

Background

Establishments that are licensed to serve alcohol, such as restaurants, bars, community centres, or stores that sell alcohol, may be willing to support your local campaign about alcohol and pregnancy. Licensed establishments may already be concerned about alcohol use during pregnancy and are often looking for ways to act as caring members of their community.

Things to Keep in Mind

How long will they participate?

Licensed establishments may be more interested in participating if you recommend a specific short period of time, such as the May long weekend or Mother's Day. If a licensed establishment initiates an activity, they may become convinced of the benefits, and may decide continue to provide that service for a longer period of time.

What are they willing to do?

Each licensed establishment will have a different level of interest. Some may be willing to do simple things such as putting up posters or static clings. Others, already concerned about alcohol use in pregnancy, may be able to take on several tasks or may suggest creative new approaches. Be prepared with a menu of choices, from basic to more advanced suggestions (see list of possible activities below).

How many will participate?

Commitment may initially come from a small number of establishments. As participants receive recognition in the media, other establishments will likely start to express interest. Some establishments may not want to participate in the campaign. Be ready to thank them politely for their time and let them know that they can contact you at a later date if they become interested.

Will they be concerned about costs?

Licensed establishments are in business to make money and are understandably concerned about the bottom-line. Re-assure your contact that there are several ways to be involved, and that many of the choices involve no costs at all.

Possible Activities

Licensed establishments can do many things to promote alcohol-free pregnancies, including:

- Putting up static clings in the washrooms or at point of purchase
- Displaying posters
- Distributing brochures
- Using table toppers, napkins or coasters with a message about alcohol and pregnancy
- Providing free non-alcoholic beverages to pregnant women
- Being recognized in the local media for supporting the campaign

Serving Alcohol to Pregnant Women

Licensed establishments often have questions when approached about this type of activity. You will want to be prepared for the following common question:

Can I refuse to serve alcohol to a pregnant woman?

Owners and managers are often concerned about serving alcohol to pregnant women, for health reasons and due to concerns about liability. As you can imagine, this is a contentious issue. However, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (www.ohrc.on.ca) clearly indicates that it is discriminatory to refuse to serve alcohol to a pregnant woman, based on her gender. In addition, refusing to serve alcohol to a pregnant woman does not limit her access to alcohol, nor does it address the underlying reasons for her alcohol use (i.e. stress, poverty, abuse, mental health concerns, addiction, etc.). There are positive ways to make a difference, such as putting up posters or providing free non-alcoholic beverages to pregnant women.

How to Approach Licensed Establishments

1. **Make a List** – Develop a list of all establishments licensed to serve or sell alcohol in your community. Your list may include restaurants, bars and community centres that serve alcohol as well as stores that sell alcohol. Add contact names, mailing addresses, phone numbers etc. to your list.
2. **Send a Letter** – Send a letter to the licensed establishments on your list, describing the campaign and suggesting ways that they can become involved. Sample text has been provided on the Best Start website.
3. **Phone Them** – Call each licensed establishment to determine their level of interest. Expect a range of responses from uninterested, to those who are eager to participate.
4. **Deliver Materials** – Mail or drop off materials such as posters, brochures, static clings etc., along with instructions on how to use them. Include your contact information in case they have any questions or need additional resources.

Follow up

1. **Check back** – Check back to see how the materials were received or if there were comments about the initiatives. Your contacts may have useful suggestions for future activities.
2. **Thank them** – It is important to provide community recognition for licensed establishments who participate in the campaign, whether their efforts are minimal or extensive. Here are some ways to thank participating licensed establishments:
 - **Thank you ad in the newspaper** – A camera ready ad is available on Best Start website. You can insert the names of participating establishments, plus your organisation name and contact information.
 - **Article in the local newspaper** – You can write an article or contact a reporter about the many ways that licensed establishments participated in your community. Photographs could accompany the article.
 - **Radio Interviews** – Set up a radio interview so that you can talk about the campaign and thank licensed establishments for their participation. A licensed establishment that has done creative or extensive work during the campaign may also be willing to participate in a radio interview.
 - **Letter of Thanks** – Send a personalized letter of thanks or certificate to each participating licensed establishment.

For resources and ideas on working with licensed establishments, see:
http://www.beststart.org/resources/alc_reduction/alc_camp/index.html