

Policy Summary

False Identification (“False ID”)

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>

False Identification (“false ID”)

Policy Description

Alcohol retailers are responsible for ensuring that sales of alcoholic beverages are made only to individuals who are legally permitted to purchase alcohol. Inspecting government-issued identification (driver’s license, non-driver identification card, passport, and military identification) is one major mechanism for ensuring that buyers meet minimum age requirements. In attempting to circumvent these safeguards, minors may obtain and use apparently valid ID that falsely states their age as 21 or over. Age may be falsified by altering the birthdate on a valid ID, obtaining an invalid ID card that appears to be valid, or using someone else’s ID.

Compliance check studies suggest that underage drinkers may have little need to use false ID because retailers often make sales without any ID inspection. However, concerns about false ID remain high among educators, law enforcement officials, retailers, and government officials. Current technology, including high-quality color copiers and printers, has made false ID easier to fabricate, and the internet provides ready access to a large number of false ID vendors.

All states prohibit use of false identification by minors to obtain alcohol. In addition to the basic prohibitions, states have adopted a variety of legal provisions pertaining to false ID for obtaining alcohol. These provisions can be divided into three basic categories:

- Provisions that target minors who possess and use false identification to obtain alcohol
- Provisions that target those who supply minors with false identification, either through lending of a valid ID or the production of invalid (“fake”) IDs
- Provisions that assist retailers in avoiding sales to potential buyers who present false IDs

Government-issued IDs are used for a number of age-related purposes other than the purchase of alcohol: registering to vote, enlisting in the military, entering certain entertainment venues, and so on. APIS confines its analysis to statutes and regulations relating to the use of false identification for the purpose of obtaining alcohol.

For further discussion of policies pertaining to the purchase of alcohol by minors, see the “[Underage Purchase and Attempted Purchase](#)” section of this report; policies that mandate training of servers to detect false identification, see the “[Responsible Beverage Service](#)” section of this report; and license suspension or revocation, see the “[Loss of Driving Privileges for Alcohol Violations by Minors](#)” section of this report.

Status of False ID Policies

Provisions That Target Minors

As of January 1, 2012, all states and the District of Columbia prohibit minors from using false IDs to obtain alcohol (see Exhibit 4.3.9). All but eight states (Delaware, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming) authorize suspension of minors’ driver’s licenses for using a false ID in the purchase of alcohol. In all but four states (Alaska, Illinois, Ohio, and West Virginia) the suspension is through judicial proceedings. Two states (Arizona and Iowa) allow for both judicial and administrative proceedings for license sanctions.

to minors. By contrast, states have been actively enacting four of the retailer support provisions. All 11 scanner provisions were enacted over the last 12 years (see Exhibit 4.3.10). Two of the specific affirmative defense laws (Arizona and Vermont), two of the right to detain minors laws (Arkansas and South Dakota), and three of the right to sue minors laws (Alaska, New Hampshire, and Utah) were enacted during this time period. Idaho is an exception to the general trend; in 2007, it rescinded its law permitting retailers to seize apparently false IDs.

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 “False Identification for Obtaining Alcohol.” 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. Variables are defined in Appendix B.

Exhibit 4.3.10: Number of States with Scanner Provisions in False ID Laws, January 1, 1998, through January 1, 2012

