



Summary and Lessons Learned from POLD Case Studies

Lead Author: Linda M. Bosma, PhD

Other Contributing Authors:

Daniel Schriemer, MPH

Eileen Delehanty, MPH

Kathleen Lenk, MPH

Traci Toomey, PhD

June 2022

Introduction

Place of Last Drink (POLD) is a strategy to reduce illegal service of alcohol to obviously intoxicated customers ("overservice") at licensed establishments such as bars and restaurants. Place of last drink can be asked about and recorded for alcohol-related incidents such as drinking and driving, underage drinking, assaults, etc. POLD uses these data to identify establishments that demonstrate a pattern of overservice. When these establishments are identified, it is possible to then intervene to prevent future overservice of alcohol.

In 2021, we developed case studies of two cities in Minnesota and two counties in Wisconsin that are implementing POLD. The communities included urban, suburban, and rural areas. The case studies revealed a variety of ways that communities implement POLD and use POLD data. The two Minnesota cities implement POLD at a city level, where data are collected, compiled and used by law enforcement personnel. In Minnesota, POLD data are collected in a multi-jurisdictional database that shares the information between participating agencies. The two Wisconsin counties compile and analyze data at the county level, and then prepare individual city-level reports for each city law enforcement agency. In these two counties, POLD data are documented by law enforcement officers on a form that is already in use statewide; the data are then compiled by community partners in public health and local coalitions who engage college interns in this work. The two Minnesota cities collect POLD data for any incidents in which alcohol use is suspected; the Wisconsin counties collect POLD data only for drinking-and-driving-related incidents.

While the communities we examined implement their POLD differently, there are benefits, challenges, and lessons learned that were common.

Benefits of POLD

- POLD can help law enforcement agencies identify overservice issues early on, allowing them to respond quickly and reduce the likelihood that an alcohol establishment develops a more serious problem. POLD can identify alcohol establishments that contribute to problems that use a lot of law enforcement resources.
- POLD is a "tool in the toolbox"; it can complement other strategies that a law enforcement agency uses for enforcement and monitoring of alcohol establishments.
- POLD enables quantification of issues at alcohol establishments, to find patterns of problems, and to provide data to identify problematic practices at establishments.
- POLD can provide useful information to stakeholders and partners to inform community action. For example, some law enforcement agencies provide regular reporting to city councils and have used POLD data to inform licensing renewal processes.
- POLD is easy for most agencies to implement and officers can quickly document POLD on report forms.
- Whether a community collects POLD on only drinking-and-driving violations or for a broader range of incidents, the goal is to collect the data consistently for the selected

incident types. Consistent data collection helps law enforcement identify patterns within the community and helps identify if there are establishments that they can work with to improve serving practices. Universal collection of POLD data helps ensure that POLD is not used to unfairly target specific establishments, populations, or geographic areas.

Potential Challenges of POLD

- Some establishments may question the POLD data or challenge its accuracy. Consistent data collection and procedures are essential to show that data collection is impartial and valid. It can be helpful for officers to be able to remind establishments that POLD data are collected on all alcohol-related incidents (or for all DUI arrests in communities that collect POLD on only drinking-and-driving incidents), and does not target individual establishments.
- POLD incidents that identify establishments outside of an agency's jurisdiction can limit an agency's ability to take action with that establishment. Some agencies notify law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the establishment is located and provide information so that the agency has the option to follow up. Minnesota POLD information is entered into a multi-jurisdictional database so it is possible for participating agencies to share and access information on an establishment that is a POLD even if the incident occurs in another jurisdiction.
- As with other alcohol control measures, acting on POLD data may be constrained by a community's policies and practices. In all of our case studies, officials were quick to point out that their goal is to reduce alcohol-related problems, not to punish an establishment. For this reason, the agencies in our case studies emphasized requiring training and working with an establishment to improve policies and procedures, rather than starting with a punitive approach. The degree to which POLD data can be used during the liquor license renewal process, for example, is likely to vary based on local politics.
- It may not be possible to collect POLD data in all situations such as when providing assistance in a medical emergency or if the person refuses to provide information. Also, sometimes officers forget to document POLD. Ongoing officer training, periodic reminders at roll calls, visual reminders, and sharing how the data are being used to reduce alcohol-related problems can all help improve POLD data collection.

The Four Components of POLD and Lessons Learned

Evaluators at the University of Minnesota have identified four components of POLD implementation: startup, data collection, stakeholder awareness, and follow-up. The case studies of Minnesota and Wisconsin communities identified several lessons learned for each component.

