



2025 Annual Report

Office of Nightlife, NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS)

18 May 2025

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

The Office of Nightlife (ONL) at the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) is a non-enforcement liaison between City agencies and the nightlife industry, serving its community of business owners, workers, performers, patrons and residents in New York City's bars, nightclubs, performance venues, and restaurants.

ONL was created through Local Law 178 of 2017. That law requires ONL to conduct outreach, review information on complaints and violations, and issue a report on the activities and recommendations of the office.

NYC nightlife is essential not only to our culture and economy but forms a critical aspect of our identity to the world. Our nightlife venues also strengthen our collective well-being, providing us places to gather and to take advantage of the unparalleled cultural offerings that make New York City great.

Acknowledging the nightlife sector's various points of intersection with economic, social, cultural, and community issues, ONL's overall agenda continues to bridge four distinct areas of focus:

- 1) Support Business Development
- 2) Improve Quality of Life
- 3) Promote Safety, Equity, and Harm Reduction
- 4) Elevate Nightlife Culture

ONL continues to work to support the industry through program support, policy advocacy, and problem solving. The team works closely with industry partners, advocates, and local communities to support nightlife businesses and balance quality of life. ONL remains firmly committed to supporting business into compliance before enforcement becomes necessary.

Since transferring to SBS in November 2023, ONL has worked to expand its focus on outreach to marginalized communities, broadening the team's reach to neighborhoods across every corner of New York City. This has included meeting with businesses as well as Community Boards, chambers of commerce, advocacy organizations, police precincts, neighborhood associations, and other civic leaders in every borough. Under the leadership of Executive Director Jeffrey Garcia, ONL has expanded its outreach across all boroughs and deepened its partnerships with regulatory agencies.

Since ONL's formation, NYC has become a leader in the growing movement of urban nightlife advocacy, now numbering nearly 100 major cities across every continent.

1.0 SUPPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CURE Initiative

In December 2023, the administration announced an initiative to address issues and incidents at nightlife establishments and replace Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotspots (MARCH) operations with a new, education-first approach known as CURE, or Coordinating a United Resolution with Establishments.

The goal of CURE is to inform businesses about community concerns, complaints, and potential violations, and educating them with practical steps they can take to resolve the conditions. As such, ONL helps businesses avoid unnecessary fines, violations, or liquor license suspensions. CURE helps businesses develop solutions and provides multiple opportunities to resolve problems. ONL works with NYPD and other enforcement agencies to ensure that nightlife businesses have an opportunity to correct issues and conditions before multi-agency inspection operations are initiated.

When working with CURE referrals initiated by NYPD, ONL meets with the precinct leadership and venue management to identify issues, provide recommendations for mitigation, and share information about available resources, training, programs, and initiatives to enhance safety and compliance. A business's failure to take steps to adopt recommendations made through the CURE process can result in a multi-agency operation conducted by NYPD and other enforcement agencies.

In recent years under the MARCH protocol, an average of 17 inspectors from multiple agencies would visit an establishment for over 80 minutes and issue an average of approximately six summonses, resulting in upwards of \$10,000 in city-levied fines, fees, and penalties. Those inspections occurred at peak hours and could result in significant lost revenue as many patrons leave for the night, sometimes forgoing open checks. In many cases, this "all-of-the-above" approach to enforcement was not directly effective at solving root causes such as security measures. Now as part of the CURE process, ONL regularly makes referrals to SBS's NYC Business Express Service Team (NYC BEST) and communicates with the business to provide support throughout NYC BEST's compliance consultations, which help to identify and prevent potential violations from other city agencies including FDNY, DOB, and DOHMH.

As of May 13, 2025, NYPD has initiated 171 CURE referrals to ONL to support nightlife businesses experiencing public safety incidents and quality of life complaints. An additional 97 CURE referrals for support from ONL have been made by other agencies, elected officials, and community boards.

