



Server Training for Spanish Speakers: Montgomery County, MD

Building Trust and Compliance through Business Assistance

Several alcohol prevention and harm reduction initiatives were undertaken to address over-consumption and over-service in Latino businesses licensed to sell or serve alcohol in the business districts of Wheaton, Long Branch, Silver Spring and in Rockville, Maryland. A Spanish-speaking liaison at the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control collaborated with the Latino Business Alliance to implement a state certified alcohol server training program and reviewed the city's business code of conduct with business owners. The liaison connected owners with free information and resources to align existing policies and procedures with responsible hospitality aims.

Problem Statement

In Montgomery County, Latinos represent 12.4% of the total county's population and are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group with an annual growth of 7.8%. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), impaired drivers are most likely to be white or Hispanic males between 18 and 44 years old. This age range correlates with half of Montgomery County's Latino population, a demographic group that comprises a large percentage of the countywide workforce in the hospitality, service and construction industries.

Despite their significant role in the hospitality industry, historically only a limited number of Montgomery County Latino businesses and their staff have had access to adequate resources or culturally competent training. This has coincided with statistics that indicate that many Latino businesses in the business district of Wheaton were not in compliance with Alcohol Awareness training requirements. Given language limitations, the need was identified to develop a Spanish Alcohol Awareness program.

Goals

Goals specific to the Latino business community:

- To develop an educational process and raise awareness on the prevention of alcohol sales to minors and over-service within licensed establishments in the Latino community in Montgomery County.
- To develop a collaborative, cooperative and trusting relationship among Latino businesses licensed to sell/serve alcohol.
- To provide one on one consulting on the Code of Conduct with the local businesses from Wheaton and Silver Spring in order to address and reduce the public intoxication issues.
- To provide State Certified Alcohol Awareness Training in Spanish to Latino businesses in the target areas. To offer training to Latino establishment employees to promote responsible alcohol service.
- To provide educational programs in relation to the Rules and Regulations from the Department of Liquor Control to licensed Latino business owners and managers from the target area.

Overarching goals to the general community:

- Reduce drunk driving and alcohol related crime stemming from over-serving and serving alcohol to underage persons.
- Provide incentives and resources for responsible hospitality.
- Enhance capacity of existing agencies and associations to use resources more effectively.
- Improve practices of high risk establishments through risk assessments, trainings and business meetings.
- Create specific operational criteria for new businesses.
- Facilitate efficient accessibility to information and educational programs on responsible hospitality.
- Enhance professional skills and image of those working in the hospitality industry.
- Promote a Code of Conduct and existing local programs and resources.

Stakeholders

Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control (DLC)'s Community Outreach Office: Originally established as a Hospitality Resource Panel, this office provides leadership to promote efficient and responsible management of county liquor stores and businesses that sell or serve beverage alcohol in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Business Alliances: In 2002, the Community Outreach Office began developing Business Alliances. Business Alliances serve as a community based umbrella organization under which local business owners work with state, county and city governments to customize and implement comprehensive prevention, education and enforcement programs addressing alcohol abuse, drinking in public and related issues.

Alliance partners typically include the Department of Liquor Control, local and county police departments, local businesses that sell/serve alcohol, volunteer groups, State and County Highway Safety Offices, local non-profits, and state recognized server trainers (the Maryland Hospitality Education Foundation and others). Alliance initiatives are intended to have a direct impact on neighborhoods' alcohol-related social issues where these partnerships exist.

The Latino Business Alliance played a key part in the initiatives undertaken.

This business educational program is part of a collaborative effort with the following organizations: Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control, Maryland State Highway Administrator's Highway Safety Office, Maryland State Attorney's Office, Department of Public Works and Transportation, Department of Permitting Services, Montgomery County Department of Police, Montgomery County Park Police, Metro Transit Police, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue, MC Board of License Commissioners, the Century Council, the Maryland Hospitality Education Foundation, Long Branch Business League, Wheaton Business Alliance and Western Maryland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Local Montgomery County Licensees.

