



## COPS IN SHOPS UPDATE

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### Introduction from Responsibility.org President & CEO:

Thank you for your interest in the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([Responsibility.org](http://Responsibility.org)) and our *Cops in Shops*® program. This innovative and simple-to-implement program is designed to assist law enforcement, beverage alcohol retailers and other community stakeholders in their efforts to stop underage persons from illegally purchasing and/or accessing alcohol from retail establishments. This tested and proven program works to both deter, interdict and when/as necessary apprehend underage youth who either attempt to purchase alcohol using fraudulent and/or altered identification or those individuals who are legally able to purchase alcohol and then illegally provide the alcohol to minors. The program was developed in 1992, and since its inception, it has been successfully used throughout the United States.

Founded in 1991, and originally known as The Century Council, the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([Responsibility.org](http://Responsibility.org)) is a national not-for-profit that leads the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and is funded by the following distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory Inc.; Brown-Forman; Constellation Brands, Inc.; DIAGEO; Edrington; Hood River Distillers, Inc.; and Pernod Ricard USA. Recognizing 25 years of impact, we are proud to be able to provide a variety of programs such as Cops in Shops that assist and enhance the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and we look forward to helping your organization with this important mission.

Again, thank you for your interest in our programs and welcome to *Cops in Shops*®. We have recently updated the program and this easy to use guide will provide you with all of the necessary information to develop and implement the program in your jurisdiction. Responsibility.org staff is also available to assist you as/if necessary.

Please also visit our website at [www.responsibility.org](http://www.responsibility.org) to learn more about our various programs and initiatives and how we can assist your organization.

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Blackman  
President and CEO

## Program Mission

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To provide expertise and tools to bring law enforcement, beverage alcohol retailers and other community organizations/stakeholders together to collaboratively work on preventing underage youth from illegally purchasing alcohol using fraudulent identification and preventing adults from illegally providing alcohol to minors. The program will result in long-term positive impact for the community in the fight to eliminate underage drinking.

## Program Overview/ Executive Summary

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Underage drinking is an issue that must be addressed comprehensively by law enforcement, parents and the community as a whole. While research has shown that a majority of underage youth access alcohol through family and friends, alcohol retail establishments (both on and off premise) must also be considered when initiating a comprehensive enforcement strategy.

Many law enforcement organizations conduct compliance checks (also called “stings”) as a part of their underage drinking enforcement program. Compliance checks send underage agents into a retail establishment to see if the retail employee has illegally sold alcohol. Enforcement action may be taken against employees and/or the retail establishment itself when violations occur.

While this enforcement activity is an important prong in any underage drinking enforcement plan, it only focuses on one side of the issue – the illegal sale of alcohol to an underage person. The other side of the issue, and just as important, is the use of fraudulent identification by underage persons attempting to purchase alcohol. In these cases, the offender produces a seemingly legitimate form of identification in an attempt to defraud the retail establishment into selling product.

In any comprehensive underage enforcement initiative, this offense must also be targeted. Additionally, the issue of adults who legally purchase and then illegally provide alcohol to underage youth (also referred to as a “shoulder tap”) must also be considered. Compliance checks do not focus on either of these illegal activities, both of which greatly contribute to underage drinking.

Experience has shown that collaboration among all community stakeholders produces maximum results in efforts to eliminate underage drinking. *Cops in Shops*® provides a platform for law enforcement, alcohol retail establishments and other interested stakeholders to work together on these important offenses as a part of an overall well-balanced enforcement program. The program is a great example of a community policing initiative – law enforcement and businesses understanding each other’s environments and issues, establishing relationships and working together toward a common goal...all positive long-term benefits. It is also interesting to note that law enforcement agencies who have used the program report there is also often a deterrent effect on other criminal activity in the area where the program is implemented.

## Program History

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The *Cops in Shops*® program was adapted in Eugene, Oregon in 1992 and successfully implemented in 1993. The idea came out of a similar program first developed in Delaware in 1991 and then later conducted by State Patrols in Oklahoma and Nebraska. The Eugene program had law enforcement, alcohol retailers and other community organizations all working together toward a common goal – stopping underage drinking. The Eugene project was unique as it was the first time the program was established, supported and managed by the private sector, an organization by the name of Project Eugene, a Century Council initiative. Since those early days in Eugene, the program has been successfully implemented across the country and has also been independently evaluated demonstrating positive results.

