**Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) Training**

**Policy Description**

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 sales and service to underage and intoxicated persons.

Server/seller training focuses on procedures for serving, selling, and checking age ID, 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 people under age 21.

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 (1) a defense in dram shop liability lawsuits (cases filed by injured persons against retail establishments that provided alcohol to underage 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 underage youth or sales to intoxicated persons; and (4) protection against license revocation for sales to underage or intoxicated persons.

See the “Dram Shop Liability” policy for further discussion. The “Furnishing of Alcohol to People Under Age 21” policy discussion has additional information regarding prevention of alcohol sales to underage people, and the “False ID” policy discussion includes materials related to age ID policies.

**Status of RBS Training Policies**

As of January 1, 2020, 40 states have some type of RBS training provision (Exhibit 2.12). Of these, 14 states have mandatory provisions, 15 states have voluntary provisions, and 11 states have both. The 11 states that have both mandatory and voluntary provisions are California, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington.

Of the 25 states 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

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9 Note that throughout this chapter, “states” refers to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
either on-sale or off-sale establishments. Some of the mandatory states apply their provisions to both new and existing establishments, whereas others apply them to either existing or new establishments.

**Trends in RBS Policies**

Between 2003–2020, the number of states with mandatory policies increased from 15 to 25, and the number of states with voluntary policies rose from 17 to 26. The number of states with no RBS training policy decreased from 22 to 11.

**Exhibit 2.12: RBS as of January 1, 2020**

![Map showing RBS policies across the United States]

**Data Sources and Citations**

All data for the “Beverage Service Training and Related Practices” policy were obtained from the APIS website: https://alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/apis-policy-topics/beverage-service-training-and-related-practices/26. 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.


Cook, W. K., Li, L., Greenfield, T. K., Patterson, D., Naimi, T., Xuan, Z., & Karriker-Jaffe, K. J. (2020). State alcohol policies, binge drinking prevalence, socioeconomic environments and alcohol’s harms to others: A mediation analysis. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*.