Process

In 2004, the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control (DLC) collaborated with Maryland Hospitality Education Foundation to modify and translate the Maryland State Certified Alcohol Server Training (BEST Program) into a culturally competent, Spanish training. With grant funding the DLC planned on using this educational tool, along with community building and enhanced enforcement efforts, to prevent behavior issues stemming from over-service and illegal sales of alcohol. In turn, the outcome intended to prevent alcohol related social issues such as impaired driving, pedestrian safety and violence stemming from over-service.

Spanish Language Alcohol Awareness Training Initiative

Sonia Nieves was newly hired on by the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control as a Spanish liaison just before the grant was awarded. This part-time coordinator salary along with a portion of salary from a Grant Manager and Director were used to meet the 40% match requirement. A contractor was trained as a state certified trainer by the Maryland Hospitality Education Foundation (MHEF), an alcohol server state certification program known to many as BEST. This Spanish speaking trainer was responsible for doing all trainings related to the state certifications.

After receiving lists of businesses in the targeted areas through the DLC, Ms. Nieves began calling businesses and setting up meetings with Owners and/or Managers of the Latino run businesses. These meetings, also known as "Door to Door interventions," were a strong tool to raise program awareness, find out what the businesses needs were, connect services and gain trust of the businesses.

Door to door meetings were ongoing during the training process due to the time restraint. All of the restaurants contacted agreed to a one on one meeting. Each meeting lasted an average of 45 minutes. Among the topics discussed were: sanitation and safety issues; compliance with state and county alcohol laws; ID policies: how to request and read proper identification; prevention of alcohol sales to anyone under the age of 21; relationship building with neighbors and other businesses; and state certified Alcohol Server Trainings.

These visits also offered a chance to set up the free trainings with staff and a code of conduct was presented and management was asked to sign it. This was an agreement to follow alcohol responsibility laws. There was a 94% compliance rate with the code of conduct. This was a huge step forward since in past programs the request to sign any type of agreement (even non law binding agreements) was met with skepticism and a reluctance to commit.

When high risk establishments were approached, it was decided by the Latino Business alliance that Spanish speaking code enforcement and Spanish liaisons from the county police department would be invited to accompany Ms. Nieves. However, it was found that the businesses shared more and seemed to be most receptive and honest when Ms. Nieves was by herself. Latino business management had a distrust of code enforcement and enforcement even with the pretense that they were there to help in any capacity possible and were not going to be writing citations.

Appointments were made for the free server trainings at the door to door interventions whenever possible. Multiple follow up calls to confirm preceded each appointment. Even with this process there were many cancellations and no-shows. Paper pre and post tests were conducted at each training session as well as paper trainer evaluations. The pre and post tests showed an overall increase in knowledge by 29%. In Wheaton pre tests yielded an average of 57% and post-tests 89% (a 32% increase) and in Long Branch, Silver Spring verbal tests yielded an average of 68% with a 93% post-test average score (an increase of 25%).

Chronology of Steps Taken:

1. Set up and invited participants to a Business Alliance Meeting within target areas to discuss and coordinate the program.
2. Gathered an updated list of businesses with alcohol licenses in the target areas. Identified businesses pertinent to reducing public intoxication. Met with police and code enforcement to coordinate their presence on door to door meetings with establishments that had prior alcohol citations (Spanish speaking preferred).
3. Wrote a letter to businesses describing the program to come.
4. Updated and translated the Code of Conduct Form.
5. Attended meetings with local business and planning in the target areas.
6. Scheduled "door to door intervention" meetings with businesses to discuss the program, what it offered and to discuss businesses' top concerns.
7. Hosted a Press Conference within the area to raise awareness among Latino media outlets. Launched Adult Host Responsibility educational campaign.

8. Scheduled Spanish Alcohol Awareness Trainings with local restaurants.
9. Collected data: contacts, surveys and trainings as well as time sheets from police.
10. Delivered final report.

Outcome

The Latino Business alliance model's training was offered to at least 100 licensed Latino businesses via a mass mailing and followed up by visits to locations within the target areas. A total of 28 Spanish trainings were held with 22 of these trainings receiving one or more state approved, alcohol server certifications for a total of 196 total participants trained and 140 Alcohol Awareness certifications awarded. Trainings all took place on-site; within the businesses themselves with pre-and post tests conducted at each. Although trainings were held within target area businesses, all Spanish speaking county servers were welcome to attend any of the trainings.

