

Alberta Alcohol Strategy

Purpose

To prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm by developing a culture of moderation.

Outcomes

- Reduce intoxication, heavy drinking and other risky patterns of alcohol consumption.
- Improve community safety by reducing alcohol-related harm.
- Increase public awareness of the risks associated with alcohol consumption.
- Increase understanding among Albertans that social norms do not support a culture of intoxication.
- Delay the onset of alcohol use.
- Decrease the social and economic costs related to alcohol consumption.
- Ensure effective policies and measures are in place to control the physical, social and economic availability of alcohol.
- Communities have the capacity to respond to individual and family problems related to alcohol use.

What we heard from Albertans:

Key Themes

The issue is complex – alcohol-related problems need to be addressed in conjunction with a host of other issues, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment and family violence.

Build on what works – a broad range of community-based and government programs designed to reduce alcohol-related harm currently exist but they are not consistently available throughout Alberta.

Have a long-term vision – outline a comprehensive plan with clear and measurable results.

Recognize diversity – programs must be culturally sensitive, age and gender-specific and developmentally appropriate.

Respect the values of Albertans – for healthy and safe communities and the best quality of life possible.

Strategic priorities and recommended actions

1. Promote healthy perceptions, attitudes and behaviours toward alcohol use.

- Incorporate the new national low-risk drinking guidelines (LRDG) in health promotion, education, workplace and alcohol treatment settings so that Albertans are informed about their alcohol consumption.
- Develop a sustained social marketing campaign to raise awareness about drinking patterns that cause alcohol-related harm. The campaign should present clear, balanced and credible messages that are linked to similar communications at the national, regional and community levels, including the National Alcohol Strategy.
- Develop educational resources to improve the health and safety of high-risk groups, such as underage drinkers and their parents, young adults who over-drink, women who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, and seniors.
- Ensure that information about alcohol use is consistently included in policies and programs focused on preventing and treating chronic disease.

2. Ensure social responsibility in the production, distribution, regulation and service of beverage alcohol.

- Routinely review and report on Alberta's alcohol regulatory system to identify and implement changes that promote moderate and responsible alcohol consumption. This includes review of licensing, pricing, mark-up system, promotional activities, server training programs and regulatory enforcement practices.
- Encourage industry to establish, implement, enforce and evaluate formal standards and codes of practice that support responsible alcohol consumption.
- Work with provincial partners to review advertising standards to ensure that these comply with a social responsibility mandate.
- Educate the public about liquor licensing, liability concerns and hosting responsibilities.

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3. Foster the development of context-specific alcohol policies.

- Work with employers and other groups such as the Drug and Alcohol Council for Safe Alberta Workplaces (DACSAW) to develop evidence-based workplace alcohol policies, prevention and employee assistance programs.
- Assist local governments in making decisions related to liquor licensing by developing a tool kit that includes best practice guidelines for the management of alcohol-related issues in public places and at public events, and the effective use of bylaws and fines to manage local concerns related to location, density or operation of licensed premises.
- Support community mobilization programs designed to reduce the social acceptability of harmful drinking, increase parental supervision and restrict access to alcohol.
- Develop alcohol-free contexts for youth through local sports, recreation and cultural activities and give youth the opportunity to benefit from volunteer and mentorship to increase social and employment skills.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to develop a common understanding of alcohol issues, policies and programs.

4. Enhance the province-wide continuum of alcohol treatment services.

- Further establish clinical and non-clinical healthcare settings as accessible and non-stigmatizing options for information, early intervention and treatment of alcohol problems.
- Work with primary health care providers to improve screening, implement brief interventions and enhance referral systems to reach Albertans who otherwise would not seek traditional treatment services for alcohol-related problems.
- Support provincial FASD networks to improve prevention, screening and assessment, and increase understanding of the support services required for parents whose children are affected by FASD.
- Establish an effective continuum of care for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Albertans living on and off reserve, ensuring that Aboriginal people are involved in developing, implementing and monitoring programs and services for their communities.
- Examine the use of non-traditional treatment approaches such as Internet counselling, home detoxification and interactive self-help materials to expand the range of treatment options for Albertans, particularly those living in rural or remote areas.

5. Expand harm reduction programs for alcohol.

- Review local transportation options for bar patrons, including taxi, shuttle and bus service, volunteer and commercial designated driver programs.
- Work with the insurance industry to develop strategies to minimize the risk associated with alcohol use.
- Revise, develop (where necessary) and disseminate best practice guidelines related to the physical design, social environment and management of licensed premises to reduce the incidence of violence, public disorder and other alcohol-related crime on the premises and in the neighbourhood.
- Increase programs and initiatives that reduce harm to health and safety for current drinkers including youth, seniors and marginalized populations.

6. Support enforcement efforts to reduce alcohol-related crime.

- Develop a monitoring system that tracks serious harm associated with drinking at particular licensed premises. This could include data on the “last place of drinking” for all incidents of alcohol-related crime and disorder.
- Maintain a focus on impaired driving using a mix of effective countermeasures such as ignition interlock, roadside sobriety checks, graduated licensing, administrative license suspension and remedial treatment for those convicted of drunk-driving offences.
- Pursue approaches that focus on high-risk or alcohol-dependant drivers (i.e. with BACs of 0.15 percent or higher) to better deter and rehabilitate repeat offenders. This would include: (a) technology-based solutions, (b) improved assessment protocols, (c) improved treatment programs and (d) targeted enforcement using the Justice Online Information Network (JOIN).
- Provide information and education to better co-ordinate the response to alcohol-related crime.