

## ***Cops In Shops***

Cops In Shops was originally developed in Delaware, but in recent years, the program has been enhanced, packaged and promoted nationwide by the Century Council, a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to fighting drunk driving and illegal underage drinking.

A Cops In Shops program places undercover law enforcement officers, or alcohol beverage control (ABC) agents or inspectors in off-premise stores that sell alcohol. Officers issue citations or make arrests for underage purchase, attempts to purchase, and related violations, including citations for adults who purchase alcohol for underage youth, according to the current law of the jurisdiction where the program is in operation. Training is provided to both law enforcement officials and retailers.

In this program, law enforcement officers and inspectors not only cite or arrest underage youth who attempt to purchase or purchase alcohol illegally, the program also emphasizes the use of publicity as a continuous deterrent to potential underage buyers. Store posters, stickers for cold case storage areas, brochures, posters on buses or in subways, buttons, retail communication and television public service announcements remind young people that if they attempt to buy alcohol illegally, they may be dealing with an undercover law enforcement officer or alcohol inspector.

### **Elements of a Cops In Shops Program**

- a. Law enforcement agencies (police departments, alcohol beverage control agencies) agree to participate in the program.
- b. Liquor licensees are informed of the program and urged to participate, usually through a letter or other communication from an ABC or law enforcement agency.
- c. Posters and other retailer information are distributed to liquor licensees throughout the jurisdiction.
- d. Law enforcement agencies select officers or ABC agents/inspectors to participate in the program, usually in teams of two or three at each site.
  - o Sites are selected where officers/agents/inspectors will be posted. These sites are usually determined by the law enforcement agencies with the cooperation of the retailer. Usually these sites are locations where there has been a lot of underage activity in the past.
- e. Judges and prosecutors are informed of the program. Prosecutors are requested to assist in tracking the citations and arrests for use in media follow-up.

Prior to the implementation of the program, a news conference is held to announce that “cops” will be deployed in retail outlets throughout the city/county. Posters can

also be placed in high schools, at colleges, and universities to spread the word. Law enforcement agencies develop a form to track all citations and arrests. News releases are distributed periodically to keep the public and the press abreast of the number of underage youth who were cited and the disposition of those cases. This media component is critical to insure the on-going deterrent value of the program.

Conducting a Cops In Shops program does not mean a community should not do compliance checks. In fact, under the comprehensive approach developed by the NAGHSR Underage Drinking Prevention Program, both strategies should be employed to insure the seller and potential buyer are targeted for enforcement efforts. Contact information on Cops In Shops appears in the Resource Section of this booklet.

[https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Book5\\_Enforcement.html](https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Book5_Enforcement.html)