



Introduction to Shoulder Tap Operations



Online Course Companion Guide



**SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

PREVENTION FIRST
Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse
Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services



Prevention First is a nonprofit dedicated to preventing teen drug use before it starts. Since 1980, Prevention First has provided training, technical assistance and resource materials to thousands of schools, community groups, parents and youth.

We specialize in building the capacity of practitioners to develop strategic plans to address local substance abuse prevention needs, select and implement the best programs, curricula and strategies designed to promote social and emotional health and prevent substance abuse, and develop and implement media and communication campaigns designed to educate the public.

Prevention First is primarily funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services. Additional funding is provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections, Illinois Department of Transportation, and through private foundations and individual donations.

Our Vision

Healthy communities that encourage drug-free youth.

Our Mission

To build community capacity to prevent substance abuse by providing training and technical assistance and raising public awareness.



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Overview

Description

This on-line training will provide participants with an overview of shoulder tap operations. Participants will learn about the strategy's planning and implementation/enforcement considerations, as well as tips for meeting standards.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- articulate the intent, effectiveness and key components of shoulder tap operations,
- identify important steps involved in planning and providing support for shoulder tap operations as outlined by the SAPP Standards for Shoulder Tap Programs, and
- identify important components of strategy implementation/enforcement.

Outline of Course Contents

Module One: Overview of Shoulder Tap Operations

Module Two: Planning Shoulder Tap Operations

Module Three: Implementing Shoulder Tap Operations

Audience

IDHS SAPP Sub-Grant C Providers implementing this strategy and their coalition members.

Completion Time

Estimated completion time is 1.5 hours.

Testing

Participants will complete a post-test on material learned in this course.

Participants must pass the post-test with 80 percent accuracy in order to obtain credit for the course.

Module One:

Overview of Shoulder Tap Operations



Youth Social Access to Alcohol

Young people who drink alcohol obtain it from a variety of sources including friends, parents, parties and retail outlets. In other instances youth identify other adults as a source of alcohol. According to the 2012 Illinois Youth Survey (IYS), of those who reported using alcohol in the past year, 15% of 8th grade students, and over 20% of both 10th and 12th grade students reported obtaining alcohol by giving a stranger money to buy it for them. In addition, data from one study on underage drinkers aged 18-20 revealed that adults over 21 years old were the most common source of alcohol, with 21.6% of these youth reporting that they gave money to someone else to purchase it on their behalf.

Together this research highlights the fact that underage drinking cannot be eradicated by focusing on youth alone. Typically, underage youth obtain alcohol – either directly or indirectly – from adults. Efforts to reduce underage drinking, therefore, must focus on both youth and adults to address the problem. Shoulder tap operations are a prevention strategy to reduce the provision of alcohol among strangers and other community adults.

Table 2.3 Sources of alcohol

Sources of Alcohol Access	Among Alcohol Users in the Past Year...		
	8 th	10 th	12 th
Social Access			
AT LEAST ONE social source (excluding parents)	75.8%	87.8%	91.0%
A friend gave it to me	50.9%	67.9%	73.6%
Got it at a party	54.6%	68.1%	69.8%
Gave a stranger money to buy it for me	15.0%	21.0%	20.6%
My older brother or sister gave it to me	23.2%	25.2%	30.6%
Got it from an adult (other than my parents) WITH that adult's permission	36.1%	40.2%	41.0%

Source: Illinois Youth Survey 2012 State Report ⁽²⁾, Wagenaar et. Al. ⁽⁷⁾ SAMHSA ⁽⁶⁾

Basic Overview

Introduction

Shoulder tap operations are designed to curtail the problem of adults providing alcohol in and around licensed alcohol outlets by holding adult providers accountable for illegally furnishing alcohol to minors.

Summary of Effectiveness

In 1998, a joint operation was initiated by California's Alcohol Beverage Control's Special Operations Unit, the Sutter County Sheriff's Department, and the Yuba City Police Department to conduct a seven-week effort in which 15- to 18-year olds were used as decoys. During the operation, a total of 24 adults were arrested. At the beginning of the program, nearly a third of adults agreed to furnish beer to the minors. By the end of the program, only one out of 35 adults would furnish.

The Sutter County District Attorney agreed to prosecute 100% of the cases. Local liquor stores became more active in calling the police or sheriff's department to report minors loitering in front of their stores trying to have adults furnish them beer.

Benefits

Shoulder tap operations serve several purposes:

- Reduces underage consumption of and access to alcohol by deterring adults from providing alcohol to minors outside of licensed premises,
- Builds a collaboration with law enforcement, liquor control agencies, and licensed establishments to enforce underage drinking laws,
- Raises public awareness about the problem of providing alcohol to youth, and
- Changes community norms regarding the acceptability of supplying alcohol to youth

Strategy Intent

As retailers get better at refusing sales to youth and retail access decreases, youth turn to alternative means to obtain alcohol. As a result, some youth resort to asking patrons to purchase alcohol for them. Often such youth simply approach adults who are entering a liquor or convenience store and ask the adult if they would be willing to purchase alcohol for them. These instances are referred to as Third Party Transactions and nicknamed "Mister Will Ya?", "Hey Mister" and/or Shoulder Tapping by youth.

In response to this type of illegal behavior, many police departments have developed operational guidelines to intervene and hold the adult providers accountable for illegally furnishing alcohol to youth in order to deter adults from engaging in this type of transaction. Thus the strategy of "Shoulder Tap Operations" focuses on non-commercial providers of alcohol (e.g. strangers and/or community adults) who may be misguided, or looking to profit from the illegal transaction, as well as youth who approach adults requesting such a transaction.

