

Policy Summary

Responsible Beverage Service

This policy summary is excerpted from:

The 2013 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking
submitted to Congress by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

To obtain more information and a copy of the full Report to Congress go to:

<https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>

Responsible Beverage Service

Policy Description

Responsible beverage service (RBS) training policies set requirements or incentives for retail alcohol outlet participation in programs that: (1) develop and implement policies and procedures for preventing alcohol sale and service to minors and intoxicated persons, and (2) train licensees, managers, and servers/sellers to implement RBS policies and procedures effectively.

Server/seller training focuses on serving and selling procedures, recognizing signs of intoxication, methods for checking age identification, and techniques for intervening with intoxicated patrons. Manager training includes server/seller training, policy and procedures development, and staff supervision. RBS programs typically have distinct training curricula for on- and off-sale establishments because of the differing characteristics of these retail environments. All RBS programs focus on preventing sale and furnishing to minors.

Responsible beverage service training can be mandatory or voluntary. A program is considered mandatory if state provisions require at least one specified category of individual (e.g., servers/sellers, managers, or licensees) to attend training. States may have either mandatory programs, voluntary programs, or both. For example, a state may make training for new licenses mandatory while also offering voluntary programs for existing licensees. Alternatively, a state may have a basic mandatory program while also offering a more intensive voluntary program that provides additional benefits for licensees choosing to participate in both.

States with voluntary programs usually provide incentives for retailers to participate in RBS training but do not impose penalties for those who decline involvement. Incentives vary by state and include (1) a defense in dram shop liability lawsuits (cases filed by injured persons against retail establishments that provided alcohol to minors or intoxicated persons who later caused injuries to themselves or third parties); (2) discounts for dram shop liability insurance; (3) mitigation of fines or other administrative penalties for sales to minors or sales to intoxicated persons; and (4) protection against license revocation for sales to minors or intoxicated persons.

See the “[Dram Shop Liability](#)” section of this report for further discussion of this policy. The “[Furnishing of Alcohol to Minors](#)” section has additional information regarding prevention of alcohol sales to minors, and the “[False Identification](#)” section includes materials related to age identification policies.

Status of Responsible Beverage Service Training Policies

As of January 1, 2012, 36 states and the District of Columbia have some type of RBS training provision (see Exhibit 4.3.21). Out of these, 18 states and the District of Columbia have some form of mandatory provision, and 24 states provide for voluntary training. Of the 18 mandatory states, 13 states and the District of Columbia apply their RBS training provisions to both on- and off-sale establishments; 4 states (Michigan, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington) apply them to on-premises establishments only; and New Jersey limits its provisions to off-sale establishments. Thirteen of the mandatory states and the District of Columbia apply their provisions to both new and existing establishments, while four states (Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Wisconsin) apply them to new establishments only. Six states

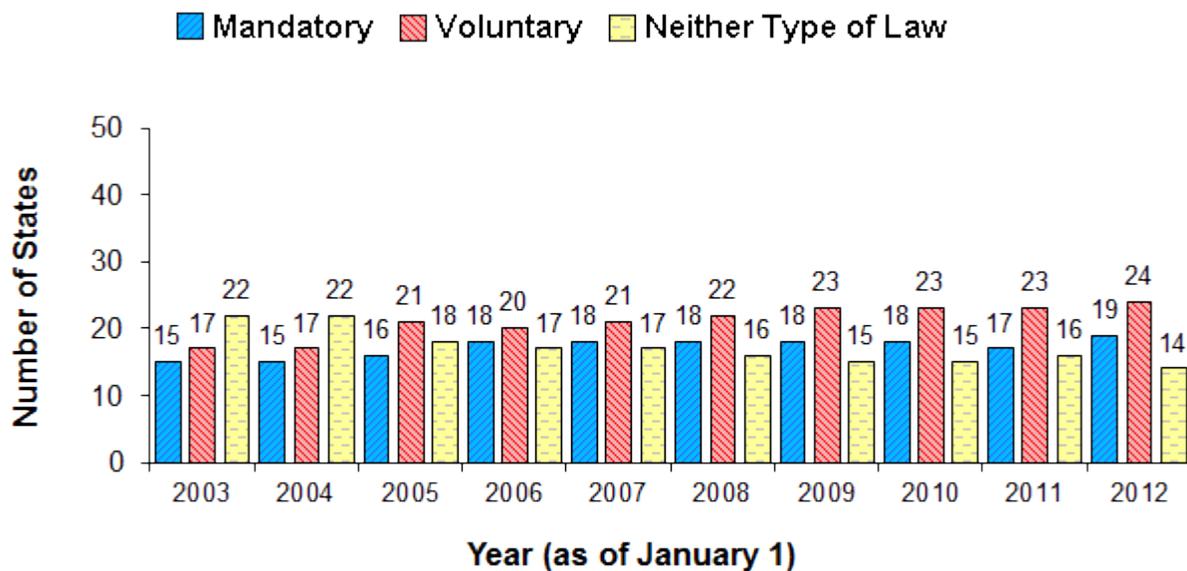
Trends in Responsible Beverage Service Policies

Between 2003 and 2012, the number of states with mandatory policies increased from 15 to 19, and the number of states with voluntary policies rose from 17 to 24 (see Exhibit 4.3.22). The number of states with no RBS training policy decreased from 22 to 14.

References and Further Information

All data for this policy were obtained from APIS at <http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov>. Follow links to the policy entitled “Beverage Service Training and Related Practices.” APIS provides further descriptions of this policy and its variables, details regarding state policies, and a review of the limitations associated with the reported data. To see definitions of the variables for this policy, go to Appendix B.

Exhibit 4.3.22: Number of States with Responsible Beverage Service, January 1, 2003, through January 1, 2012



Note: some jurisdictions have both types of laws