
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

NYC OFFICE OF NIGHTLIFE

ANNUAL REPORT
2022



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Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment
NYC Office Office of Nightlife
Eric Adams, Mayor
Anne del Castillo, Commissioner
June 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Nightlife (ONL) at the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment is a dedicated, non-enforcement liaison between City agencies and the nightlife industry and community, serving owners, workers, performers, patrons and residents for New York City’s 25,000 bars, nightclubs, venues, and restaurants.

ONL was created through Local Law 178 of 2017, following legislation written by former Council Member Rafael Espinal and signed by former Mayor Bill de Blasio. That law requires ONL to conduct outreach, review information on complaints and violations, and issue a report of recommendations for policies and initiatives to strengthen the nightlife industry, along with annual updates. ONL also assists nightlife establishments in navigating City processes, permits, or other requirements, and advises other administration officials and City agencies on trends in the nightlife industry.


Following extensive research, public outreach, case studies, and other research, **ONL released a comprehensive report in 2021** describing how the office was formed, new programs and initiatives, and detailed recommendations. These recommendations represent a series of policy ideas and programmatic initiatives to improve nightlife in NYC and are the result of stakeholder engagement, collaboration with agency partners through the Nightlife Interagency Working Group, and lessons learned from constituent casework.

These nearly two dozen recommendations, which include solutions to challenges that existed long before the pandemic dealt a significant blow to businesses and workers in the nightlife industry. Acknowledging the nightlife sector’s various points of intersection with economic, social, cultural, and community issues, ONL’s overall agenda spans **four principal areas of focus**:

1.0
**SUPPORT BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT
& RECOVERY**




2.0
**IMPROVE
QUALITY OF LIFE**



3.0
**PROMOTE SAFETY,
EQUITY AND HARM
REDUCTION**



4.0
**ELEVATE NIGHTLIFE
CULTURE**



This report is intended to serve as an update on the status of and progress toward the implementation of new initiatives and policy changes recommended by ONL's 2021 report. While much progress has been made, further action remains to implement some of that report's 23 recommendations. ONL's 2021 report was intended as a road map for the future, and the Office continues to work with its partner agencies to advance many of these initiatives.

Now over four years since the creation of the office, New York City has demonstrated leadership in the global movement of nighttime management and governance, which now accounts for nightlife offices and representation in more than 60 cities across the world. ONL communicates regularly with other nightlife managers and municipalities throughout the US, including Austin, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington DC and has advised new representatives in Philadelphia, Atlanta, and New Orleans taking their respective roles in 2022. ONL participated as a contributor to the [Global Nightlife Recovery Plan](#), a collaboration of over 130 practitioners and experts from 70 cities to guide the safe and feasible rebuilding of cities' nighttime economies. As is the case with so many other fields, other cities are looking to New York to see how we are innovating to support this vital sector through the advent of our initiatives and the development of our recommendations.

ONL also continues to work closely with industry partners and advocates, as one of few positive aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the unifying effect it had for the nightlife industry. Many former and current competitors worked together to organize and advocate for their needs with a collective voice, forming new coalitions and advocacy groups. Ongoing partnerships with these coalitions, in addition to continued work with organizations that preceded the pandemic, continue to strengthen the work and voice of the Office of Nightlife.

Mayor Eric Adams and the entire administration are committed to a strong recovery for the nightlife industry, as New York City's recovery will depend in part on this sector that accounted for over \$35 billion in economic activity and supported nearly 300,000 jobs prior to the pandemic, according to the [economic impact study](#) released in 2019. Covid-19 has also taught New Yorkers that nightlife is not a just luxury, but a necessity. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, these recommendations are even more urgent now, as the nightlife industry has come a long way facing unimaginable struggles. New York's venues, and the people who run them, are resilient, and the Office of Nightlife continues to work tirelessly to continue supporting them. The industry is essential not only to our culture and economy, but also our identity to the world and our collective healing, providing us places to gather, and to share in the rich cultural experiences that make New York City the greatest city in the world.



Left: Mayor Eric Adams at the Blue Note Jazz Club in Greenwich Village announcing New York City's suspension of Key to NYC requirements

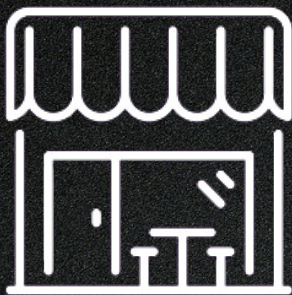


People dancing at a nightlife establishment.

