

Responsible Beverage Service

What is responsible beverage service?

Responsible beverage service (RBS) programs target both on-premises and off-premises alcohol retailers and are designed to reduce sales to minors and intoxicated adults. RBS includes three critical components:

1. Media advocacy to promote policy change;
2. Manager training; and
3. Server/seller training.

Training might include, for example, training employees to recognize false age identification, to refuse sales to underage or obviously intoxicated patrons, and to offer food and nonalcoholic beverages to reduce patron intoxication levels. As with all types of environmental prevention, RBS should be conducted as part of a larger comprehensive plan to reduce underage drinking.

How does responsible beverage service reduce underage drinking and its consequences?

Lax enforcement of minimum legal drinking age laws by merchants, lack of server familiarity with State and local restrictions on alcohol service, failure

to recognize false identification, and continued service to intoxicated patrons may all encourage underage drinking. RBS helps to eliminate these prevention gaps.

How can my community take this action?

Determine whether your State has a law that mandates or provides incentives for RBS. If your State does not have an RBS law, your initial efforts should be to mobilize to get an RBS law or ordinance passed. This effort could target the State, county, or city level. If a law exists, assess the degree to which it is being implemented and enforced.

Provide a ready-made RBS ordinance or law as a model for lawmakers. Mandatory versus incentives is the main issue to decide when drafting an RBS law. This issue centers on whether all alcohol licensees, as a condition of their license, will be required to run a preapproved RBS training OR whether licensees would only receive incentives to do so. Typical incentives are reductions in license fees. Insurance companies may also offer incentives. Making RBS mandatory is preferred.

Help shape implementation of RBS in your community. The following community-based actions support an effective, high-quality training program:

- ▶ Enforce the law;
- ▶ Target trouble spots;
- ▶ Keep the legal burden of failing to prevent service to underage drinkers on owners;
- ▶ Provide incentives for participate in RBS;
- ▶ Intervene early for establishments that fail to comply with the law;
- ▶ Close license loopholes so that all establishments must comply; and
- ▶ Ensure continuous server training for experienced as well as new servers.

Measure and report successful outcomes. Some measures of the effectiveness of RBS are:

- ▶ The presence of an in-store (or off-premises) policy consistent with RBS;
- ▶ Signage posted about the store's policies;
- ▶ Improved law enforcement activities to target businesses that sell to minors;
- ▶ Reduced rates of driving under the influence in the targeted area (e.g., neighborhood); and
- ▶ Retailer violation rates.

Resources Supporting Action

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit*, from http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf (accessed January 31, 2012).

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, *Responsible Beverage Service*, from <http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/responsible-beverage-service> (accessed January 31, 2012).

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Focus on Prevention*, from <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA10-4120/SMA10-4120.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2012).