



Responsible Retailing Practices

Although most people under the age of 21 obtain the alcohol they drink from social sources, a comprehensive approach to preventing underage drinking must include commercial sources as well. While state and local policies vary, effective retailing practices should include training to ensure age verification, underage sales refusals, explicit store policies, and remedial training for non-compliant employees.

The following policies and programs offer beverage alcohol retailers numerous options to meet their compliance goals through self-regulation and create a culture of responsibility in their stores.

- **Regular and ongoing server training (in person and/or online) for all retail employees, especially non-compliant employees.**
- **Cops in Shops® programs** where law enforcement officers pose as retail employees to deter illegal attempts to purchase alcohol. This program has been effectively implemented in more than 40 states.
- **Mystery Shopper programs.** These program utilize legal-age “mystery shoppers” who provide immediate feedback to licensees on actual staff performance during attempts to purchase or be served beverage alcohol.
- **Compliance check programs.** These checks are conducted in strict compliance with enforcement procedures by local law enforcement.
- **Point of sale public awareness campaigns** deliver a strong message from the retailer to the community about its commitment to responsible alcohol sales and increase awareness of the legal purchase age and consequences of underage drinking.
- **Laws that allow retailers to bring civil action** against an underage person (or the underage person’s parents) who illegally enters an establishment, illegally attempts to purchase alcohol and/or successfully purchases alcohol after falsifying his/her age. Currently only Alaska and Wisconsin have these laws (Brown Jug legislation) in place. *This law does not apply to persons conducting compliance checks.*

Responsibility.org Position:

The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility supports comprehensive responsible retailing practices that ensure legal sales. Comprehensive efforts should include regular retailer training, mandatory remedial training for non-compliant employees, effectively publicized point of sale campaigns, and enforcement efforts.