Quantitative Results:

- Between June and September of 2007, 196 servers have received alcohol training with an average of 29% increase in knowledge on pre and post tests.
- Between June and September of 2007, 140 servers in Wheaton, Long Branch and the crossroads in Rockville have received State Certified Alcohol Awareness Certifications. Another 56 were trained without certifications.
- Between May and August of 2007, 32 establishments within the Business District in Downtown Wheaton received a door to door intervention.
- Between May and August of 2007, 94% of all establishments approached in Wheaton and Long Branch signed the county code of conduct, agreeing to abide by all alcohol laws and to serve their community responsibly.
- 29 of the 32 restaurants signed the Code of Conduct, a compliance rate of 94%.

Anecdotal Results:

- Over 90% of the Door to Door meetings resulted in the owner/manager adding to the list below:
- Needs/Suggestions: Business owners expressed a need for more Alcohol Awareness Training programs in Spanish, educational materials, signs and posters in Spanish that are easy to interpret and preferably illustrative. They also wanted to see more police patrols working with the business, newsletters in Spanish, county resources for small businesses, removal of intoxicated costumers from streets, list of taxis, and an increase in police responsiveness to calls for service.
- Challenges: The major challenges identified were compliance with laws prohibiting underage service of alcohol, public intoxication and fights in the parking areas or outside of the business. They also mentioned that business was slow due to immigration issues in the area of Wheaton and construction issues.

- During the discussion all agreed to: Conduct ID Checks, offer more food, train their staff, refuse alcohol service to intoxicated customers, refuse alcohol service to minors under the age of 21, work in collaboration with County agencies and Police dept. for the purposes of this program.

For the first time the DLC has seen a shift in attitudes toward government agencies. Recently, Latino establishments have been reaching out to the Department of Liquor Control for technical assistance, resources and help with alcohol related issues. Prior issues of mistrust make this collaborative program a profound success.

The Latino Business Alliance has won the Montgomery County BEST Partnership Award and has been recognized as an award winner by the National Association of Counties (NACO).

Challenges and Lessons Learned

It was found that initially Spanish speaking establishment owners were likely to withhold information on needs and challenges and were much more likely to discuss these topics at the end of the meeting once trust was established.

Ongoing efforts are needed to make a long term impact and to support the new demands of increased outreach to Spanish speaking populations. With the initial outcomes of the Business Alliance it is recommended that statistics be used to secure future funding.

While the Safety Alliance is an extremely valuable resource it would have served the Latino Business Alliance to have Spanish speaking code enforcement more involved in the actual trainings. Due to time restraints, scheduling and coordination proved to be difficult. If the program was to be repeated it would be another component added into the trainings.

Policy building, teaching tactics that work and having the backing of police and code enforcement officials are imperative to future efforts.

Jurisdiction

Trainings were open to all Montgomery County Licensed establishments and their staff but were held in the target areas of the Business District of Wheaton, Long Branch, Silver Spring and the cross roads of Randolph Rd. and Viers Mill Rd. in Rockville.

Funding

In the late summer of 2006 the Maryland Highway Safety Office expressed an interest in server training and especially culturally competent training efforts. A grant for the fiscal year was submitted in October 2006. In March of 2007, the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control was awarded as a pilot program and was granted \$34,500 to plan, implement and evaluate the Montgomery County Business Alliance - Latino Server Training Initiative. The program began in May of 2007 and finished within four months, ending September 28th, 2007.

Spin-off Projects

Localities have been able to continue educational efforts on their own through the established, trusted connections built with the Latino business community. Meetings with coordinators, local police, code enforcement officials, local business owners and volunteers have been ongoing throughout the duration of this program in order to plan the community policing and volunteer Extra Eyes operations, educational efforts, mailings and a media event. Parents who host brochures have been modified to a new campaign titled Adults Who Host Lose the Most and were printed on one page handouts with an English version on one side and a Spanish version on the reverse. These handouts have been distributed to spread a consistent message to adults on Social Host Responsibility. Data collection was done after each activity.

Start Date: 5/1/2007 - 11/4/2008

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