1.0

SUPPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & RECOVERY

The Covid-19 pandemic struck a direct and devastating blow to the nightlife and hospitality sector, disproportionately impacting our social gathering spaces and performance venues. Federal aid in the form of the Paycheck Protection Program, Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), and Shuttered Venue Operators Grants (SVOG) helped provide economic relief necessary to stabilize businesses, and the State's commercial eviction moratorium and Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant provided further support. With operating restrictions lifted in summer 2021, due in part to declining case counts, increased vaccination rates, and the Key to NYC requirement to show proof of vaccination, most businesses were able to resume normal operating activity. Yet challenges persist. Given the scale of the economic challenges the industry faced, nightlife businesses will require ongoing support to make a full recovery.



A **January 2022 report** from the Office of the NY State Comptroller found that New York City lost approximately 3-4% of businesses in the restaurant and arts and entertainment sectors as a result of the pandemic, with data to the second half of 2021. More recent **data for these sectors** from the Comptroller's office shows that jobs in are still down approximately 20% from their pre-pandemic peak. New Yorkers and visitors alike are eager to get back to socializing, to taking in a show or a concert, and spending a night out dancing. There is no substitute, virtual or otherwise, for a night out in New York City. New York City remains open for business, and many nightlife entrepreneurs are beginning to take advantage of new opportunities created by the pandemic, investing in the future of our city and our nightlife ecosystem.









Throughout the pandemic, and now into the recovery, ONL continues to fulfill its mandate to serve as a vital resource to the nightlife community, providing information and guidance through email newsletters, social media communications, and webinars, and representing and amplifying the needs of the industry to decision makers. ONL served as a representative for the nightlife industry in the City's interagency business recovery efforts, as agencies worked in close cooperation to launch emergency programs and initiatives. The City's efforts included the Open Restaurants program for outdoor seating at bars and restaurants, which saved 100,000 industry jobs; the Curtains Up program, which provided free webinars and one-on-one application support for SVOC grants, which provided over \$1.6 billion to 921 NYC venues and promoters; and the Open Culture program for outdoor performances in City streets, which facilitated venues and cultural organizations to host 459 public events through the end of 2021.

ONL also created resources and campaigns to share and explain new rules and regulations in plain language to business owners and the public. This included working with inspection agencies to prepare the "What to Expect When You're Inspected" guidance document focusing on Covid safety compliance, and producing new awareness campaigns such as "It's Up to You, New York" to communicate Covid rules to patrons. Since the start of the pandemic, ONL conducted walking tours to bring information to businesses in all five boroughs, including Astoria, Queens; Bay Ridge and Bushwick, Brooklyn, Port Morris and Hunts Point, Bronx; Inwood, Chelsea, and Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan; and New Dorp, Staten Island.

In August 2021, New York City instituted the Key to NYC requirement for indoor dining, fitness, and entertainment venues to require proof of vaccination from their employees and guests. The Office of Nightlife helped to inform businesses of these requirements through multiple communications channels, including campaigns, newsletters, and webinars, to help facilitate businesses' understanding of their requirements under this life-saving mandate.

ONL has utilized dedicated lines of communication with the nightlife industry to which these businesses had not previously had access. ONL's regular newsletters have received more than 919,067 total opens for over 42,642 subscribers, and its social media channels receive more than 1,000 impressions a day by an audience of over 9,300 followers. As of June 2022, ONL has worked in partnership with City, State and federal agency partners to host over 40 virtual "Town Calls" for more than 20,450 people in the nightlife community, including business owners, workers, and performers. These webinars have convened government officials and subject matter experts and advocates together to share resources and information about new programs and regulations, and helped nightlife businesses and workers get answers to common questions.

Since 2021, recent webinar topics have included:

-  **NARCAN Behind Every Bar: Naloxone Training (June 2, 2022)**
Harm reduction tips and training for nightlife businesses, security, and staff from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
-  **COVID SAFETY: De-Escalation Tips for Public Engagement (April 21, 2022)**
Pragmatic and mindful de-escalation tactics in light of the suspensions of the Key to NYC vaccine mandate from the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution
-  **Promoting Your Nightlife Business with NYC & Company (March 16, 2022)**
Providing access to membership benefits with a 50% discount for nightlife venues from NYC & Company
-  **Town Call for Nightlife / Hospitality / Entertainment Workers (February 22, 2022)**
Information about unemployment insurance, free tax prep and financial counseling, freelance worker labor laws, tenant rights and resources, accessing the health insurance marketplace, public assistance benefits and more from multiple City and State agencies
-  **NARCAN Behind Every Bar: Naloxone Training Webinar (December 16, 2021)**
Harm reduction tips and training for nightlife businesses, security, and staff from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
-  **Key to NYC: Presentation and Q&A Webinar (September 22, 2021)**
Updates and Q&A about the City's vaccination mandate, including program rules, details about employee and guest accommodations and enforcement protocol
-  **Key to NYC: Conflict Resolution for Businesses (August 24, 2021)**
Conflict resolution tips for businesses and workers to assist with new vaccination rules from the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution
-  **ELEVATE Nightlife Mental Health Forum (June 23, 2021)**
Announcing a new initiative to provide mental health services and resources to workers in an industry on the frontlines to the city's re-opening