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## Program Implementation

*Cops in Shops*® is a relatively simple program to implement and operate. Before starting the program the following points must be addressed:

- A comprehensive review of existing state and local laws, ordinances, etc. must be completed to ensure that appropriate laws and/or regulations are in place to address violations of minors using fraudulent identification and adults illegally furnishing alcohol to minors.
- A program advisory group should be formed consisting of representatives from law enforcement, prosecutors, retailers (including related retailer associations if available) and other stakeholder organizations as required. This group should meet regularly to monitor progress, identify potential issues that need to be addressed, coordinate efforts both internally and externally and provide ongoing support as may be required.
- Outreach to alcohol retailers in your jurisdiction must be conducted, and a thorough understanding of the program and its intended outcomes must be explained so that retailers understand the program and its intended results – retailer “buy-in” is critical and essential. Through written materials and personal meetings, the program must be properly explained. It is important to highlight that the program is not focused on the retailer but rather on the offender attempting to illegally purchase or illegally furnish alcohol and that law enforcement and retailers will be working together as partners in this effort. Constructive input and cooperation is required from both entities for the program to work. A memorandum of understanding should be developed and signed by both entities. Once the memorandum of understanding is completed, enforcement locations can be determined. Using “predictive policing” strategies, analysis of existing data relating to underage drinking should be considered and discussed when identifying potential enforcement locations.
- Training for both law enforcement and retailers must be conducted prior to initiating enforcement efforts. Training aids are included in this program guide.
- A robust public information campaign should also be developed and implemented that works in concert with enforcement efforts. These activities should be conducted before, during and after enforcement efforts. While enforcement activities may be limited to certain retail locations, community-wide media activities work to warn potential offenders of the initiative and at the same time promote this effort to a wider audience. Examples of sample materials are included in this program guide.

## Law Enforcement Operational Considerations

- Through careful and balanced analysis of existing data re: underage drinking offenses, arrests, incidents, etc. along with input from retailers and the program advisory group, enforcement locations should be selected. *Cops in Shops*® was developed to be primarily an “off-premise” (establishments where alcohol is purchased but not consumed) initiative, so potential enforcement locations could include liquor stores, grocery stores, convenience stores, etc. The program can be adapted to “on-premise” establishments (locations where alcohol is served and consumed such as restaurants, taverns, etc.) but again it was designed to be primarily an off-premise program.
- Once potential enforcement locations are selected, the retailers must be notified and approve the initiative including dates and times of the detail. *Cops in Shops*® is a voluntary program and cannot be conducted at an establishment where approval has not been given by the retailer.

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- Once enforcement locations have been confirmed, press efforts announcing the program should be conducted. While the actual enforcement locations should not be released, elements of the program should be disseminated to the public via the media (social media, sample news releases and other publicity resources are included in this guide). Media releases and/or events should be conducted before, during, and at the conclusion of enforcement details. The use of social media is also strongly suggested.
- Only law enforcement personnel trained in the program should participate.
- Constant communication between law enforcement and involved-retailers is critical. Outreach reminding the establishment of upcoming approved enforcement details should be communicated at least one (1) month in advance and then again several times afterward so the establishment is adequately prepared.
- Like any other specialized enforcement detail, *Cops in Shops*® should be integrated into an agency's overall enforcement strategy. Ideally, on-duty personnel should be used for the detail. At times, funding for additional personnel may be available through Federal, State and local government agencies including, but not limited to, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the state Governors Highway Safety Office.
- The actual enforcement activity requires two (2) sworn plainclothes personnel. One officer/deputy/trooper is stationed inside the establishment posing as store staff. This individual should not be stationed behind the register but instead somewhere else within the store looking as if they are taking inventory and/or other work-like functions and should only engage/identify themselves as law enforcement when notified of a possible violation by the sales staff. The second enforcement person should be positioned outside the establishment, preferably in an unmarked/concealed identity vehicle so that he/she can both provide back-up as necessary and also monitor for "shoulder taps" where an adult legally purchases and then illegally provides alcohol to underage youth outside the establishment. In these cases the officer inside the establishment should back-up the outside officer as required. As always, appropriate officer safety protocols should be deployed not only regarding the actual detail but also re: potential other criminal activity in or around the retail location (robbery, larceny, etc.). Additionally, uniformed patrols in the sector/patrol zone of the establishments should be informed of the detail, and appropriate supervision must always be in place. Retail establishment personnel should never be involved in enforcement activities.
- The possession/use of fraudulent identification may have other ramifications besides attempting to purchase alcohol. If/as necessary, an investigation should be conducted as to where/how the fraudulent identification was obtained and the appropriate authorities advised of same.
- As always, the extent of any enforcement activity is at the discretion of law enforcement. When an offense occurs during a detail, whether that be an underage youth using a fraudulent ID or an adult participating in a "shoulder tap," there are several actions that can be taken to terminate the offense including, but not limited to, arrest, warning with a field contact card done and/or notifying parents of involved youth. Regardless of the enforcement option selected, records must be maintained documenting the enforcement activity. Additionally, the program advisory group should be kept informed regarding enforcement activities.

