



Use of False Identification for the Purchase of Alcohol

A common strategy utilized by underage individuals seeking to purchase alcohol is the use of false identification. Responsible retailing practices require those who sell alcoholic beverages to verify the age of the consumer prior to completing a transaction to ensure that the individual is of legal age (i.e., is 21 years or older pursuant to the [minimum legal drinking age law](#) enacted in every state). In an attempt to circumvent age verification protocols, youth often rely on false identification or “fake IDs” (e.g., driver’s license, passport, state-issued ID card) that has a date of birth that presents them as 21 years of age or older.

False identification can be produced in several different ways including:

- An altered birth date on a valid piece of identification;
- A valid piece of identification that is sold or lent to an underage individual;
- An expired piece of valid identification that is used by an underage individual; or
- A manufactured piece of identification.



While there is variance in state statutes, it is illegal to manufacture, possess, and use false identification for the purpose of purchasing alcohol. Furthermore, some states have enacted provisions that target individuals who lend valid identification to minors.

Research Highlights:

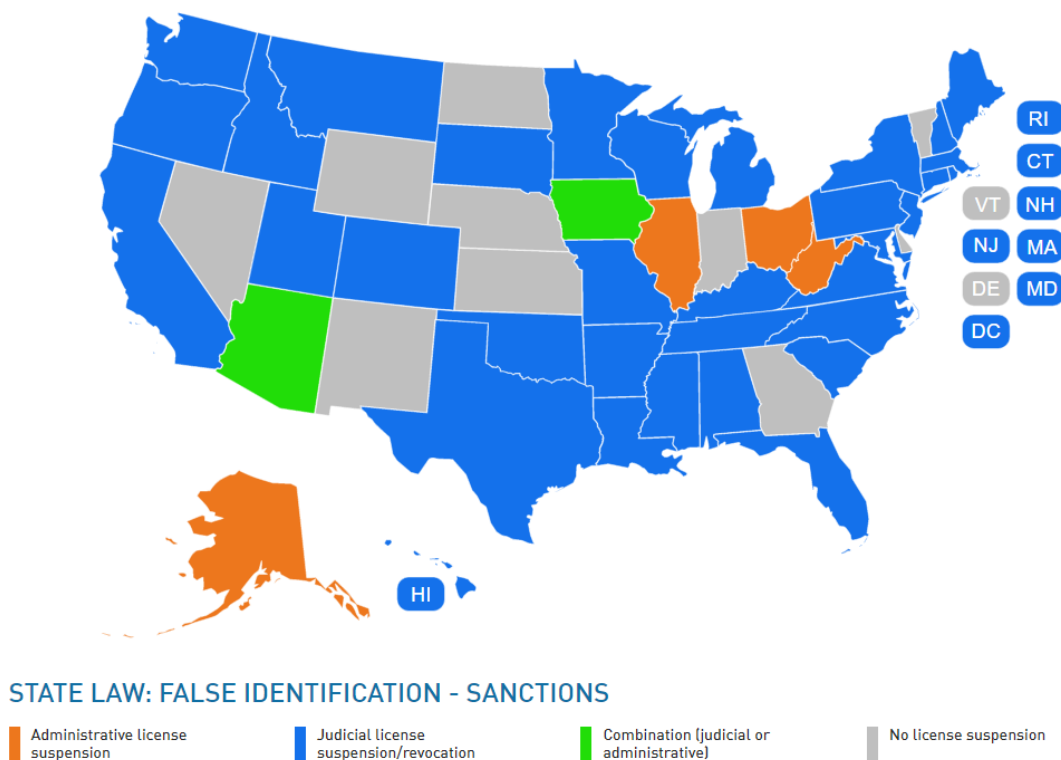
- Students possessing a fake ID have been found to be more likely than their peers to consume alcohol (Durkin et al., 1996; Martinez et al., 2007).
- In a cross-sectional online survey of 1,098 underage students at a large Midwestern university, 21% of respondents reported possessing a fake ID. Of those who owned false identification, 93.5% reported having used it, and only 29.1% reported having been caught (Martinez and Sher, 2010).
- Arria et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study of 1,015 college students to examine whether false ID use increased the risk for alcohol use disorder. The researchers found that false IDs were used by almost 2/3 (66.1%) of the sample. They noted that false ID use may contribute to alcohol use disorder risk by facilitating more frequent drinking. As a result, students who use false IDs represent an important target population for alcohol prevention activities. The study further identified predictors of false ID use frequency which include earlier onset of consumption, greater levels of alcohol and drug involvement during high school, higher levels of sensation-seeking, Greek life involvement, and living off-campus.
- Another longitudinal study authored by Martinez et al. (2007) examined the relationship between false ID ownership to heavy drinking. A sample of 3,720 undergraduates were assessed during the summer prior to commencing college and each semester during their freshman and sophomore years. The study revealed that the ownership of false IDs increased over time (12.5% precollege to 32.2% at the end of their sophomore year). Ownership of a false ID also predicted concurrent and next-semester heavy

drinking. Similar to previous findings, the researchers identified the acquisition and use of false IDs as a “significant public health problem” and recommend that punitive measures be applied to underage individuals who own and use false identification for the purpose of purchasing alcohol.

