

Responsible Beverage Service Training

Policy Description

Responsible beverage service (RBS) training policies require or incentivize retail alcohol outlets to train licensees, managers, and servers/sellers to effectively implement policies and procedures that prevent alcohol sale and service to minors and intoxicated persons.

Server/seller training focuses on procedures for serving, selling, and checking age identification, along with techniques for recognizing signs of intoxication and 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 sales and furnishing to minors.

RBS 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 licensees 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 (a) 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); (b) discounts for dram shop liability insurance; (c) mitigation of fines or other administrative penalties for sales to minors or sales to intoxicated persons; and (d) protection against license revocation for sales to minors or intoxicated persons.

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

Status of Responsible Beverage Service Training Policies

As of January 1, 2017, 38 states and the District of Columbia have some type of RBS training provision (see Exhibit I.21). Of these, 12 states and the District of Columbia have mandatory provisions, 17 states have voluntary provisions, and 9 states have both. The nine states that have both mandatory and voluntary provisions are Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington.

Of the 22 jurisdictions with mandatory provisions, some apply their provisions to both on-sale (e.g., bars and restaurants) and off-sale (e.g., liquor stores) establishments, whereas some apply to either on-sale or off-sale establishments. Some of the mandatory jurisdictions apply their provisions to both new and existing establishments, whereas others apply them to either existing or new establishments.

Trends in RBS Policies

Between 2003 and 2017, the number of jurisdictions with mandatory policies increased from 15 to 22, and the number of states with voluntary policies rose from 17 to 26 (see Exhibit I.22). The number of states with no RBS training policy decreased from 22 to 12.

