

Gillette looks to improve bar worker training

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GILLETTE, Wyo. (AP) — It takes only four or five hours to train for a bar employee in responsible alcohol serving and it's free. But it can save a business hundreds of dollars in fines should it be caught serving liquor to minors.

The city of Gillette started mandating last year that restaurants with liquor licenses provide alcohol server training for their employees. The same ordinance allowed restaurant servers 18 and older to serve alcoholic beverages.

The measure was meant to make sure the servers are up-to-date in their training and help avoid compliance violations. But a local group, the [Substance Abuse Advisory Council](#), wants to add more stipulations to the ordinance to encourage responsible alcohol serving.

Based on the statistics, the substance abuse council sees value in adding more requirements for alcohol server training. Since 2009 (when the server training for restaurants serving alcohol was voluntary), 29 tickets have been issued to Gillette eateries serving alcohol. Out of those, 21 (or 72 percent of the cases) didn't receive alcohol server training.

The council works with various local agencies to promote the responsible, safe and legal consumption of alcohol and to reduce substance abuse problems in the community. Together with [Gillette Police Department](#), the council offers one of the possible trainings for alcohol servers — Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPs) training.

The council has been considering expanding the requirement so that any establishment with a liquor license would have to maintain records of alcohol training that its employees have taken and extend it to include not just restaurants that serve liquor but packaged liquor stores.

The purpose of the change is to make it easier for the police to verify that the people who are working there have the training they are supposed to have, said [Charlie Anderson](#), city attorney.

"This is just a way of enforcing the training requiring. It's already there," he tells the [Gillette News Record](#) (<http://bit.ly/QMwmgf>).

Police Lt. [Brent Wasson](#) said the measure would help the police department enforce the ordinance.

"That is the portion of the ordinance that we would like to be addressed," he said. "Let's say that we conduct a compliance inspection and we encounter a server that violates the ordinance by providing alcohol to a minor. If the business cannot show us that the employee was trained, if they are not required to document the training, it makes it extremely difficult for us to enforce that portion of the ordinance."

Ultimately, the goal of adopting new requirements would be to reduce alcohol-related crimes.

The group says there is a correlation between having the training and not getting compliance convictions. The council's statistical numbers seem to illustrate that more people without the training get charged with violations than those who had the training.

The training takes four to five hours to complete and the certification is valid for three years. The training is put on by the council and the police department and is free for businesses.

The businesses only are responsible for the time their employees spend at the training.

The change in the ordinance would result in a mandatory responsible alcohol service training for everyone within the city limits that serves alcohol in a business setting. It is hoped that it would help cut the number of alcohol-related violations, including over serving people.

"(Over service) is one of those that are very hard to prove, very hard to ticket," said Spring Wilkins, community prevention professional and one of the coordinators for the Substance Abuse Advisory Council. "The evidence and the research behind the responsible service training is that it helps bartenders and service staff prevent over service that has a trickledown effect in terms of drinking and driving. Another one is serving (alcohol) to minors. We want to take that down. The compliance checks are sort of the snapshot of those violations that there are things like that going on all the time."

Don Edwards, manager at Eastside bar, said the measure would be another effort to control local bars because they tend to get negative reputation just by being bars. But, he added, all his employees receive alcohol service training.

Local bars and eateries and liquor stores have been open to collaborating with the police and the city on the issue of alcohol service training, Wasson said.

"They have been very open to working with us and open to ideas to improve responsible service. I don't think that anyone would say that education is a bad thing. The businesses have been very good to work with. They are aware of their responsibilities and education helps us get there," he added.

Wilkins doesn't believe that local businesses will oppose the changes.

"It doesn't seem to have been an issue with restaurants. For the past year, they have been required to do that and we haven't heard any negative feedback about the business owners being terribly inconvenienced. So I'm hoping that that would be similar," she said.

Councilwoman [Louise Carter-King](#) said it was part of the deal when the City Council decided to lower the age to 18 for servers

"I don't think liquor dealers will have any problem with it because I believe they already do it," she said. "I think all the way around they'd rather be as careful as they can without having to risk either their license or their insurance. I believe it's in their best interest to do this."

Information from: The Gillette (Wyo.) News Record, <http://www.gillettenewsrecord.com>

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