In most cases, the business owners have cooperated with the process and taken steps to implement recommendations involving security procedures and notification to NYPD of incidents or upcoming large events. Under the previous MARCH protocol, many of the businesses referred by NYPD could have faced a costly and disruptive multi-agency inspection. To date, only five venues have demonstrated significant non-cooperation with the CURE process and been subject to a multi-agency inspection operation initiated by NYPD, with two taking place in 2024 and three in 2025.

The CURE process is helping to guide more than 100 businesses into compliance and improve their operational practices. ONL continues to encourage CURE referrals for businesses that are experiencing issues or incidents that may not necessarily require urgent action to prevent incidents of violence from occurring. This process gives businesses concrete opportunities to correct issues before enforcement becomes necessary.

To help build awareness of this initiative across both the nightlife business community as well as NYPD officers, ONL has attended quarterly nightlife meetings held by borough commands in every borough, and also worked with precinct commanders to convene nightlife business operators within each borough, addressing local concerns and promoting ONL and SBS services.

Continuing to Engage Nightlife Business Owners

In April 2025, Mayor Adams and ONL Executive Director Garcia convened the second nightlife industry mayoral roundtable at a nightlife business in the Bronx, bringing together more 70 venue owners, promoters, advocates, and other industry leaders from across the city.

The meeting was an opportunity for senior administration officials and to hear feedback, issues, and ideas from the industry for how to continue to tackle ongoing challenges. Business owners raised concerns including rising cost of insurance, fears of reduced tourism to NYC, challenges with limitations on liquor license hours of operation, impacts from agency inspections, and shared ideas for improving ways to navigate government regulatory processes.

ONL has also engaged business owners in their neighborhoods across the city, presenting at workshops and local convenings hosted by organizations such as Queens Together, NYS Latino Restaurant, Bar & Lounge Association, Brooklyn Allied Bars and Restaurants, NYC Nightlife United, Neighborhood Venue Alliance, and the NYC Hospitality Alliance.

On May 28, 2025, on the eve of the second annual Small Business Expo, ONL will host the [2025 State of NYC Nightlife Town Hall](#) meeting. This public event will bring together nightlife business owners, workers, community members, and city agencies. This forum will be an opportunity for the city to share progress on key initiatives impacting the nightlife industry, and hear directly from the community about their challenges, questions, feedback, and suggestions, to help shape the future of NYC's world-class nightlife industry.

2.0 IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

ONL is committed to ensuring that NYC's nightlife operators can thrive while ensuring good quality of life in their neighborhoods. New Yorkers are accustomed to sharing space in many aspects of daily life, and ONL works tirelessly to assist venues and their neighbors can similarly coexist. ONL has implemented initiatives to help resolve issues between nightlife establishments and their neighbors before those concerns escalate to enforcement.

MEND NYC Mediation

The Office of Nightlife worked with the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings' Center for Creative Conflict Resolution to create [MEND NYC](#), or Mediating Establishment and Neighborhood Disputes to provide free mediation for nightlife venues and their neighbors.

MEND NYC is an alternative approach to quality-of-life disputes involving nightlife establishments, 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, collaborating to resolve quality of life issues involving sound, crowd management, waste removal, or other similar impacts.

As of May 1, 2025, MEND NYC had completed 94 successful mediations, resolving 86% 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	1333
Eligible inquiries	840
Ineligible and referred to other services	493
Successfully resolved	94
Successfully resolved (%)	86%
Total currently open	18
Open for intake (no parties have yet agreed to mediate)	9
Seeking second party's agreement (one party has agreed to mediate)	3

In mediation (including cases already scheduled and in process of being scheduled)	6
Mediation unsuccessful	15

The program 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. An inquiry form is also available on the MEND NYC website. The program also regularly receives referrals and works in partnership with NYPD officers, Community Boards, State Liquor Authority inspectors, and elected officials. ONL regularly conducts outreach to these groups to make them aware of the MEND NYC program's offerings, including numerous meetings with Community Boards, Borough service cabinet meetings, borough board meetings, and similar forums.

