

# Environmental Prevention of Underage Drinking

# Responsible Beverage Service

## What is responsible beverage service?

Responsible beverage service (RBS) programs target both on-premises and off-premises alcohol retailers and are designed to reduce sales to minors and intoxicated adults. RBS includes three critical components:

1. Media advocacy to promote policy change;
2. Manager training; and
3. Server/seller training.

Training might include, for example, training employees to recognize false age identification, to refuse sales to underage or obviously intoxicated patrons, and to offer food and nonalcoholic beverages to reduce patron intoxication levels. As with all types of environmental prevention, RBS should be conducted as part of a larger comprehensive plan to reduce underage drinking.

## How does responsible beverage service reduce underage drinking and its consequences?

Lax enforcement of minimum legal drinking age laws by merchants, lack of server familiarity with state and local restrictions on alcohol service, failure to recognize false identification, and continued service to intoxicated patrons may all encourage underage drinking. RBS helps to eliminate these prevention gaps.

## How can my community take this action?

Take the following steps to promote RBS:

- **Determine whether your state has a law that mandates or provides incentives for RBS.** If your state does not have an RBS law, your initial efforts should be to mobilize to get an RBS law or ordinance passed. This effort could target the state, county, or city level. If a law exists, assess the degree to which it is being implemented and enforced.
- **Provide a ready-made RBS ordinance or law as a model for lawmakers.** Mandatory versus incentives is the main issue to decide when drafting an RBS law. This issue centers on whether all alcohol licensees, as a condition of their license, will be required to run a preapproved RBS training OR whether licensees would only receive incentives to do so. Typical incentives are reductions in license fees. Insurance companies may also offer incentives. Making RBS mandatory is preferred.

- **Help shape implementation of RBS in your community.** The following community-based actions support an effective, high-quality training program:
  - Enforce the law;
  - Target trouble spots;
  - Keep the legal burden of failing to prevent service to underage drinkers on owners;
  - Provide incentives for participation in RBS;
  - Intervene early when establishments fail to comply with the law;
  - Close license loopholes so that all establishments must comply; and
  - Ensure continuous server training for experienced as well as new servers.
- **Measure and report successful outcomes.** Some measures of the effectiveness of RBS are:
  - The presence of an in-store (or off-premises) policy consistent with RBS;
  - Signage posted about the store’s policies;
  - Improved law enforcement activities to target businesses that sell to minors;
  - Reduced rates of driving under the influence in the targeted area (e.g., neighborhood); and
  - Retailer violation rates.

## Resources Supporting Action

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). *The Health Communicator’s Social Media Toolkit*. From [http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit\\_BM.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf) (accessed December 15, 2013).

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. Responsible Beverage Service. From <http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/responsible-beverage-service> (accessed December 15, 2013).

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Focus on Prevention*. From <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA10-4120/SMA10-4120.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2013).

## About Environmental Prevention

Environmental prevention focuses on changing the environment in ways that make alcohol less available and appealing to young people. Some goals of environmental prevention are to change social norms or attitudes relating to the use of alcohol, to restrict youth access to alcohol, and to strengthen enforcement of laws and regulations governing its use. Environmental prevention of underage drinking also includes:

- Alcohol compliance checks;
- Controls on alcohol outlet location and density;
- Graduated driver licensing laws;
- Increased taxes on sales of alcohol;
- Restricted sales of alcohol at public events;
- Restrictions on low-price, high-volume drink specials;
- Sobriety and traffic safety checkpoints; and
- Social host liability laws.

Visit <https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings> for more information.

Materials to support national Town Hall Meetings on the prevention of underage drinking are provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.