Left: Examples of graphics used to promote virtual webinars



Above: Example of MASH program promotional material

Multi-Agency Support for Hospitality (MASH)

ONL supports nightlife businesses through individual casework and constituent services, providing a personalized, dedicated line of communication for people in the nightlife industry to resolve issues and get answers to questions. Following the conclusion of the Five-Borough Listening Tour, ONL developed a dedicated Nightlife Interagency Working Group, convening more than a dozen City agencies and the NY State Liquor Authority on an ongoing basis to review how the industry interacts with City and State government, and how the agencies interact with each other in relation to the industry.

This Working Group formed the basis for an approach to problem solving known as **MASH**, or Multi-Agency Support for Hospitality. ONL works closely with agency partners to help manage individual casework, which includes helping nightlife businesses navigate City agencies. It also includes crisis management response for venues that are facing some form of threat or other emergency, helping to coordinate and expedite support from City services and resources and offer a central point of contact for venues.

Venue owners, managers, staff, performers, and patrons can contact the Office of Nightlife through email, phone, or social media to request assistance with an issue or problem. To protect the privacy of business owners and others in nightlife who reach out for assistance, as well as to build trust within the industry, ONL works hard to keep these cases confidential, and provides as much identifying information as is necessary to address the issue, and only with the consent of the inquiring party. Since its inception, ONL and the Nightlife Interagency Working Group partners have helped address and resolve more than 725 cases through the MASH approach, helping businesses to open and operate safely and navigate challenging compliance issues.

Transparency for Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotspots (MARCH) Operations

Through Local Law 220 of 2019, ONL is responsible for publishing [semi-annual reports of Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotspots operations](#), otherwise known as MARCH. ONL works with the participating City agencies to create a centralized reporting system to provide information to the public about these operations’ frequency, locations, and results. Historically, there had been no centralized data collection or analysis for these inspections, and these reports provide an opportunity for the public to better understand and evaluate MARCH. The first report covered the period of January-June 2020, but Covid-related closures meant that there was a pause in MARCH operations for more than a year, which has meant that the data available to date has been relatively limited.

The transparency legislation also now requires nightlife establishments to receive written notification from NYPD at least 30 days prior to any MARCH operation, with an opportunity to rectify the conditions and potentially avoid a MARCH by contacting their local precinct or the Office of Nightlife. Since MARCH operations have resumed as the pandemic has receded, ONL has received inquiries from venues and their representatives about potential MARCH operations at their establishment. ONL also regularly attends each NYPD patrol borough’s quarterly nightlife meetings, to inform business operators how they can work with the Office of Nightlife, including what to do should they receive a MARCH notification. These notification letters, which provide an opportunity to work cooperatively with local precincts and the Office of Nightlife to achieve compliance, has helped reduce the number of MARCH operations overall.

The following is a summary of the data from most recent six-month periods during which MARCH operations were conducted:

	Q1 and Q2 2020	Q3 and Q4 2021
No. of venues inspected	23	11
Average length of inspection	98 minutes	83 minutes
Average No. of inspectors	17	17.2
Average No. of summonses	5.2	5.2
Location of venues inspected	Bronx (8) Queens (9) Manhattan (3) Brooklyn (1) Staten Island (2)	Bronx (3) Queens (2) Manhattan (6) Brooklyn (0) Staten Island (0)

Other Initiatives and Recommendations

The Adams administration is working hard to support businesses, especially those in the nightlife industry, with new policies and initiatives to reduce fines and improve the ways that business operators interact with City processes. Many of these initiatives build on recommendations made in ONL's 2021 report, and much progress is underway implementing those recommendations (see table on p. 12).

ONL's research and public engagement found that businesses regularly cited challenges with navigating City permitting and licensing processes, asking the City to create a single, centralized location to coordinate multi-agency plan review, permitting, inspections, and related processes (ONL recommendation 1.1). The City has already made significant progress to address these challenges in the last year. In summer 2021, SBS introduced NYC Business Quick Start to help small businesses navigate permitting and licensing.

In March 2021, Mayor Adams's [Blueprint for Economic Recovery](#) announced plans to build on this approach by streamlining agency inspections, reviews, and approvals and launching an interagency small business express service to cut business opening times in half. In summer 2022, the City will convene a new Business Portal Working Group to begin this work in order to launch a new, one-stop-shop online business portal, where businesses can track interactions with the City in real time, including filings, permits, and inspections. This initiative will support a recovering nightlife economy by accelerating business starts and business licensing so that businesses are not wasting time and money while waiting in limbo.