Exhibit I.21: Responsible Beverage Service as of January 1, 2017

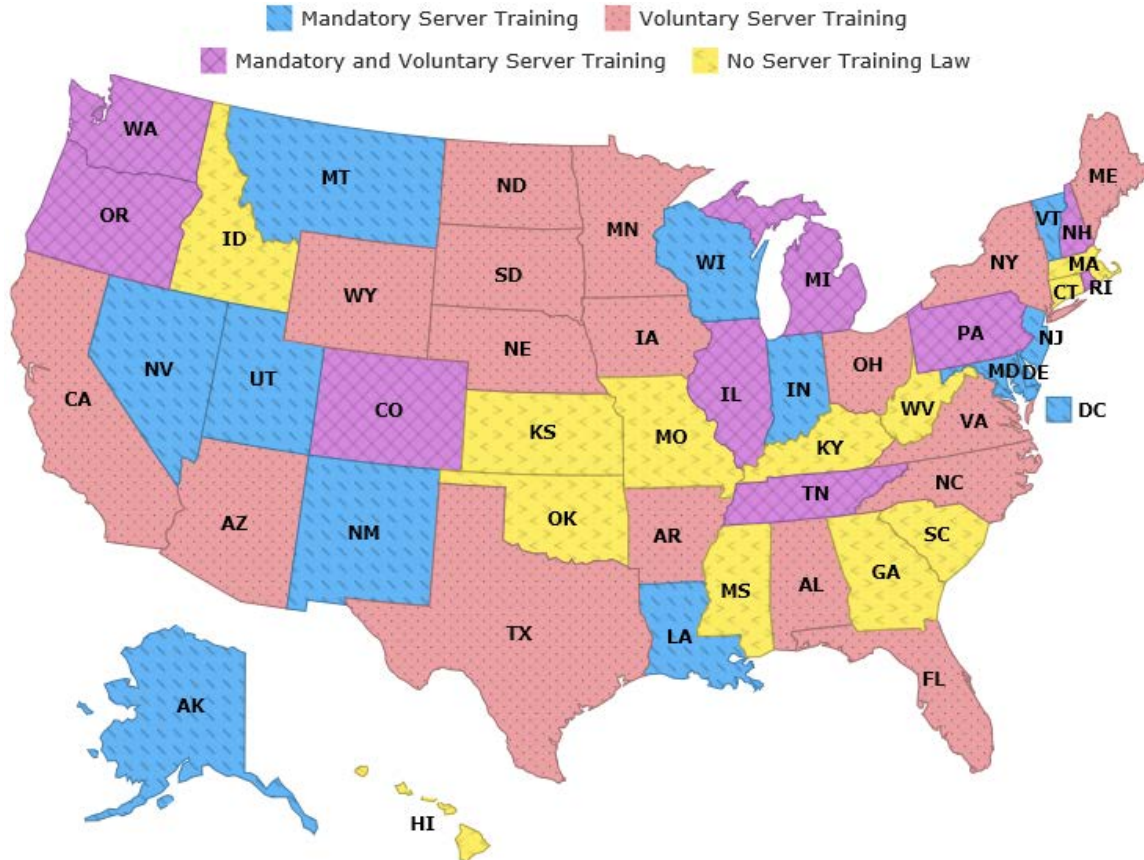
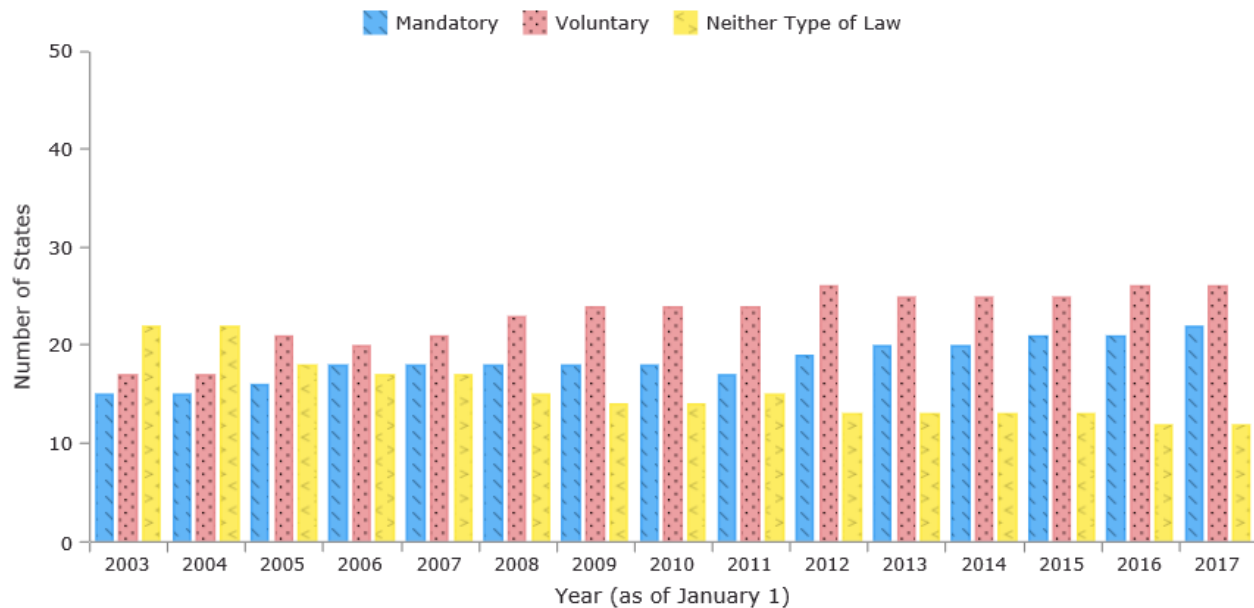


Exhibit I.22: Number of States with Responsible Beverage Service, January 1, 2003, through January 1, 2017



Data Sources and Citations

All data for this policy were obtained from <http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov>, NIAAA's APIS. Follow links to the policy titled "Beverage Service Training and Related Practices" for further descriptions of this policy and its variables, details regarding state policies, and a review of the limitations associated with the reported data.

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