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## Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to maintain the integrity of the program and ensure maximum results, monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the program should be ongoing and shared with all involved organizations/individuals.

The *Cops in Shops*® program has been evaluated several times with positive results. Evaluations include:

- 1994 by George Mason University – Center for Health Promotion prepared for the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).
- 1995-1996 in conjunction with the National Association of Governors Highway Safety Representatives (NAGHSR) and The Century Council for programs in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Iowa and Wisconsin.
- 2000 in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Altoona and Williamsport School Districts.
- 2003 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

## Summary

*Cops in Shops*® is a simple-to-implement, proven program that can be used as an important pillar of a comprehensive enforcement effort to eliminate underage drinking. The power of collaboration – law enforcement and beverage alcohol retailers working together with other community stakeholders – is a winning combination that can produce long-term positive impact in your community.

Start your program today. Send an important message to underage youth in your community – if you're too young to buy, don't even try!

## Additional Resources

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility  
[www.responsibility.org](http://www.responsibility.org)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
[www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)

Governors Highway Safety Association  
[www.ghsa.org](http://www.ghsa.org)

International Association of Chiefs of Police  
[www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org)

National Sheriffs' Association  
<http://www.sheriffs.org/>

Responsible Retailing Forum  
[www.rrforum.org](http://www.rrforum.org)



# CREATING INTEREST IN STARTING A “COPS IN SHOPS” PROGRAM

## DISCUSSION POINTS

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- Stopping underage drinking is important and must be addressed.
- Underage drinking negatively impacts the community.
- Experience has demonstrated that the most successful programs have participation from all stakeholders.
- Law enforcement working collaboratively with alcohol retailers and other community stakeholders provides a well-balanced approach to accomplish long-term positive impact.
- “Cops in Shops” is a great community policing initiative.
- The program is low-cost, simple to implement and has proven positive impact/results.
- Implementing the program also enhances relationships among community stakeholders and an understanding of issues of all involved – a great outcome!
- Working together, we can make a difference!



# COPS IN SHOPS

## SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY/INVITATION LETTER

Date XX-XX-XX

Dear Owner/Manager,

I am pleased to inform you that the (insert law enforcement agency's name) will be launching an exciting new program to aid in the fight to stop underage drinking in our community. The "Cops in Shops" program is a cooperative effort between law enforcement and alcohol retailers, which has been used across the country producing positive results in jurisdictions that have implemented it. Using undercover officers/deputies posing as store clerks, the program is aimed at deterring, detecting and, as required, apprehending underage persons who attempt to illegally purchase alcohol using counterfeit/fraudulent IDs and adults who illegally provide alcohol to underage persons. Here are some highlights of the program:

- A Program Advisory Panel consisting of representatives from law enforcement, beverage alcohol retailers and other community stakeholders has been formed to provide guidance on program efforts.
- You and your store staff will be briefed on proper procedures re: checking identification and recognizing false/fraudulent IDs.
- The program provides signage for your establishment to inform the public that you participate in the program. Regardless of whether or not law enforcement is on-site, this signage has been proven to have a deterrent effect.
- The program's goal is to focus on underage persons attempting to purchase alcohol and adults who illegally provide alcohol to underage youth – this is not a retailer-focused program.
- Program efforts will be disseminated to the media so that the public knows about the program and the joint effort of retailers and law enforcement.