Another challenge that the nightlife community raised was the need to expand cure periods for issues that do not pose immediate life safety hazards, to give businesses the opportunity to get into compliance without paying fines (ONL recommendation 1.4). In his first week in office, Mayor Adams announced a new initiative to do just that, directing regulatory agencies via [Executive Order 2](#) to review all fines and violations within six months and recommend specific cuts or revisions. That multi-agency review culminated in the [Small Business Forward report](#), outlining plans for reforms to 118 City regulations. These changes include the full repeal of 30 provisions, the reduction of civil penalties associated with 49 provisions, and amendments to 39 provisions to include a first-time warning or cure period or to extend an existing cure period.

The Mayor's Blueprint also addressed challenges that nightlife business face in the liquor licensing process, announcing the suspension of the City's liquor license surcharge for one year and recommending standardized processes and applications for Community Board advisory review (ONL recommendation 1.6). ONL is now working with Borough Presidents, liquor licensing attorneys, and Community Board representatives to draft universal questionnaires, processes, and resolutions for Boards to adopt. This effort will improve predictability and expectations throughout the process, from industry applicants to Community Board meetings to State Liquor Authority review, as well as help reduce excessive stipulations and restrictions on arts and culture.

Recommendations and Status Updates

The following table is a status update on progress toward implementation of recommendations to Support Business Development and Recovery in ONL's 2021 report.

1.0 SUPPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & RECOVERY			
#	2021 Recommendation	Description	2022 Status Update
1.1	Streamline processes through one-stop for multi-agency permitting, inspections, and support	Create a single, centralized location to coordinate multi-agency plan review, permitting, inspections, and related processes for hospitality and nightlife businesses	The City established a new interagency working group beginning summer 2022 to streamline and accelerate business processes and openings, and launch the City's one-stop-shop online business portal. Intro 0116-2022 would formally establish the One-Stop Shop NYC Business Portal.
1.2	Launch "Night School" workshops for business operations, best practices, and workplace rights	Create training sessions offering information about rights and agency procedures	ONL is working with industry advocates, agency partners, and other experts to create a webinar series geared toward opening and operating nightlife businesses, with curriculum including avoiding common violations, hiring practices, community relations, and liquor licensing processes..
1.3	Establish process to evaluate and address complaints about venues	Enhance protocol to address chronic quality of life complaints and encourage participation in MEND NYC mediation services	311 now provides referrals to MEND NYC to New Yorkers with complaints related to nightlife establishments..
1.4	Reduce impact of "curable" violations and redundant penalties	Work with enforcement agencies to expand "cure periods" for minor violations and reduce rules that discourage businesses from self-reporting emergency incidents	The Small Business Forward initiative established by Executive Order 2 outlines reforms for 118 business violations to be repealed, reduced, or allowed to be "cured" prior to violations. Changes to policy.
1.5	Study effects of commercial rent and long-term vacancies on businesses	Ensure nightlife businesses are represented in efforts to study and implement commercial rent control; consider measures to prevent vacancies	The administration is working to advance policies to ensure affordability for small businesses and will continue to work the Council to do so.
1.6	Encourage standard community board processes and applications for liquor licensing	Develop standardized questionnaires and processes for liquor licensing review and advocate for expanded participation of nightlife operators on community board licensing committees	ONL is working with Borough Presidents to develop universal processes, questionnaires, and resolutions for liquor license review at community boards to make the application process quicker and fairer and reduce excessive stipulations and restrictions on arts and culture.
1.7	Advocate for amended "tied house" law in New York State	Help change State law to allow greater flexibility for manufacturers and distributors to offer financial contributions to licensed establishments	Former Governor Cuomo included reformation of the NYS Tied House Law on his 2020 State of the State agenda, but was paused due to the pandemic. We will reengage with the State partners to discuss.



View of a mixed use commercial and residential street in New York City at night.

2.0

IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE



In a city of more than eight million people, New Yorkers experience the benefits and challenges of sharing space with friends, neighbors, and visitors on a daily basis. Sometimes, that proximity can lead to issues or conflicts between various parties – including, but not limited to nightlife venues. The Office of Nightlife is committed to ensuring that all New Yorkers can have good quality of life, and has implemented new programs and initiatives to help resolve issues between nightlife establishments and their neighbors before those concerns escalate to enforcement.

Mediating Establishment Neighborhood Disputes (MEND NYC)

The Office of Nightlife has worked to implement a new, alternative approach to quality of life disputes involving nightlife establishments, working with the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings' Center for Creative Conflict Resolution to launch **MEND NYC**, which stands for Mediating Establishment and Neighborhood Disputes. Many enforcement actions against nightlife venues can often take place as the result of accumulated community complaints, and frequently those complaints can be the result of one or two neighboring individuals. The MEND NYC program works to provide free mediation for nightlife venues and their neighbors, bringing together both parties with a neutral, third-party mediator to resolve disputes through direct communication and compromise. The objective of MEND NYC is for venues and residents to establish long-term relationships, helping New Yorkers co-exist, before issues escalate to the need for enforcement. The program addresses quality of life while also ensuring that small businesses are supported and can thrive.