Startup

During startup, agencies make decisions about how to administer POLD, who is responsible for reviewing the data, and how the agency will follow up with licensees.

- Law enforcement agencies may first learn about POLD in various ways such as from other agencies or community coalitions, or at conferences. During startup, many agencies find that it is helpful to learn how other agencies implement POLD and use POLD data.
- Most agencies feel POLD is fairly easy to implement and that the data they obtain are useful to address alcohol service issues in their community.
- When starting POLD, law enforcement agencies may find it valuable to seek buy-in from key stakeholders, such as elected officials, city administrators/departments, and officers.
- Some law enforcement agencies notify alcohol establishments in their jurisdictions that they will be collecting POLD data, explain the purpose of POLD, and that they will notify establishments that have patterns of being identified as a POLD.
- Initial training of officers is essential to ensure they understand the purpose of collecting POLD data, how the information will be used, and how to collect data accurately.
- Partners such as community coalitions or public health organizations can provide valuable support for POLD during the startup phase as well as throughout implementation. Coalition partners in Minnesota have helped with local POLD evaluation and garnering support for the program, and the Partnership for Change Coalition was instrumental in developing the Minnesota multi-jurisdictional database. In Wisconsin, public health and prevention coalitions encourage adoption of POLD, and public health partners compile POLD data and prepare reports.

Data Collection

POLD is a data-driven strategy. When establishing POLD data collection procedures, agencies determine what data they already collect and what is needed to collect and record POLD data.

- While some agencies limit POLD data collection to drinking-and-driving incidents, many collect POLD for a broad range of incidents, including assaults, fights, domestic violence, and underage drinking, among others.
- POLD data are collected at the scene of an incident. The general approach is for the officer to ask an individual where they had their last drink, and then to record that information.
- When starting POLD data collection, individual agencies looked at what would work best in their community. Many agencies added a space for documenting POLD in their reporting systems, often with a system to flag a POLD incident for additional attention.
- In Wisconsin, POLD data were already collected using a statewide form; thus, it was only necessary to develop systems to compile the data. Agencies can partner with stakeholders

to facilitate POLD data compilation or assessment, such as working with local colleges or health departments.

- Agencies determine how frequently to review their POLD data. Some agencies review POLD incidents almost daily; some compile, review, and analyze POLD incidents less often. More frequent review of the data enables timelier follow-up on specific incidents, while an examination of the data over several months may more clearly identify patterns of problems. Resources and capacity are factors in how often agencies review and assess their POLD data.

Stakeholder Awareness

It is important to keep law enforcement agency personnel, city staff and leaders, alcohol establishments, and other community stakeholders aware that POLD is being implemented.

- Ongoing reminders and training are valuable for law enforcement officers, to reinforce the value of collecting POLD data and how the data are used.
- Some agencies regularly share POLD data with their city councils, city staff, and other community partners. It is important to determine how to best share the information with each audience.
- Community partners can assist in increasing awareness and support. Community partners and stakeholders find POLD useful to increase awareness of alcohol-related issues in their communities.
- In some communities, coalitions conduct community presentations or provide support for enforcement efforts, with one coalition even providing evaluation support for local POLD efforts.

Follow-up

POLD data can be useful when following up with establishments that have demonstrated a pattern of overserving alcohol.

- Regularly reviewing POLD data enables agencies to identify establishments that may be overserving customers and/or need to improve their service policies.
- POLD provides timely information that law enforcement can use to address potential problems at businesses that serve alcohol.
- POLD is used to identify *patterns*, not single instances. It is most useful in identifying ongoing issues at a business.

- Agencies can follow up with establishments when they observe a significant incident or a pattern of incidents. Some agencies contact an establishment when they have a pattern of POLD incidents and develop an individualized response. That may be as simple as informing the business about the number of times that their establishment was named as a POLD and working with the establishment to suggest corrective action (such as serving food, altering drink specials, and training). In some instances, the agencies may require establishment staff to attend retail alcohol vendor training, or, in extreme cases, enact conditions on the alcohol license or land use permit.
- While not all communities review POLD as part of the licensing renewal process, the data can inform those decisions.

Conclusion

The cities and counties in our case studies view POLD as a benefit to their communities. POLD supports their overall efforts to address problems related to overservice of alcohol in their community. Law enforcement agencies say it is straightforward and easy to implement. In the communities in our case studies, only one establishment was elevated to a licensing issue, but all communities had several examples of situations where they were able to intervene with an establishment to educate, identify issues and improve policies and procedures. These communities have found that POLD is a useful addition to their alcohol control efforts.

Additional Resources

For more information about POLD, please go to our website: aep.umn.edu