Methods of Shoulder Tapping

There are two methods that can be utilized for shoulder tap operations:

Method One: Target Underage Youth

In this method, an undercover law enforcement officer is placed in the parking lot of a liquor or convenience store and simply waits for underage youth to approach and ask for the undercover officer to purchase alcohol on their behalf. The officer then identifies him/herself as law enforcement and provides education to the youth about the illegality of possessing and/or consuming alcohol underage. This method is traditionally conducted as an educational operation.

Method Two: Target Community Adults/Strangers

In this method, underage volunteers are placed in the parking lot of a liquor or convenience store as undercover decoys. Under controlled guidelines, youth approach adult(s) entering the store in an attempt to solicit the adult(s) to purchase alcohol for them. If the adult agrees to purchase the alcohol for the youth, the youth provides the adult with money to make the purchase. Once the adult provides the alcohol to youth, law enforcement intervenes and takes appropriate action with respect to the adult provider. This method can be done as an educational operation or as an active enforcement operation.

Source: Center for Applied Research Solutions ⁽¹⁾, PIRE ⁽⁵⁾

Providing Support

Prevention coalitions can provide various means of support for enforcement efforts.

Recruit Volunteers

Each model of shoulder tap operations can effectively utilize youth and adult volunteers in support of operations. Youth are used as undercover decoys, while adults may play a supporting role. Coalitions can assist law enforcement in recruiting the human resources necessary to implement successful shoulder tap operations.

Provide Training

Volunteers can organize or pay for trainings for law enforcement or youth/adult operatives assisting in the enforcement operations.

Build Community Support

Volunteers can build support for shoulder tap operations by educating the community about the underage drinking problem, promoting the laws and consequences for furnishing alcohol to minors, and informing the community about how and why shoulder tap operations are effective. A crucial tool in building community support is media advocacy.

Media advocacy is the strategic use of media to advance a social or public policy goal. Advocacy plays a role in educating the public, swaying public opinion and/or influencing policy-makers. There are a variety of ways to get the issue in the public eye, including:

- letters to the editor
- opinion editorials (op-eds)
- paid advertisements
- press releases
- press conferences
- interviews
- social media

It is important to engage multiple sectors of the community to develop support for the prevention strategy. Groups such as schools or universities, parent groups, or advocacy groups such as MADD or SADD can help build the political support needed to rally the community around enforcement initiatives.

Source: PIRE ⁽⁴⁾

Module Two:

Planning Shoulder Tap Operations



SAPP Standards for Shoulder Tap Programs

1. **Shoulder Tap Program Plan** has been developed that addresses the following:

- a. Securing the support of the individuals/agencies responsible for leading enforcement efforts
- b. Securing the support of adjudicators/prosecutors
- c. Protocols/procedures are written (formalized) that include:
 - a. Enforcement efforts are targeted to locations and time of day/year based on data (e.g. citizen complaints, law enforcement information, requests from merchants, etc.)
 - b. Ensure public/youth safety
 - c. Enforcement efforts adhere to state and local requirements (laws, ordinances, policies)
 - d. Underage youth volunteers should meet the following criteria:
 1. Be under 20 years of age
 2. Appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females)
 3. Have not been cited for liquor violations and do not have a criminal record
 4. Willing and able to conduct undercover work
 5. Willing and able to prepare a written statement of their involvement
 6. Willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the program
 7. Have a signed permission/acknowledgement form which includes program expectations and requirements and a non-disclosure statement for youth indicating they will not discuss the program with others
 8. Have a signed parental release for volunteers under 18
 9. Have their age-appearance validated using law enforcement-approved protocols
- d. Sanctions are identified which are swift, certain and of appropriate severity to the policy/ordinance/law violation
- e. Training is provided for non-law enforcement operatives who are part of the enforcement effort (e.g. underage youth, coalition members). Training for underage youth decoys should include:
 - How to act, speak, and respond to adult buyers
 - Dressing in a manner consistent with peers in their age group

- Ways to avoid dangerous situations
 - Types of alcohol (or other items) the volunteer should request from potential buyers
 - Correct volunteer responses to subjects that either refuse their solicitation or furnish alcohol
- f. Information about the policy and enforcement efforts results are sufficiently publicized to promote awareness of the policy/consequences within the community
- g. Enforcement agencies have agreed to share enforcement data at minimum annually with the coalition/provider

2. Shoulder Tap Operations demonstrate that the following have been addressed:

- a. Secured the support of the individuals/agencies responsible for leading enforcement efforts
- b. Secured the support of adjudicators/prosecutors
- c. Protocols/procedures have been written (formalized) that include:
- Enforcement efforts are targeted to locations and time of day/year based on data (e.g. citizen complaints, law enforcement information, requests from merchants, etc.)
 - Ensure public/youth safety
 - Enforcement efforts adhere to state and local requirements (laws, ordinances, policies)
 - Underage youth volunteers should meet the following criteria:
 1. Be under 20 years of age
 2. Appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females)
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 6. Willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the program
 7. Have a signed permission/acknowledgement form which includes program expectations and requirements and a non-disclosure statement for youth indicating they will not discuss the program with others
 8. Have a signed parental release for volunteers under 18
 9. Have their age-appearance validated using law enforcement-approved protocols

- d. Sanctions have been identified which are swift, certain and of appropriate severity to the policy/ordinance/law violation
- e. Training has been provided for non-law enforcement operatives who are part of the enforcement effort (e.g. underage youth, coalition members). Training for underage youth decoys has addressed:
 - How to act, speak, and respond to adult buyers
 - Dressing in a manner consistent with peers in their age group
 - Ways to avoid dangerous situations
 - Types of alcohol (or other items) the volunteer should request from potential buyers
 - Correct volunteer responses to subjects that either refuse their solicitation or furnish alcohol
- f. Information about the policy and enforcement effort results have been sufficiently publicized to promote awareness of the policy/consequences within the community
- g. Enforcement agencies have shared enforcement data at minimum annually with the coalition/provider.

