Alcohol-related calls for police service represent a significant – and sometimes the majority – of police calls in Wisconsin communities. Successful efforts to adopt and implement evidence-based alcohol policy needs law enforcement support and involvement. Taking the time to build a positive relationship with local law enforcement agencies is an important step towards the long-term success of your group or coalition. Here’s how:

1. Demonstrate your support. When the Police Department takes action thank them in letters sent to the City Council/Village Board and the local newspaper. Public action deserves public thanks.
   a. Examples include: completed alcohol age compliance checks, breaking up an underage drinking party, or high visibility enforcement actions (saturation patrols).
   b. Also take a moment to send a quick e-mail or voice mail to offer your personal thanks to specific officers who helped you, we all like our work to be appreciated.

2. Before meeting with local law enforcement, research existing local policies to prevent or reduce alcohol misuse. Many communities have online ordinances and a reference copy at the local library. Even very small communities have a copy maintained by the clerk for public use.
   a. A guide to creating an inventory of local alcohol related laws is on the Wisconsin Alcohol Policy Project website.

3. If your group has identified a specific policy or goal, consult law enforcement before taking any action. Coalitions will have a hard time implementing policies or practices that don’t have police support. Police can also help identify obstacles the coalition hasn’t identified and possible solutions. Finally, if you propose policy; support the resources to enforce it. Unenforced ordnances create problems.

4. Make it clear you want to be a partner in efforts to improve the community alcohol environment; every law enforcement agency needs local supporters.
   a. Introduce yourself and your group to law enforcement before you need their help.
   b. Ask for an appointment with the Chief, you may be referred to a different officer but should begin by asking to see the Chief. Law Enforcement agencies are paramilitary organizations, respect their chain of command.
c. Ask for a regular contact, don’t expect an officer to attend every meeting or event but establish a regular pattern of communication so they know your plans even when they can’t attend meetings.

5. Your police contact is your teacher and colleague; learn how large the police service area is and how nearby communities impact your area. Listen carefully, you’ll learn Department priorities and what isn’t a priority. You could learn of alcohol-related problems that aren’t evident from a simple review of the statistics.
   a. Ask open-ended questions and listen; what is the most pressing alcohol-related problem in the community or how many calls for service are alcohol-related? Find out if your research aligns with theirs and, if it doesn’t figure out why.
   b. Learn if (or how) local law enforcement codes alcohol-related calls for service. Alcohol is often a factor in suicide, falls, domestic violence and vandalism. Is that noted on police reports? How? If it isn’t noted, could that be done? Is useful data collected but not compiled?
   c. Gather statistics, examples and anecdotes; then, then learn the narrative that rounds out the picture. For example, a statement that alcohol sales to youth are down by 50% could be followed-up by asking how the estimate was created. Does the community operate regular alcohol age compliance checks and compliance is up? Or has the number of underage drinking citations decreased, perhaps both?