

PREVENTION FIRST 

SUCCESS STORY

**PREVENTION
IN ACTION:
COALITION
REDUCES
YOUTH
ACCESS TO
ALCOHOL**



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

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THE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (+PYD) COALITION OF OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIPS,

led by Kelly O'Connor, is committed to preventing underage drinking in their community. They utilized data to determine youth access to alcohol was a significant underlying factor contributing to underage drinking in their community and formed partnerships to implement strategies proven to reduce youth retail access.



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS



Defining Issue

In 2015, the +PYD Coalition was awarded the Partnerships for Success grant, which created an opportunity for coalition members to be trained in the Strategic Prevention Framework process. During that process, the coalition identified a high rate of youth retail access to alcohol in their community. In 2012, the retail access rate for area 12th graders was 44%, well above the state rate of 25%.



Steps to a Solution

The data led the coalition to seek effective strategies to prevent youth from purchasing or taking alcohol from retailers. They chose Compliance Checks, an evidence-based strategy that can successfully reduce retail access rates. +PYD hosted two trainings for law enforcement on conducting compliance checks. Having officers attend trainings and other educational opportunities increased awareness of underage drinking within the community. The trainings, led by certified law enforcement officers, provided the foundation for incorporating this strategy into the coalition's long-term plan.

Starting the planning process early allowed enough time to build relationships and increase coalition member's capacity. They recognized involving the right partners at the right time was critical. The coalition utilized technical assistance from Prevention First throughout the Strategic Prevention Framework process.

The +PYD Coalition was aware that compliance checks, sometimes, have a negative perception in the community. To gain community support, they created a media campaign that congratulated the local businesses that did not sell to minors. They thanked them for their part in advancing the goal of the coalition which was to keep youth safe and healthy.

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Results

As a result of the collaboration that took place between the +PYD coalition, local law enforcement, and the community, Oak Park and River Forest have seen a 20% decrease in the Retail Access Rate of Alcohol since 2012. In addition, since 2018, law enforcement has checked 118 retailers with a 98% pass rate of these establishments.



One of the greatest successes in conducting compliance checks is working together with local law enforcement. The collaborative partnership we have created sends a positive and powerful prevention message to our community. Having youth and adult volunteers work alongside the coalition has helped demonstrate that addressing underage drinking takes everyone to get involved!

Kelly O'Connor, Prevention Services Manager



Sustaining Success

Law enforcement's involvement in the coalition and their continued understanding of the issue of underage drinking is essential for sustainability of the +PYD's compliance check strategy.

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The IL Youth Survey is our best barometer for alcohol consumption among our youth. Any intervention steps we take as a community to help lower the percentage of youth alcohol consumption is worth the time and effort invested. In our case, RFPD believes compliance checks proactively address this concern in our community by sending officers to the actual points of sale. The point is not to punish alcohol retailers but to educate and hold them accountable. We want our businesses to pass the compliance checks; we want to see them succeed and share in the responsibility as we strive to make a positive impact. Everyone in our community, from residents to businesses, is expected to recognize that underage alcohol consumption is dangerous and not in the best interest of our youth.

Officer Ben Ransom, River Forest Police Department

The +PYD coalition was awarded a Drug-Free Communities grant in 2019. Despite roadblocks, including the current pandemic, the Positive Youth Development coalition, led by Kelly O'Connor, will continue their efforts to reduce youth retail access.



My experience in doing compliance checks with the Oak Park Police Department was truly great! I felt safe conducting the checks and the officers were as nice as they could be.

Tim K., Youth

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS



Contact Info



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