3.0 PROMOTE SAFETY, EQUITY & HARM REDUCTION

New Yorkers look to nightlife venues as spaces that influence and impact our well-being. Nightlife staff work hard to keep patrons safe, ensuring that people can gather and socialize while looking out for each other. ONL prioritizes the safety and well-being of the nightlife community through initiatives and policies that promote harm reduction, promote “safer spaces” approaches to prevent harassment and discrimination, and provide readiness strategies for emergency situations.

NITE SCHOOL

Enhance Venue Security: From Door to Dance Floor

The security of nightlife venues is more important than ever, and ONL works to ensure that business owners and security teams can take advantage of resources and trainings to best prepare their establishments for incidents. In April 2025, as part of its NITE School Nightlife Industry Training and Education series, ONL hosted “Enhance Venue Security: Door to Dancefloor,” an in-person workshop with more than 50 attendees from nightlife venues and security companies. The event included speakers from US Department of Homeland Security, NYPD Shield, NYPD Crime Prevention, NY State Liquor Authority inspectors, and OutSmartNYC, covering a range of topics including sexual harassment prevention, bystander intervention, de-escalation techniques, identifying suspicious behavior, emergency planning and response. Attendees were able to enhance their teams' skills, exchange best practices, network with other professionals in the field and discuss emerging challenges and trends in the industry.

Narcan Behind Every Bar

Since December 2021, ONL has worked to promote the availability of naloxone and other opioid overdose prevention and response techniques provided by DOHMH. ONL's campaign, Narcan Behind Every Bar, has helped to broaden access to harm reduction tools across the nightlife community, ensuring that venues, staff, promoters, and security can be trained in overdose response. In the past year, ONL has coordinated four in-person Narcan training sessions with DOHMH trainers in Brooklyn and upper Manhattan, serving more than 100 nightlife personnel.

Elevate Nightlife Health & Wellbeing Initiative

Mental health struggles have long been prevalent in the nightlife industry, with late hours and high-volume, high-energy environments. Working at night or in entertainment industries can present unique health challenges for individuals, making it crucial for workers to prioritize their wellbeing. ONL has worked with partner organizations and agencies to compile a list of mental health and wellness resources that are accessible to all New Yorkers, including some tailored specifically for individuals in the nightlife, hospitality, entertainment, and music industries. In September 2024, ONL was proud to promote these resources in partnership with Sound Mind Live, a non-profit working to address mental health issues and socioeconomic challenges among musicians and industry professionals.

4.0 ELEVATE NIGHTLIFE CULTURE

Pushing Nightlife Culture Forward

Nightlife is at the core of NYC's cultural identity, and ONL continues to work to establish new policies and programs to support creative spaces and the New Yorkers who work and perform in them. Nightlife is teeming with trend-setters, and what starts at night extends into daytime culture. That is often true for creative fields like music and fashion, but it can also be true for changing our practices that reduce our carbon footprint and achieve our climate goals. Since 2024, ONL has been working in partnership with Future Meets Perfect, a non-profit organization working to design actionable interventions that guide society towards a net-zero future, on a "Greening Nightlife" initiative. This has brought together nightlife businesses at panels and events to help them understand how they can be a part of the solution to achieve NYC's climate goals. In September 2024, ONL participated in a panel discussion during climate week about sustainability in nightlife. ONL also presented at an Earth Night event in April 2024 with the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, working to mobilize climate action among nightlife patrons and venue operators.

ONL has also worked to advance the implementation of the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity (COYEO) rezoning initiative, passed by City Council in June 2024. These reforms updated the city's zoning code to revise longstanding restrictions on social dancing in many commercial districts, creating a new category for eating and drinking establishments with ticketed, scheduled entertainment. ONL

Throughout the past year, ONL also continued to support the Department of City Planning's efforts to engage the nightlife community in its outreach and stakeholder feedback efforts to develop the NYC Industrial Plan, and worked with advocates from the Pratt Center for Community Development to host a workshop in February for event organizers looking to produce outdoor music events, incorporating information and feedback from NYC Parks, NYC Department of Transportation, and the Street Activity Permit Office.