I sincerely hope that you are interested in participating in the program. A department representative will be contacting you shortly to further discuss the program. In the meantime, please feel free to contact (insert name) at (insert phone and/or e-mail address) if you would like any additional information. I look forward to working with you on this important initiative to help keep our community safe.

Best regards,

Chief of Police or Sheriff



# COPS IN SHOPS

## SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Retail establishments participating in the “Cops in Shops” program should execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with law enforcement. Major points that should be considered in the MOU are listed below. Additional points as needed may also be included:

- The program is a voluntary, joint effort by law enforcement and retail establishments and can be terminated at any time by either party.
- The mission of the program is to deter, detect and, as/if necessary, apprehend underage persons who attempt to purchase alcohol with counterfeit/fraudulent identification and any adult who attempts to illegally furnish alcohol to any underage person.
- Undercover law enforcement personnel working the program will have access to a retail establishment. Law enforcement personnel will not perform any duties other than those of a law enforcement nature.
- Retail establishment staff will not take any action re: enforcement and will only perform regular store duties and responsibilities.
- Media visits will be allowed with advance approval.
- All employees/representatives will be covered (insurance, workmen’s compensation, etc.) by their individual organization’s coverage/policies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Retailer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Law Enforcement Representative

Date:

Date:





# TIMELINE/ACTION STEPS FOR LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM

## Step 1:

1. Prepare overview of program for both internal and external dissemination.
2. Explain program/explore interest with representatives from the alcohol sales (retailers, wholesalers, trade associations) community and other community stakeholders.
3. Recruit members for/from the Program Advisory Panel.
4. Identify Program Advisory Panel Chair/Co-Chairs.
5. Convene meeting of Advisory Panel. Establish program goals and objectives, roles and responsibilities and desired outcomes.
6. Develop introduction letter re: the program for dissemination to alcohol retailers and other community stakeholders. Once completed and approved by Program Advisory Panel, distribute letter.

## Step 2:

1. Analyze existing law enforcement data (along with other reliable sources) re: underage drinking occurrences/incidents in order to highlight potential priority locations for program.
2. In cooperation with advisory panel members and other community stakeholders, determine potential program locations.
3. Visit potential program locations and meet with owner(s) to explain program/enlist support.

## Step 3:

1. Train law enforcement personnel re: program policies and procedures.
2. Meet with District Attorney/Prosecutor re: program overview and what types of violations are anticipated.
3. Prepare packets of program materials for establishments and disseminate.
4. Execute Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with establishments that are participating in program.

## Step 4:

1. Prepare media materials, talking points and potential speakers for launch media event.
2. Send out media advisory re: program launch event.
3. Hold media event to announce program launch.
4. Use social media to enhance launch activities.

## Step 5:

1. Launch enforcement activity.
2. Use social media to communicate efforts.
3. Collect/analyze enforcement data.
4. Disseminate enforcement data/updates to media for dissemination to public.
5. Perform ongoing monitoring and evaluation of program.

## Step 6:

1. Repeat enforcement activities with special consideration during times such as holidays, prom and graduation, festivals, etc.
2. Media, data collection/analysis and monitoring/evaluation activities should be ongoing.
3. Solicit feedback from program participants.
4. Conduct regular briefings/updates for Program Advisory Panel.





## POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR ADVISORY PANEL

The following entities/organizations should be considered re: providing potential candidates for a “Cops in Shops” Program Advisory Panel. Representatives should be senior staff/policy makers:

- Law enforcement from each jurisdiction where the program will be implemented
- Off-premise retail establishments (including liquor stores, grocery stores and convenience stores)
- On-premise establishments (restaurants, taverns, etc.)
- Alcohol distributors
- Alcohol trade associations
- State Alcohol Beverage Control Board or Liquor Authority
- District Attorney/State Prosecutor’s Office
- Elected officials (Mayor’s/Town Supervisor’s Office, etc.)
- Community/business organizations (Chamber of Commerce, Business improvement district, etc.)
- Education (local colleges, high schools, Board of Education, etc.)