Secure the Support of Enforcement

SAPP Standard:

- a. Secure the support of the individuals/agencies responsible for leading enforcement efforts
-

In order for Shoulder Tap Operations to be effective, law enforcement agencies must commit to conducting operations on a regular basis and establish policies that encourage officers to support/conduct shoulder tap operations. A Shoulder Tap Program Plan should include strategies to secure and maintain the support of law enforcement for the strong and consistent application of laws aimed at deterring youth access to alcohol.

If law enforcement is indifferent or even resistant to implementing shoulder tap operations, determine the barriers to their support, and identify strategies for building their support over time.

Demonstrate Community Support

A frequent barrier to enforcement is a belief that there is no community support for conducting shoulder tap operations. Law enforcement generally backs efforts that are well-supported by the community. Provide data that demonstrates public support for holding adults accountable for furnishing alcohol to minors. Prevention coalitions can conduct interviews and gather information to help demonstrate your community's support for the enforcement of laws aimed at deterring adults from providing alcohol to minors.

Educate about Strategy Effectiveness

Providing evidence that the use of a shoulder tap program will result in a safer community can help persuade law enforcement. Share community-specific data demonstrating how youth obtain alcohol and the extent of the local problem of strangers/community adults providing alcohol to minors. Emphasize the deterrent effect of conducting shoulder tap operations.

Articulate Benefits to Law Enforcement

By implementing shoulder tap operations, law enforcement can benefit from long-term economic savings. A reduction in access to alcohol among youth translates into fewer negative consequences and a decrease in alcohol-related crime and injuries. Police departments are bottom line-oriented. Demonstrating the cost savings over time can compel departments to implement this strategy.

Offer Support

Stretched resources and a lack of manpower are common barriers to police willingness and ability to implement shoulder tap operations. Community coalitions can partner with law enforcement by offering to supplement shoulder tap operations through prevention grants. Additionally coalitions can support law enforcement through efforts such as providing volunteers, recruiting youth decoys, organizing or paying for training, purchasing equipment and building media support.

Review SAPP Standards

Finally, if shoulder tap operations are funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services Substance Abuse Prevention Program, it is critical to review the SAPP Standards for Shoulder Tap Programs with law enforcement prior to implementation to ensure understanding and commitment to fulfill each standard.

MOU/Sub-Contract

During the planning phase, providers should document the shoulder tap program agreement with law enforcement through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Linkage Agreement.

An MOU is a document describing an agreement between two or more parties. Each MOU should include the following:

- Names of both parties and length/date of agreement
- Description of the scope of services, including timelines and compensation
- Roles and responsibilities of both parties
- Signature and date of each party

An MOU between a SAPP Provider/coalition and police agency should reflect and ensure that all SAPP Standards will be adhered to.

MOU (SAMPLE)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into between Anytown Police Department and ABC Coalition, for services from July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015 as follows:

Anytown Police Department agency will conduct 4 rounds of shoulder tap operations by no later than June 30, 2015. Payment shall be based on the cost of overtime for 2 officers and one supervisor for each operation. Shoulder tap operations should occur on a quarterly basis, or every 3 months, throughout the jurisdiction. During the term of this agreement, as long as funding is available, ABC Coalition agrees to pay Anytown Police Department \$4,000.00 for 4 rounds of shoulder tap operations, including funds for youth stipends.

ABC Law Enforcement Agency agrees to:

- Notify the Strategic Prevention Framework Project Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to each shoulder tap operation
- Provide the results of the shoulder tap operations to the Strategic Prevention Framework Project Coordinator within 2 weeks after the shoulder tap operations are completed, including:
 - Number of off-premise alcohol retailers in community/target area
 - Number of shoulder tap operations conducted
 - Number of retailer locations where operations were conducted
 - Number of persons from whom alcohol purchase was requested
 - Number of persons who purchased/provided alcohol
 - Number of sanctions/consequences administered
- ABC Law Enforcement Agency agrees to adhere to all of the SAPP Standards for Shoulder Tap Programs (see attached).

ABC Coalition agrees to:

- Sign a Statement of Confidentiality regarding the advanced notice of enforcement operations
- Inform community of their responsibility to not furnish alcohol to minors (within 3 weeks prior to upcoming shoulder tap operations)
- Promote awareness of the policy/consequence of furnishing alcohol to minors
- Develop and distribute press releases announcing results of shoulder tap operations
- Recruit and coordinate training for underage youth volunteers

Authorized Representative, ABC Coalition

Date

Authorized Representative, Anytown Police Department

Date

Secure the Support of Adjudicators/Prosecutors

SAPP Standard:

b. Secure the support of adjudicators/prosecutors

Shoulder tap operations will greatly impact the regulatory and criminal justice system. The Shoulder Tap Program Plan should address how judicial partners will be informed of the operation and include strategies to garner and maintain their support. During the planning phase, coalitions should build the support of local prosecutors, the Illinois Attorney General's Office, the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, juvenile officers, and judges. Each of these groups plays a unique role in the prosecution of cases.

Establishing a working relationship, and notifying these agencies and individuals of operations ahead of time will go a long way in ensuring successful prosecution of cases. These groups can advise law enforcement on specific procedures that need to be followed during shoulder tap operations to ensure proper fidelity of conduct to avoid issues of entrapment. Judicial partners can advise coalitions and law enforcement on specific protocols necessary to ensure the successful prosecution of cases (e.g. youth decoys must clearly indicate that they are under the legal age to purchase alcohol when asking the target to purchase for them, youth should not incentivize the target by offering to pay the target to purchase for them, etc.).