Since its inception, there have been 531 total inquiries to MEND NYC, and 41 successful completed mediations, resolving 80% of all cases that moved to the mediation process.

The following table shows additional detail for MEND NYC inquiries, cases, and resolution:

STATUS	NUMBER
Total inquiries	531
Eligible inquiries	293
Ineligible and referred to other services	238
Successfully resolved	41
Successfully resolved (%)	80%
Total currently open	14
In mediation	9
Open for intake (no parties have yet agreed to mediate)	3
Seeking second party's agreement (one party has agreed to mediate)	2
Mediation unsuccessful	8

The program now has multiple avenues for New Yorkers to make a referral. New Yorkers who contact 311 with complaints related to a nightlife establishment are informed about the option of the MEND NYC program, and if they choose to proceed, they will be contacted by a MEND NYC representative for case development and intake. Information about MEND NYC mediation options are also available on the 311 app and website, and an inquiry form is available on the MEND NYC website. DEP also includes information about MEND NYC in their letters to complainants requesting inspection for neighboring nightlife establishments.

MEND NYC regularly receives referrals and works in partnership with NYPD NCO officers, Community Board members and district managers, State Liquor Authority inspectors, and elected officials, and ONL regularly conducts outreach to these groups to make them aware of the MEND NYC program’s offerings. Additional efforts to raise awareness the MEND NYC non-enforcement solution to help resolve quality of life issues include campaigns on bus shelters and LinkNYC kiosks as well as informational videos and graphics on social media.



Above: MEND NYC campaign graphics on LinkNYC kiosks citywide



Other Initiatives and Recommendations

One common-sense solution that ONL has frequently observed as a potential solution for sound issues between nightlife venues and their neighbors includes the installation of new double- or triple-paned windows. In some cases, this can involve retroactive solutions for older buildings, either at the venue itself or in the residential unit, and can be installed by landlords, venue owners, or residents themselves. For future development, additional soundproofing measures could be improved citywide with the adoption of the “agent of change” principle (ONL recommendation 2.2).

ONL has also worked to help resolve district-wide quality of life issues. In October 2019, ONL launched the [Lower East Side Quality of Life Improvement pilot program](#), in cooperation with the Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Sanitation (DSNY), the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) and the Lower East Side Partnership. This multi-agency plan worked to improve quality of life in one of the city’s densest nightlife districts, by reorienting City services to address the conditions that are unique to life at night. Implemented prior to the pandemic, this pilot program served as a model during the pandemic for the Commercial District Recovery Safety Plan (CDRSP), a multi-agency, coordinated approach to address quality of life concerns in commercial districts led by the Recovery Office and SBS Neighborhood Development from May to December 2021. These regular, geographically specific meetings brought City agencies and Business Improvement District (BID) Directors together for a one-stop-shop to discuss and address specific issues in their neighborhoods.

In response to CDRSP meetings, many agencies partnered with BIDs to conduct educational walk-throughs in their districts, joint enforcement operations (e.g. vending), clean-ups (e.g. illegal dumping and homeless encampments), and adjustments to City services (e.g. sanitation pick-ups, enforcement). In a feedback survey in January 2022, participants rated their ease of dealing with various NYC agencies to solve district problems at 2.54 before CDRSP and 3.6 after CDRSP, representing a 42% increase. More than half said that they now have the City agency contacts that they need to solve day-to-day problems, and nearly 75% of respondents said that CDRSP would still be useful if continued in the same format in 2022.

Recommendations and Status Updates

The following table is a status update on progress toward implementation of recommendations to Improve Quality of Life in ONL's 2021 report.

