events, civic groups, churches and synagogues, schools, and local mass media. The objective is to reduce the flow of alcohol to youth from illegal sales by retail establishments, and from provision of alcohol to youth by other adults in the community. Effectively limiting the accessibility of alcohol to teens not only directly reduces teen drinking, but also communicates a clear social norm in the community that underage drinking is inappropriate and unacceptable.

The CMCA intervention is based on established theory and research showing the importance of the social and policy environment in facilitating or impeding youth drinking. CMCA community organizing methods draw on a range of traditions in organizing across social and health issues. It is important to distinguish the community organizing approach from common coalition-building methods. Coalitions are typically dominated by professional leaders of organizations, seeking agreement on common actions across organizations. Community organizing involves activating a diverse citizenry from throughout the community to achieve institutional and policy change. While participants may have leadership positions in extant community organizations and institutions, it is usually necessary to develop a group independent from the existing community power structure.

CMCA was evaluated in a fully randomized trial across 15 communities. Data collection included pre and post in-school surveys of 12<sup>th</sup> graders, telephone surveys of 18- to 20-year-olds and alcohol merchants, direct testing of the propensity of alcohol retailers to sell to young buyers, and monitoring changes in relevant practices of community institutions. Results show that CMCA significantly and favorably affected the behavior of 18- to 20-year-olds and the alcohol sales practices of bars and restaurants. Alcohol retailers increased age-identification checking and reduced sales to minors. Eighteen- to-20-year-olds were less likely to

try to purchase alcohol, less likely to frequent bars, less likely to drink, and, importantly, less likely to provide alcohol to other teens. Arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol also declined significantly among 18- to 20-year-olds. Younger adolescents were not significantly affected by CMCA.

Changing the social and policy environment in communities is essential for long-term prevention success. The CMCA project demonstrated the effectiveness of such environmental strategies, and provides numerous tools and resources for successful community action.

### Model Program

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The CMCA project received a 1999 Exemplary Substance Abuse Prevention award from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. CMCA is listed on the National Registry of Effective Prevention Programs.

### Agency

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Alcohol Epidemiology Program  
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[www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol](http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol)

### Contact

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### Tools for Community Change

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CMCA produced numerous resources that are freely available to all communities through the University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program website: [www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol](http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol). First is a set of concise three-page summaries of practical strategies to reduce access to alcohol by underage youth—one for each key community institution. The following documents are

available on strategies to reduce youth access to alcohol:

- *What Civic Groups Can Do*
- *What Colleges Can Do*
- *What Faith Organizations Can Do*
- *What Hotels and Motels Can Do*
- *What Parents Can Do*
- *What Police Can Do*
- *What Schools Can Do*
- *What Worksites Can Do*

A second set of available resources from the CMCA project are concise three-page summaries of local policies to reduce youth access to alcohol. Policy summaries are available on:

- *Alcohol Advertising Restrictions in Public Places*
- *Alcohol Warning Posters*
- *Administrative Penalties*
- *Checking Age Identification*
- *Minimum Age of Seller Requirements*
- *Alcohol Restrictions at Community Events*
- *Compliance Checks*
- *Regulations on Home Delivery of Alcohol*
- *Social Host Liability*
- *Beer Keg Registration*
- *Alcohol Use Restrictions in Public Places*
- *Responsible Beverage Service Training (voluntary)*
- *Responsible Beverage Service Training (mandatory)*
- *Restrictions on Alcohol Sponsorship at Community Events*

A third set of available resources from the CMCA project for use by communities are model ordinances that provide the exact draft legal language to establish policies that reduce youth access to alcohol. Model ordinances available include:

- *Keg Registration*
- *Noisy Assembly*
- *Open house Assembly*
- *Alcohol Restrictions in Certain Areas*
- *Exterior Parking Lot Lighting*
- *Alcohol at Special Events*
- *Responsible Beverage Service Training*
- *Server Licensing*
- *Employment of Minors*
- *Compliance Checks/Administrative Penalties*
- *Banning Home Alcohol Deliveries*
- *Warning Signs in Alcohol Establishments*
- *Billboards and Signage*
- *Warning Labels on Alcohol Advertisements*

## **Enforcement**

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Policies must be implemented and enforced to be most effective. Thus, also available at [www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol](http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol) is an easy-to-use manual on conducting compliance checks to prevent sales of alcohol to teens, entitled *Alcohol Compliance Checks: A Procedures Manual for Enforcing Age-of-Sale Laws*. The manual includes

clear checklists and step-by-step instructions on how local law enforcement agencies can best conduct regular compliance checks.

## **Research Results**

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A total of 30 papers have been published in scientific journals on aspects related to the CMCA project. These research papers report analyses of many issues related to youth access to alcohol and youth drinking. Citations for all the papers are available at [www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol](http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol). A few key papers on the CMCA community trial are:

**Background theory:** Wagenaar, A.C., Perry, C.L. Community strategies for the reduction of youth drinking: Theory and application. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 4(2), 319-345, 1994.

**Evaluation design and data:** Wagenaar, A.C., Murray, D.M., Wolfson, M., Forster, J.L., Finnegan, J.R. Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: Design of a randomized community trial. *Journal of Community Psychology* (CSAP Special Issue):79-101, 1994.

**Data on sources of alcohol to youth:** Wagenaar, A.C., Toomey, T.L., Murray, D.M., Short, B.J., Wolfson, M., Jones-Webb, R. Sources of alcohol for underage drinkers. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 57(3): 325-333, 1996.

**Data on sales of alcohol to youth:** Forster, J.L., Murray, D.M., Wolfson, M., Wagenaar, A.C. Commercial availability of alcohol to young people: results of alcohol purchase attempts. *Preventive Medicine*, 24:342-347, 1995.

**CMCA community organizing results:** Wagenaar, A.C., Gehan, J.P., Jones-Webb, R., Wolfson, M., Toomey, T.L., Forster, J.L., Murray, D.M. Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: Lessons and results from a 15-community randomized trial. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(3): 315-326, 1999.

**CMCA effects on alcohol sales to minors, teen drinking, and related behaviors:** Wagenaar, A.C., Murray, D.M., Gehan, J.P., Wolfson, M., Forster, J.L., Toomey, T.L., Perry, C.L., Jones-Webb, R. Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: Outcomes from a randomized community trial. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 61(1):85-94, 2000.

**CMCA effects on arrests and traffic crashes:** Wagenaar, A.C., Murray, D.M., Toomey, T.L. Communities Mobilizing for change on Alcohol: Effects of a randomized trial on arrests and traffic crashes. *Addiction*, 95(2):209-217, 2000.

## **Dissemination**

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After CMCA was originally implemented in the small set of research trial cities, dozens of other communities adapted ideas and components from the CMCA project.

All CMCA materials and resources are freely available for adaptation by other communities seeking to reduce youth access to alcohol, reduce teen drinking, and reduce the health and social problems associated with underage drinking.