Coalition leaders should encourage law enforcement to consult with legal counsel to ensure operational plans meet state and local requirements prior to implementing shoulder tap operations.

Develop Protocols/Procedures

SAPP Standard:

- c. Protocols/procedures are written (formalized) that include:
- Enforcement efforts are targeted to locations and time of day/year based on data (e.g. citizen complaints, law enforcement information, requests from merchants, etc.)
 - Ensure public/youth safety
 - Enforcement efforts adhere to state and local requirements (laws, ordinances, policies)
 - Underage youth volunteers meet the following criteria:
 - Be under 20 years of age
 - Appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females)
 - Have not been cited for liquor violations and do not have a criminal record
 - Willing and able to conduct undercover work
 - Willing and able to prepare a written statement of their involvement
 - Willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the program
 - Have a signed permission/acknowledgement form which includes program expectations and requirements and a non-disclosure statement for youth indicating they will not discuss the program with others
 - Have a signed parental release for volunteers under 18
 - Have their age-appearance validated using law enforcement-approved protocols

The Shoulder Tap Program Plan should include the protocols and procedures that will be used in operations. Shoulder tap protocols/ procedures should be developed by law enforcement to guide their internal processes and ensure that key aspects of the operation are accounted for. SAPP providers/coalitions should talk to their law enforcement partners to determine whether protocols/procedures already exist or need to be revised or developed to include the components listed in the SAPP Standards.

Targeted Approach

Enforcement efforts should be targeted to locations and time of day/year based on data. Law enforcement agencies should utilize a systematic approach to select locations and times for operations and incorporate information from a number of sources to ensure efforts meet the needs of their specific community.

While the most comprehensive program would involve all retail alcohol outlets, it is not always practical with limited resources. During the planning phase, protocols should be established for defining which retail outlets will be utilized for operations.

Approaches to targeting enforcement operations may include:

- Utilizing hotlines or tip lines to solicit community complaints/information
- Reviewing law enforcement data to determine previous problems at particular locations
- Identifying peak times and/or events when youth attempt to gain access to alcohol (e.g. holidays, homecoming, graduation, prom, etc.)
- Requests from merchants

Ensuring Safety

The safety of the underage decoys, volunteers and law enforcement, and the ability to observe the provision of alcohol to underage youth are the most important elements of a shoulder tap operation.

Youth approaching an unknown individual in a parking lot and soliciting them to purchase alcohol can create a real safety risk for the youth volunteer. The individual approached may be intoxicated and/or potentially dangerous. Proper protocols should be developed during the planning phase to ensure safety concerns are minimized.

- **Youth Safety**

Training should be provided to youth on avoiding potentially dangerous situations and youth should be advised not to approach subjects that make them feel uncomfortable. Safety signals should be developed for youth to utilize when they believe they are in danger or in need of help.

Safety signals should be well thought out, easy to implement, and not be easily mistaken for other gestures. All operatives working the detail should be briefed on safety signals and officers should be in close proximity to intervene in the case of a potentially dangerous or hostile encounter. If resources are available and allowed for by law, decoys may be wired with a listening device to allow law enforcement to easily monitor the conversation and intervene as warranted. Local legal council should be sought to determine the legality of utilizing listening devices in operations.

- **Other Volunteers**

Adult volunteers assisting in staffing shoulder tap operations should be issued reflective safety vests that clearly identify them as volunteers. The volunteers should be placed in secondary areas of the operation where the risk of injury from hostile and/or intoxicated individuals is minimized. At no point should an adult volunteer be the initial point of contact with the target. Volunteers should be advised that they have no law enforcement authority and should engage the targets only after law enforcement indicates that it is safe to do so and only under the direct supervision of a sworn law enforcement officer.

- **Site Safety**

Site visits should occur prior to implementation to ensure locations utilized for operations do not have any inherent safety concerns. Locations selected should have adequate visibility of the store and youth decoys from all directions. Locations should have sufficient lighting for the safety of both youth decoys and the officers working the operation. Law enforcement should be stationed in close proximity to ensure they can maintain a visual on youth decoys, while also ensuring they are able to discretely blend into the site.

Adherence to State and Local Requirements

Enforcement efforts must adhere to state and local requirements. During the planning phase, legal advice should be sought from the state's attorney and/or the local legal counsel with respect to the operational procedures of shoulder tap operations including evidence handling, arrests, decoy criteria and reporting. Judicial partners can also help establish guidelines for avoiding issues of entrapment (e.g. what youth decoys are and/or are not allowed to say or do). They may even provide specific language for youth volunteers to use in order to establish the necessary legal elements to prove a crime occurred. Collaborating with judicial partners during the planning phase will help to ensure protocols/procedures are legally acceptable and allow for the successful prosecution of cases.

Decoy Criteria

Underage youth volunteers should meet the following criteria:

1. **Be under 20 years of age:**

When conducting shoulder tap operations, the young person soliciting an adult to purchase alcohol on their behalf must be underage. If the buyer is not actually underage, no law would be violated when the adult furnishes alcohol to them. Underage decoys should not be too close to the age of 21, as it is beneficial for youth to still be underage when and if they have to provide testimony in court proceedings resulting from shoulder tap operations.

2. **Appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females):**

Youth decoys should appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females). Appearance of youth decoys is a major consideration in defending the investigations against charges of trickery or entrapment. The decoys should look and act their actual age and should not alter/enhance their appearance. Ball caps and sunglasses, which may hide portions of the face or disguise the volunteer, should not be permitted. Revealing or suggestive clothing should never be worn by volunteers.