2.0 IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE			
#	2021 Recommendation	Description	2022 Status Update
2.1	Implement street ambassadors program	City to introduce supplemental non-enforcement hospitality personnel to welcome, educate, and monitor patrons in high-traffic entertainment areas	The City Clean Up Corps: Hosts pilot program was launched in summer 2021 to residents and tourists to high-traffic commercial corridors, share information on COVID protocols, and report on any potential issues to other units as necessary, serving approximately 15 locations weekly, through November 2021.
2.2	Implement policy to improve conditions that cause complaints from new residential developments near existing venues	Support "Agent of Change" policies that would require improved soundproofing and other measures within new developments near existing nightlife venues	A bill that would implement the "Agent of Change" principle was introduced in 2018. Intro 1119-2018 would amend the building code by establishing soundproofing requirements. Although no subsequent legislation has been introduced, ONL will continue to support this principle going forward.
2.3	Create incentives for soundproofing	Develop financing mechanisms to support nightlife businesses to improve soundproofing measures to mitigate sound disturbances between nightlife venues and neighbors	Action toward implementing this recommendation would follow from any implementation of recommendation 2.2, for "agent of change" policies that require improved soundproofing.
2.4	Introduce Sunday waste removal services to address Saturday nightlife activity	Increase sanitation services such as street sweepers and litter removal in concentrated nightlife areas on Sunday mornings	Discussions regarding expanded operations are ongoing with the relevant agencies.
2.5	Coordinate for-hire vehicle pickups in nightlife areas	Work with ride-sharing companies to explore a curb space management system to better coordinate vehicle pickups in areas with dense nightlife activity	Action toward implementing this recommendation is currently on hold.



Executive Director Ariel Palitz with venue owner promoting Party Safety campaign during Pride Month

3.0

PROMOTE SAFETY, EQUITY & HARM REDUCTION



Nightlife venues are increasingly should be places where everyone - management, staff, performers, and patrons - looks out for each other, helping to prevent or stop unwanted behavior or reduce harm when necessary. Many promoters, establishments, and advocates have continued to raise expectations for how everyone in nightlife can feel safe, and ONL has worked with partners inside and outside government to advance policies that promote safety, equity, and harm reduction.

NARCAN® Behind Every Bar

The consumption of alcohol and other drugs in nightlife spaces can come with certain risks, but there are many harm reduction strategies and best practices available for venue staff to enact to keep patrons safe. Adopting a harm reduction approach to substance use is increasingly urgent with the prevalence of fentanyl in cocaine and other drugs resulting in opioid overdoses. In 2020, there were 2,062 overdose deaths in New York City. While more than two-thirds of overdose deaths occurred in private homes, and less than 1% of overdose deaths occurred in bars, clubs, or other nightlife venues, the nightlife community can be called upon as partners our collective efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.

Since its inception in 2018, ONL has worked closely with DOHMH to promote its harm reduction initiatives and help nightlife venues get access to tools and tactics that utilized to reduce the risks of harm for people who use drugs and ultimately save lives. In 2018 and 2019, ONL partnered DOHMH on its “Using Cocaine?” initiative, conducting outreach to nightlife venues to educate staff about the presence of fentanyl in cocaine, train staff and patrons to respond to overdoses, and provide venues with naloxone kits and preventive messaging.

In December 2021, ONL and DOHMH expanded these harm reduction efforts through the launch of the “**NARCAN® Behind Every Bar**” campaign, which includes webinars for nightlife workers to get trained in overdose response and receive free naloxone kits. Trainings and kits distribution are regularly available via DOHMH, and this campaign promotes these free resources to nightlife venues and promotes, staff, and security companies to bring further awareness. Across multiple webinars, over 330 attendees have received training in administering naloxone, more than 100 have requested kits, and more than 425 have been mailed to nightlife establishments.

Part of this campaign involves helping to educate venue operators and staff that harm reduction tools such as NARCAN® or fentanyl test strips are not considered drug paraphernalia under NY State law and therefore are legal to possess, use, and distribute. ONL works to prevent harmful stigmatization of nightlife that has historically taken place over the last several decades, coordinating with enforcement agencies to ensure that these tools are not seen as further stigmatizing a venue, but instead something that they should have available to save lives and protect public health, similar to the distribution of free condoms or the possession of a CPR kit. ONL and DOHMH encourage nightlife venues and promoters who wish to take advantage of these tools that they can do so without penalty.



Left: Example of NARCAN® Behind Every Bar campaign promotional graphics

ELEVATE Nightlife Mental Health Initiative

Mental health struggles have long been prevalent in the nightlife industry, with late hours and high-volume, high-energy environments. The pandemic compounded the stress of working in venues, and magnified the pressures on this industry and its workers. For many workers and performers, the sudden loss of wages and performance opportunities, and the uncertainty about the future had a profound effect on the livelihood and wellbeing of this industry's workers. Many experienced sudden unemployment, loss of income exposure to illness, and many others the grief of lost friends and colleagues.

In September 2021, ONL partnered with the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH), and a non-profit called Backline Care to launch the **ELEVATE Nightlife Mental Health Initiative**. The Elevate initiative addresses the collective trauma in an industry that remains on the frontlines of the city's recovery, offering free weekly group sessions for anyone working in nightlife and hospitality, every Monday at 4pm. The initiative also offers free one-on-one case management to help nightlife workers develop a personalized mental health plan and connect to low-cost, sliding scale service providers. More than 150 members of NYC's nightlife community have joined these weekly online support groups and worked with case managers to create their own personalized mental health plans.