- In examining the effectiveness of false ID laws, Fell et al. (2014) found that supplier laws were associated with decreases in fatal alcohol-related crashes involving underage drinkers. False ID supplier laws make it illegal to produce false identification as well as transfer a valid or false ID to another person. At the time of the study, 24 states had adopted this type of law saving an estimated 14 lives annually as a result. The study revealed that the more stringent the law, the greater the deterrent effect.
- Stogner et al., (2016) determined that a substantial number of underage college students have fake IDs and are at higher risk for binge drinking, alcohol-related problems, alcohol-related arrests, and substance use. However, the researchers cautioned that while the implementation of laws and strategies that target the use of fake IDs (e.g., server training, fake ID production/supplier laws, liability laws, etc.) are important, many of the negative outcomes that are commonly associated with individuals who possess and use fake IDs may also be attributable to certain individual traits that can be addressed through other interventions. In other words, for some young adults, individual traits might place them at greater risk of engaging in risky and/or criminal behavior. One suggestion was to identify and target these at-risk youth by utilizing motivational, normative feedback, or skills interventions.

Prevalence:

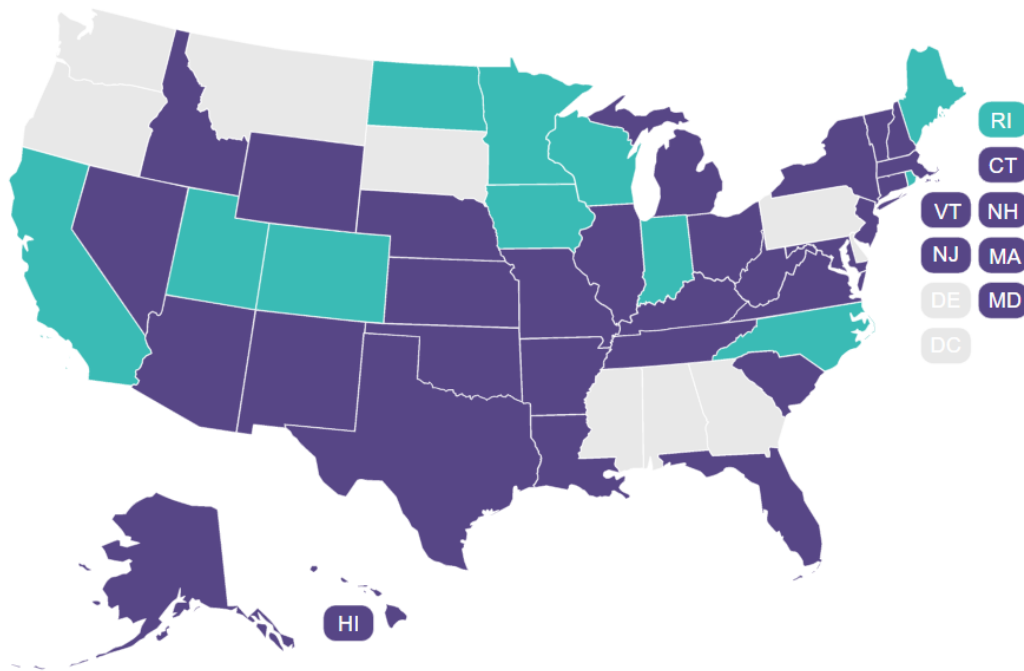
All 50 states and the District of Columbia prohibit any individual under the age of 21 from using false identification for the purpose of obtaining alcohol. According to the NIAAA’s *Alcohol Policy Information System* (APIS), 40 states and the District of Columbia have laws that authorize the suspension of driver licenses of youth who are caught using false identification to procure alcohol. The license suspension can be enacted by the courts as a sanction or administratively through the licensing system depending upon the state.



Access the Responsibility.org State Map to identify which states have instituted [license suspension provisions](#) and how these laws are enforced.

Distinctive Licenses for Drivers Under Age 21

Currently, 42 states have distinctive licenses for drivers who are under the age of 21. These licenses are created with the intention of making it simple for retailers and servers to distinguish them from regular driver licenses. For example, some states issue vertical state-issued IDs or driver’s licenses for individuals under 21 to denote their underage status. Upon reaching the age of 21, a new horizontal ID or license would be issued to that person. Other states denote on the license the year when a minor will turn 21. While these licenses are used by servers and retailers of alcohol, this policy applies to additional products and services that have similar age restrictions.



STATE LAW: FALSE IDENTIFICATION - POINT-OF-SALE POLICIES



Access the Responsibility.org [State Map](#) to identify which states have distinctive licenses for drivers under the age of 21 as well as the ability to seize fake IDs from underage individuals.

Responsibility.org Position:

Responsibility.org supports the application of penalties for underage persons who use, manufacture, and/or possess fraudulent identification for the purpose of procuring alcohol. States utilize a variety of policy options and strategies to aid retailers/servers in identifying fake IDs and Responsibility.org encourages the adoption of approaches deemed to be helpful in this effort.

References:

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