3. **Have not been cited for liquor violations and do not have a criminal record:**

Youth decoys should not have been cited for liquor violations and should not have a criminal record. Defense counsels have been known to challenge the credibility of youth decoys if they have a criminal record or previous liquor violation. This will help avoid any perception that the youth volunteer is compelled to entice sales in return for lesser sanctions or personal benefit. This pitfall can lead to issues in court and result in the dismissal of enforcement activities.

4. **Willing and able to conduct undercover work:**

All volunteers should be fully informed of the nature of their role within the operation and be willing and able to fulfill all functions required of them.

5. **Willing and able to prepare a written statement of their involvement:**

Youth decoys should be willing and able to prepare a written statement of their involvement in the operation. After each operation, underage volunteers will be required to complete a form or written statement documenting each operation. Youth decoys should be trained in reporting so that critical information needed for the prosecution of cases is captured in each form/statement.

6. **Willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the program:**

Youth volunteers should be willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the shoulder tap program. It may take months for a case to work its way through the court system. Consequently, youth decoys need to understand their commitment extends beyond the day of the actual operation.

7. **All volunteers should sign a permission/ acknowledgement form which includes program expectations and requirements and a non-disclosure statement indicating they will not discuss the program with others:**

Forms should clearly describe the tasks to be performed and the limits on the volunteer's authority and immunity. This document is intended to protect both the agency and the volunteer.

8. **Have a signed parental release for volunteers under 18:**
Signed parental release forms are required for all volunteers under the age of 18. It may also be advantageous to obtain parental release forms for those over 18, or at minimum work to ensure all parents are aware of their child's involvement in the program.
9. **Have their age-appearance validated using law enforcement-approved protocols:**
The last required criteria for youth decoys is that they have their age-appearance validated using law enforcement-approved protocols. A common defense of adults charged with furnishing alcohol to a minor is that the youth looked to be over 21. An age verification process will obtain an objective assessment of the age of each volunteer from a sample of adults. These results can then be used in court proceedings to challenge this defense.

There are two methods for validating the age of youth volunteers:

- **Method One:** simply involves asking 12 random adults in the community to guess the decoy's age. Of the ages assessed by the 12 individuals, the highest and lowest numbers are tossed out. The remaining ten numbers are added together and then divided by 10 to determine the perceived age of the decoy. Individuals participating in this method should not be affiliated with the police department to ensure opinions are unbiased.
- **Method Two:** involves convening a standing age assessment panel comprised of various individuals from the community (e.g. parents, ministers, youth, teacher, alcohol retailer, etc.). Decoys are presented to the panel and together the panel provides a written assessment of the age of each decoy.

Regardless of the age assessment method utilized, youth that assess 21 years of age or older should not participate in operations. In addition, it is important that the process is well documented. A well-defined and well documented process can help to enhance the credibility and fairness of your program.

Decoy Documentation

A file should be established on each volunteer that verifies that he/she meets the established criteria. Each file should contain:

- Photographs from each detail/operation
- Copy of driver's license, state-issued ID card, or birth certificate
- Background check results
- Acknowledgement form
- Parental consent form (if under 18 years of age)
- Age verification results
- Record of operational reports

Decoy Recruitment

In recruiting underage volunteers, you might explore:

- Family members of coalition members and/or officers
- Faith-based organizations
- Youth groups/members of school-based peer leader programs
- Police cadets or interns
- Criminal justice students
- Referrals from youth already involved in program
- Newspaper ads
- Social media

No matter how the volunteer is recruited or who he or she is referred by, all underage youth decoys must be subjected to the same protocols, background checks and age verification testing.

Age Verification Form - Template

Step 1: Enter the age reported by each adult surveyed.

1. Age reported by adult 1: _____
2. Age reported by adult 2: _____
3. Age reported by adult 3: _____
4. Age reported by adult 4: _____
5. Age reported by adult 5: _____
6. Age reported by adult 6: _____
7. Age reported by adult 7: _____
8. Age reported by adult 8: _____
9. Age reported by adult 9: _____
10. Age reported by adult 10: _____
11. Age reported by adult 11: _____
12. Age reported by adult 12: _____

Step 2: Add all of the ages together: Sub-Total: _____

Step 3: Subtract the highest and the lowest ages reported:

(Sub-total: __) - (Highest age reported: __ + lowest age reported: __) = Total: _____

Step 4:

Total _____ ÷ by 10 = **Perceived Age:** _____.

Youth Decoy ID: _____

Date: _____

Location of verification: _____

Officer Name: _____

Officer Signature: _____

Source: PIRE ⁽³⁾

Identify Sanctions

SAPP Standard:

- d. Sanctions are identified which are swift, certain and of appropriate severity to the policy/ordinance/law violation

The Shoulder Tap Program Plan should identify the sanctions that will be applied for the violation of the law. SAPP requires that sanctions be identified which are swift, certain and of appropriate severity to the violation.

Illinois Penalties

In Illinois, it is illegal to furnish alcohol to minors (235 ILCS 5/6-16 (a)(iii)). This legislation states, in part, that no person, after purchasing or otherwise obtaining alcohol shall sell, give or deliver said alcohol to anyone under the age of 21. Violations to this state law can result in charges of a Class A Misdemeanor and can result in imprisonment for up to one year. Additionally, potential fines can range from a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$2,000 for a second or subsequent offense. This provision also prohibits a minor from furnishing alcohol to another minor.

Local Sanctions

Local ordinances should clearly state the fines/penalties for violations, to ensure transparency and fairness. Local ordinances allow for greater flexibility to apply creative sanctions and/or progressive fines than if state law is used. Additionally, municipal charges allow any fines and court costs collected to remain at the local level and allow for a more streamlined process for applying violations.