Above: Example of ELEVATE Nightlife Mental Health Initiative promotional graphics

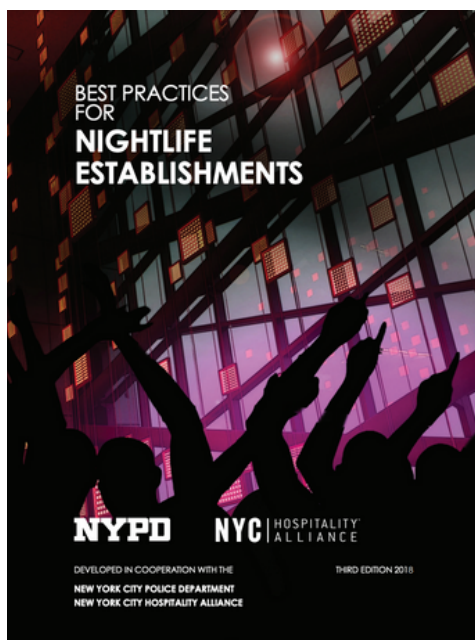
Other Initiatives and Recommendations

In the wake of some recent incidents that have occurred highlighting safety risks in nightlife venues, both in New York City as well as in other cities around the world, ONL continues to listen to the community about their concerns and ideas. ONL is currently drafting a guidance checklist for “Safer Spaces: Crisis Prevention and Response Tips.” These checklists, corresponding to ONL recommendation 3.2 (see table on p.24) will help proactively prepare bar, club, restaurant, and nightlife venue staff in case an incident were to happen in the venue, providing harm reduction and emergency planning strategies to keep employees and guests safe, and for venues to use in their employee training and handbooks.

These tips are not intended to be comprehensive, but rather a series of helpful checklists and links to more detailed resources for venue operators to consult, addressing:

- Venue security, counter-terrorism planning, and active/mass shooter preparedness
- Fire, flood, or other & extreme weather incidents that require evacuation
- Alcohol and drug safety, and other health and wellness issues
- Consent awareness, sexual assault prevention, and preventing discrimination and harassment
- Addressing quality of life issues and complaints

This guidance is expected to be released in summer 2022. ONL is also working with NYPD and the NYC Hospitality Alliance to update the [Best Practices for Nightlife Establishments](#), currently in its third edition, to incorporate additional strategies to minimize, prevent, and respond to safety and quality of issues.



Left: Cover of the 2018 NYPD Best Practices for Nightlife Establishments Third Edition

Recommendations and Status Updates

The following table is a status update on progress toward implementation of recommendations to Promote Safety, Equity, and Harm Reduction in ONL's 2021 report.

3.0 PROMOTE SAFETY, EQUITY & HARM REDUCTION			
#	2021 Recommendation	Description	2022 Status Update
3.1	Address concerns regarding inequities by race, gender, and sexual identity inequities in enforcement	Host round-table discussions and facilitate implicit bias trainings to address concerns that enforcement actions disproportionately target marginalized groups	ONL is working with agency partners to convene round-table discussions with community advocates and leaders toward the development of a "bill of rights" for fairness in nightlife.
3.2	Promote equity and fairness through best practices, guidance, and campaigns for safer nightlife spaces	Work with advocates to develop programs that advance safe and fair nightlife spaces, including campaigns and bystander training to promote consent awareness, reduce harassment, and improve equity in booking, hiring, and guest accommodations	ONL is working with advocates and agency partners to develop safety preparedness and response checklists for staff and security, including bystander trainings, exit strategies, and other tips for release in summer 2022.
3.3	Advance public health through a harm reduction approach to substance use	Host dedicated conversations and develop policies that bring harm reduction initiatives to the broader nightlife community, working with City agencies and advocates to implement training, testing, and distribution of educational materials	ONL and DOHMH launched the NARCAN® Behind Every Bar campaign in December 2021, advancing harm reduction by promoting messaging and holding webinars for nightlife venues and staff to receive training in overdose prevention and response, and obtain free naloxone kits to use in their venues and learn about the use of and distribution of fentanyl test strips.
3.4	Promote mental health awareness in nightlife spaces through "Thrive at Night" program	Expand ThriveNYC programming to nightlife spaces	ONL partnered with the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, formerly known as ThriveNYC, and the non-profit Backline Care to launch the Elevate Nightlife Mental Health Initiative in September 2021. The initiative provides nightlife workers with free, weekly online support groups and access to case managers to create affordable, personalized mental health plans.



People dancing at Lincoln Center's 'The Oasis' outdoor dance floor featuring a 30ft disco ball in New York City.