Prior to initiating the operation, communities should review their local ordinances and talk with judicial partners to ensure that the resulting penalties and sanctions will have the desired deterrent effect. The community may decide to advocate for an ordinance/policy adoption or change if the existing sanctions are not of appropriate severity.

A key to the effectiveness of sanctions is to ensure that officers are developing solid cases that will not be dismissed or plead out to a lesser crime. The stronger the case, the more likely violators will be held accountable and the greater the deterrent effect of the strategy.

Provide Training for Volunteers

SAPP Standard:

- e. Training is provided for non-law enforcement operatives who are part of the enforcement effort (e.g. underage youth, coalition members). Training for underage youth decoys should include:
- How to act, speak, and respond to adult buyers
 - Dressing in a manner consistent with peers in their age group
 - Ways to avoid dangerous situations
 - Types of alcohol (or other items) the volunteer should request from potential buyers
 - Correct volunteer responses to subjects that either refuse their solicitation or furnish alcohol
-

Both youth and adults can be utilized to enhance operations. Typically youth will play the role of decoys and attempt to solicit adults to buy alcohol on their behalf. The role of adult volunteers in the enforcement effort of shoulder tap operations is one of support as opposed to actual enforcement. Adult volunteers can support shoulder tap operations in a number of ways including:

- **Organizing and Paying for Trainings** for youth decoys or law enforcement to support the operations,
- **Recruiting Youth Operatives** through utilizing existing relationships built with community youth or tapping into networks to develop a pool of potential recruits,
- **Building Community Support** through engaging the media and raising awareness for the local underage drinking problem and the effectiveness of shoulder tap programs, and
- **Supporting Operations** by collecting data and tracking the number of individuals approached, their gender, their age and if they purchased for the youth; distributing informational literature to those approached outlining the costs and consequences of underage drinking, and assisting with follow-up paperwork.

Volunteer Training

Youth and adult volunteers who are helping to staff shoulder tap operations should be provided training and attend operational briefings prior to each operation to ensure volunteer understanding and appropriate and safe volunteer functions during shoulder tap operations.

The Shoulder Tap Program Plan should outline how and when volunteers will be trained and include the training agenda, topics and materials to be used in training. Volunteer training, particularly the training of youth decoys, is critically important to the success of operations. Youth who will serve as decoys need to be comfortable in their role and be provided with the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct operations with confidence. During the formal training process, youth should be provided with information on what to wear, what to say, and how to act.

Protocols and Expectations

A walk through of protocols and expectations will prepare youth for a successful operation. During training, volunteers should be provided with clear guidance on exactly how to approach and converse with adults. The use of a role-play scenario is a great way to build confidence and reduce nervousness. Setting the stage and putting all volunteers through the steps of a shoulder tap operation will ensure that everyone is on the same page before proceeding to the field.

What to Say/What Not to Say

Specific language should be provided in training to ensure youth decoys clearly indicate they are underage and help avoid raising the issue of entrapment as a potential defense (e.g. “Hey mister, I’m 17 years old and I just tried to buy beer and they refused to sell to me. Will you please go in and buy me some beer?”). Additionally, youth should be trained on how to respond to questions from the target regarding payment for alcohol. Youth should not promise to pay an adult a fee for buying or agree to give the purchaser change from the transaction. These payments can be seen as trickery or entrapment and will weaken a case against an adult provider.

Dress Code

It is important that underage volunteers do nothing to enhance their appearance during shoulder tap operations. They should not dress in a manner that confuses or tricks adult targets. Decoys should be instructed to wear clothing that is age-appropriate and that fits the community they are working in. Youth should not wear dated clothing or items signifying a college, fraternity/sorority, etc. Males should shave before reporting to work and should not wear a ball cap or sunglasses. Females should not wear excessive make-up, jewelry, or revealing clothing.

Safety

Training for youth volunteers should address where youth should stand to make sure they are always in view of the observing officer in order to ensure their safety. The use of satellite map images is a useful tool in helping everyone involved determine where they should be positioned for the operation and distress response protocols. Youth should be given signals to inform everyone working the detail that they feel they are in danger. Distress signals should be

easily implemented and not easily confused with other gestures. Youth should be given the authority to walk away from the adult and go straight to the backup officer if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable for any reason.

Alcohol to Request

It is important that the volunteer know exactly what they are requesting from the adult target. The product of choice should be age appropriate; something that local youth would normally purchase without raising suspicion (e.g. beer or alcopops). Typically young drinkers select common, less expensive brands of beer in small quantities (i.e. 24 or 40oz bottles, six-packs, etc.). Youth should be instructed on the specific brand names and quantities to request (e.g. a four pack of Smirnoff Ice Green Apple or a six pack of Miller Lite, etc.). Additionally, the alcohol purchased is evidence; canned/bottled products help confirm alcohol content and likely won't require lab testing.

Appropriate Responses

Youth should be instructed how to respond to adults who refuse to purchase alcohol for them, as well as how to respond after being provided with alcohol. Youth should also be provided training on responding to offers for other illegal substances or activities. If an adult furnishes alcohol to the decoy, officers may choose to mock-up the interaction like they are arresting both the youth and adult or may instruct the youth on where to go and what to do while law enforcement approaches the adult provider. All alcohol and remaining money should be relinquished to law enforcement as evidence and law enforcement should be immediately briefed by youth on the specifics of the interaction with the adult target.

Finally, youth decoys must understand the judicial process following operations. The plan should ensure decoys understand that they may be called upon to be a witness and may have to testify in public before a judge, jury, or city council regarding the particular details of a shoulder tap operation.

Publicize Results

SAPP Standard:

- f. Information about the policy and enforcement effort results are sufficiently publicized to promote awareness of the policy/consequences within the community
-

The Shoulder Tap Program Plan should include strategies for getting the media on board and outline the system to be used for informing the community of shoulder tap operations as well as collecting and reporting results. During the planning phase for shoulder tap operations, it is important to develop relationships with the media, learn their protocols and build support for the strategy.

Establish a Relationship with the Media

Establishing a relationship and generating interest and support for the issue in advance of the operation will increase the likelihood of getting media coverage when it's needed. Develop a plan to become a resource for the media when it comes to underage drinking issues. Media should be informed of the enforcement campaign prior to implementation. A concerted media plan can reinforce the deterrent effect of the strategy and change public perception regarding underage drinking and the provision of alcohol by community adults.

Develop a Media Plan

Develop a plan to become a resource for the media when it comes to underage drinking issues.

Prior to the operation:

- Develop a current contact list that includes contact information for each relevant local media outlet
- Introduce yourself to reporters, editors and others who are most likely to cover your issue
- Provide information that will make your contacts want to stay on top of the issue
- Let them know you can be reached for comment on the issue when needed

Obtain Enforcement Data

SAPP Standard:

- g. Enforcement agencies have agreed to share enforcement data at minimum annually with the coalition/provider

SAPP providers/coalitions who are sponsoring and/or working with law enforcement to conduct shoulder tap operations are required to obtain results from all operations conducted.

SAPP providers sponsoring shoulder tap operations must report the following:

- Number of off-premise alcohol retailers in the community/target area
- Number of shoulder tap operations conducted
- Number of retailer locations where operations were conducted
- Number of persons from whom alcohol purchase was requested
- Number of persons who purchased/provided alcohol
- Number of sanctions/consequences administered

A process/system for documenting and sharing information should be developed prior to the start of operations. The agreement and methods for sharing information may be documented in an MOU or Linkage Agreement and should be included in the Shoulder Tap Program Plan.

Shoulder Tap Program Plan - Template

	Description/Checklist
Describe how the coalition has or will secure the support of law enforcement (attach MOU).	
Describe how the coalition has or will secure the support of adjudicators/prosecutors.	
Ensure written protocols/procedures are developed that include (attach law enforcement protocols/procedures):	<input type="checkbox"/> Method(s) for scheduling enforcement operations <input type="checkbox"/> Strategies to ensure public/youth safety <input type="checkbox"/> A description of how enforcement will adhere to state and local requirements (laws, ordinances, policies) <input type="checkbox"/> Strategies for recruiting underage youth volunteers
Develop forms/documentation procedures that demonstrate underage volunteers meet the following requirements (attach forms to be obtained):	<input type="checkbox"/> Are under 20 years of age <input type="checkbox"/> Appear their true age (no facial hair for males or heavy makeup for females) <input type="checkbox"/> Have not been cited for liquor violations and do not have a criminal record <input type="checkbox"/> Willing and able to conduct undercover work <input type="checkbox"/> Willing and able to prepare a written statement of their involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Willing to testify in court proceedings resulting from the program <input type="checkbox"/> Have a signed permission/acknowledgement form which includes program expectations and requirements and a non-disclosure statement for youth indicating they will not discuss the program with others <input type="checkbox"/> Have a signed parental release for volunteers under 18

Describe the age-appearance validation process to be used with each volunteer	
Describe the sanctions that will be applied for violations	
Describe the training process for volunteers who will be part of the enforcement efforts.	
Develop or obtain training materials for underage youth decoys that include (attach training materials):	<input type="checkbox"/> How to act, speak, and respond to vendors <input type="checkbox"/> How to dress in a manner consistent with peers in their age group <input type="checkbox"/> Ways to avoid dangerous situations <input type="checkbox"/> Types of alcohol (or other items) the volunteer should purchase <input type="checkbox"/> Correct volunteer responses to vendors that either refuse their purchase attempt or allow the alcohol purchase
Describe the methods and processes for publicizing results.	
Describe process and guidelines for the coalition to obtain enforcement data from law enforcement.	

Module Three:

Implementing Shoulder Tap Operations



Operational Briefings

For the successful implementation of shoulder tap operations it is critical to adhere to the protocols and procedures that were developed and approved during the planning phase. In addition to providing training to all officers, youth decoys, and adult volunteers involved in operations, it is essential to conduct operational briefings prior to each operation. Briefings help to ensure that all law enforcement officers and adult and youth volunteers clearly understand the operational plan and procedures guiding the operation. All volunteers and officers will be assigned specific duties/responsibilities for the operation during briefings. Typically, the supervising officer will scout the location prior to the operation and use the briefing as an opportunity to discuss unique issues related to the specific location of the operation. Additionally, briefings can be used to ensure all staff are aware of the distress signal(s) youth decoys will utilize to notify law enforcement of any uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations.

Types of Tools and Technology

Minimal tools and technology are needed to successfully conduct shoulder tap operations. Most of the equipment necessary are basic tools already on-hand in most police departments.

Law enforcement should have the following items available to conduct shoulder tap operations:

Purchase money- The amount should only be enough to cover the product requested by the youth decoy. Large denominations may give the appearance that the adult is being incentivized to purchase with the implied promise that they can keep the change. The serial numbers of money used should be recorded to be used as evidence against adult providers. It should be noted that SAPP funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol for shoulder tap operations.

Radios – Radios may be utilized for youth, other volunteers and officers to communicate with each other during the course of the operation.

Marked squad cars – A marked vehicle may be utilized by the contact officer to conduct a vehicle stop of the suspect after leaving the parking lot in order to help ensure youth safety.