4.0

ELEVATE NIGHTLIFE CULTURE



Nightlife is at the core of NYC's cultural identity, and the Office of Nightlife continues to work toward new policies and programs to support creative spaces and the New Yorkers who work and perform in them. ONL's approach acknowledges that nightlife has historically been viewed as a liability, rather than an asset, and its efforts aim to reframe this perception with the public and across all levels of government.

“Dance, Dance Resolution”

The Office of Nightlife was established around the same time as the repeal of the Cabaret Law, an effort led by grassroots activists who worked hard to undo a Prohibition-era statute prohibiting social dancing without a license, which was historically used to criminalize venues patronized by marginalized groups. Reforming this law represented a significant victory for NYC’s nightlife community, but restrictions on dancing remained embedded in the City’s zoning codes.

In June 2022, [Mayor Adams announced](#) that DCP would be advancing three citywide zoning reforms as part of his vision for New York to become a more inclusive, equitable “City of Yes.” The first proposed citywide zoning text amendment – known as Zoning for Economic Opportunity – includes a provision that would remove the current restrictions on dancing, completing the unfinished business from the efforts to roll back the antiquated Cabaret Law (ONL recommendation 4.2).



Above: Executive Director Ariel Palitz delivering opening remarks at Lincoln Center’s ‘The Oasis’ outdoor dance floor, June 1, 2022

Other Initiatives and Recommendations

Many independent or DIY event producers have cited significant challenges about the costs necessary to comply with processes to host temporary events and programming. Applications must include plans prepared by architects and expeditors who charge fees numbering thousands of dollars, which many smaller and culturally-focused promoters cannot afford. This drives unlicensed events “underground” into informal spaces and can lead to increased risks. The pandemic’s reorientation of commercial spaces has yielded new opportunities, leading to increased demand for temporary, pop-up, and short-term uses in new spaces. ONL is currently working to reduce the time and cost to host one-off cultural events through creating a new, faster process to facilitate use of space for small arts, entertainment, and nightlife activity and reduce barriers to entry for small-scale event producers (ONL recommendation 4.1).

ONL also continues to explore an initiative outlined in its 2021 report to evaluate the viability, fitness, and economic opportunities for a 24-hour district pilot program in select districts with few residents (ONL recommendation 4.5). Through preliminary research, ONL is working to identify areas for further study, where 24-hour use might be appropriate to bring existing after-hours activity out of the shadows, reduce quality of life impacts and conflicts, and create a draw for global tourism. Additional criteria for further evaluation include use type and building type, business mix, access to transportation, sound issues, and other population demographics.

Recommendations and Status Updates

The following table is a status update on progress toward implementation of recommendations to Elevate Nightlife Culture in ONL's 2021 report.

4.0 ELEVATE NIGHTLIFE CULTURE			
#	2021 Recommendation	Description	2022 Status Update
4.1	Establish alternative temporary use process for small or “do-it-yourself” (DIY) cultural events	Develop a program to help facilitate temporary cultural uses and performances	ONL is drafting a proposal to create a new, faster process to facilitate use of space for small arts, entertainment, and nightlife activity, reducing the time and cost to host one-off cultural events.
4.2	Ensure safety and compliance in cultural spaces	Help unpermitted nightlife spaces become compliant with necessary permitting to protect health and safety	Action toward implementing this recommendation would follow from any implementation of recommendation 4.1, for improved processes for DIY events.
4.3	Improve affordability for DIY spaces and promoters to host safe, legal events	Create a pool of low-cost, pre-approved professionals to expedite permitting processes and explore new financing mechanisms for physical improvements	Action toward implementing this recommendation would follow from any implementation of recommendation 4.2, for compliance assistance for unpermitted spaces.
4.4	Explore changes to zoning language to support and expand live music and social dancing uses	Explore changes to the Zoning Resolution and Building Code language to improve consistency in enforcement for venues that host live music and social dancing	In June 2022, Mayor Adams proposed a the “City of Yes” package of citywide zoning text amendments. The first of those plans – known as Zoning for Economic Opportunity – includes a provision that would reform the zoning code’s current restrictions on dancing. DCP and other partner agencies are currently working to advance these efforts.
4.5	Explore allowing 24-hour use in select neighborhoods	Evaluate opportunities to expand 24-hour nightlife activity in appropriate locations	ONL is developing selection criteria and other parameters for evaluating different potential areas where 24-hour pilot areas might be established.
4.6	Explore dedicating city assets for new cultural venues	Explore use of underutilized sites to develop legal and code-compliant spaces that can be used to support a variety of short and long-term cultural programming	Action toward implementing this recommendation is currently on hold.
4.7	Promote and preserve New York nightlife’s cultural history	Explore the development of an archive cultural institution or museum for New York nightlife memorabilia, to highlight a diverse history and re-frame nightlife as a cultural driver for the City	Action toward implementing this recommendation is currently on hold.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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