Unmarked vehicles – An unmarked vehicle can be used for the observation officer to remain in the parking lot and witnesses the transaction.

Listening devices – Due to ever changing laws, if a local jurisdiction would want to use listening devices and/or record conversations, prosecutors must be contacted for guidance to establish legal procedures. Recordings would not be admissible in court in Illinois, however listening devices could potentially be used to help ensure safety of the youth decoys if legally allowable.

Binoculars – Depending on how close your observation officer can get to the location, binoculars may be necessary to enhance their vision of the store and the youth decoy(s) in the parking lot.

Clipboard, pens, and volunteer statement form - Basic supplies to help youth decoys write a statement immediately following each operation can help to ensure necessary information for any subsequent court proceedings is adequately documented.

Written Statements

Following operations, youth will need to complete a written statement documenting interactions that result in an adult purchasing alcohol for them. Statements will be used as evidence in legal proceedings to hold adult providers accountable for their actions. As such, it is critical that youth have the basic skills necessary to compose a brief report. The report will not need to be extensive, but will need to include the basic information regarding the transaction. It may be beneficial for law enforcement to develop pre-printed forms which simply require youth volunteers to fill in the blanks and easily capture the information necessary for court proceedings. Prevention coalitions can work to provide training or assistance to law enforcement in building the writing skills of youth decoys to ensure they are able to highlight the critical information needed to build solid court cases against adult providers.

Volunteer Statement Form - Template

Youth Decoy Name: _____ D.O.B.: _____

On [Click here to enter a date](#) at [Click here to enter a time](#), I was waiting outside of [Click here to enter store name](#) in the city of [Click here to enter city](#). I was assisting the ABC County Police Department as a volunteer.

I approached a [Click here to enter a description](#) Male/Female and asked if [He/She](#) would buy me a [Click here to enter the quality and type of alcohol](#). I said that I was only [Click here to enter age](#) and the clerk inside the store would not sell to me. The [Man/Woman](#) said [Click here to enter text](#).

I gave the Man/Woman [Click here to enter amount of money](#). [He/She](#) took the money and entered the store. When the [Man/Woman](#) came out, [He/She](#) gave me the alcohol. I did not offer to pay more than [Click here to enter the amount of money provided for the transaction](#).

As the [Man/Woman](#) left the parking lot, in a [Click here to enter description of vehicle](#), I notified Officer [Click here to enter officer name](#). I gave the alcohol to Officer [Click here to enter officer name](#) and told the officer what happened.

I have read the statement above and it is true to the best of my knowledge.

Volunteer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Officer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Source: PIRE ⁽³⁾

Court Proceedings

Youth decoys must be committed to the shoulder tap program and willing to participate in the program beyond the actual operations. It may take months for cases against adult providers to make their way through the court system. While statements made immediately following operations will serve as the basis for a case, youth decoys may also need to testify in court to hold adults accountable.

In addition to the training provided to youth on courtroom demeanor (e.g. how to dress, respond to questions, and respond to the defense counsel), youth can benefit from attending court proceedings and witness the court proceedings first hand before they have to testify. Youth should be reminded that they are prohibited from discussing the specifics of any shoulder tap operation with anyone not affiliated with the program until after the case goes to trial. Prior to that, charges against adults are merely allegations, not convictions. The supervising officer should obtain the court date in advance, inform the youth and other officers working the operation of the court date and brief all those involved in the case, prepping them to provide testimony as needed.

Publicizing Results

The media both informs the community and influences public opinion. Therefore, it is essential to develop and maintain relationships with media and work to focus the community on the issue in order to build support while implementing the law enforcement strategy.

A media plan should be utilized during implementation and efforts should coincide with times of heightened risk of youth alcohol use, such as homecoming, prom, graduation, and holidays. Media should also be engaged following each shoulder tap operation conducted to highlight the effectiveness of the program, and help bolster continued support.

Timely information should be provided to the media, piggybacking on times of heightened awareness - news becomes stale very quickly and a delay in contacting the media may result in the inability to obtain coverage.

Evaluation

Data collection and evaluation of shoulder tap operations should be conducted during and immediately following each operation to ensure standardization and consistency. This can be done by both volunteers and officers and can take many forms.

SAPP Required Outputs

As mentioned in Module Two, SAPP providers are required to report the following:

- Number of off-premise alcohol retailers in the community/target area
- Number of shoulder tap operations conducted
- Number of retailer locations where operations were conducted
- Number of persons from whom alcohol purchase was requested
- Number of persons who purchased/provided alcohol
- Number of sanctions/consequences administered

Operation Documentation

Law enforcement typically will maintain a detailed log of all operations and document all citations issued. The log might include the name of the location, the date and time of the operation, the number of adults approached during an operation and results of each attempt. If a violation occurs, a police report should be created that will contain the youth decoy's statement, any statements made by the offending adult provider and a description of the evidence and the evidence chain. The supervising officer of the operation should ensure that citations and reports are forwarded to the appropriate authority.

Operational Feedback

As there can always be issues and challenges faced with operations, it may be beneficial to debrief with officers and youth/adult volunteers following each operation to assess what went well and what may need to be addressed prior to subsequent operations.

Judicial Data

Once law enforcement issues citations, it is up to the court system to follow-through. If you have built the support of the judicial system, as discussed earlier in the training, then the appropriate sanctions and penalties should be applied. SAPP providers are required to report the number of sanctions/consequences administered, and follow-up with the court system

as necessary to obtain this information. It may be necessary to consult with law enforcement officers involved with each case to get their input and help determine if any break downs are occurring in the judicial process, such as the prosecution or judges not following through/addressing the issue.

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