

Excellence in Prevention – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

Name of Program/Strategy: Responsible Beverage Service

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1. Overview and description

The focus of RBS programs is to prevent alcohol service to minor and intoxicated patrons and to intervene so intoxicated patrons do not drive. Efforts to promote RBS consist of the implementation of a combination of outlet policies (e.g., requiring clerks or servers to check identification for all customers appearing to be under the age of 30, cutting off service to intoxicated patrons, limiting sales of pitchers of alcohol, promoting alcohol-free drinks and food, and eliminating last call announcements) and training in their implementation (e.g., teaching clerks and servers to recognize altered or false identification, training servers to recognize intoxicated patrons and deny service). RBS can be implemented at both on-license (Saltz & Stanghetta, 1997) and off-license establishments (Grube, 1997). Voluntary programs appear to be less effective than mandatory programs or programs using incentives such as reduced liability. How RBS is implemented and what elements are included in a particular program may be an important determinant of its effectiveness. Policy development and implementation within outlets may be more

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important than server training in determining RBS effectiveness. Overall, however, establishing definite alcohol serving policies in each licensed establishment has the potential to reduce sales of alcohol to youth and overall problematic consumption of alcohol.

2. Implementation considerations (if available)

3. Descriptive information

Areas of Interest	Substance abuse prevention
Outcomes	
Outcome Categories	Alcohol
Ages	
Gender	Male Female
Races/Ethnicities	American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino White Race/ethnicity unspecified
Settings	
Geographic Locations	Urban Suburban Rural and/or frontier Tribal
Implementation History	
NIH Funding/CER Studies	
Adaptations	
Adverse Effects	
IOM Prevention Categories	Universal

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4. Outcomes

Scientific Evidence

Training of servers and changing the establishment's serving policies effectively reduce service to obviously intoxicated customers, which reduces in number of intoxicated patrons leaving a bar and the number of violent incidents surrounding on-premise outlets (Wallin, Norstrom & Andreasson, 2003).

Whether RBS interventions can reduce minors' use of alcohol is less clear. Establishments with firm and clear policies (e.g., checking ID for all patrons who appear under the age of 30) and a system for monitoring staff compliance are less likely to sell alcohol to minors (Wolfson et al., 1996a; 1996b).

Voluntary clerk and manager training in off license establishments appears to have a negligible effect on sales to minors above and beyond the effects of increased enforcement (Grube, 1997b; Wagenaar, Harwood, Silianoff, & Toomey, 2005a). Similarly, a study in Australia found that, even after training, age was rarely checked in bars, although decreases in the number of intoxicated patrons were observed (Lang, Stockwell, Rydon, & Beel, 1996, 1998).

In one study, RBS training was associated with an increase in self-reported checking of identification by servers (Buka & Birdthistle, 1999).

Server training is most effective when coupled with a change in actual serving policy and practices of a bar or restaurant (Saltz and Hennessy, 1990b; Saltz, 1988; Saltz et al., 1987b).

Establishments with firm and clearly stated policies (e.g., that all patrons who appear younger than 30 must have their IDs checked), coupled with a system for monitoring staff compliance, are less likely to sell alcohol to minors (Wolfson et al., 1996a; Wolfson et al., 1996b).

Some studies, however, showed interventions had little influence (Grube, 1997; Lange, Stockwell, Rydon, & Beel, 1996, 1998). See Rydon & Stockwell, 1997, for a summary of RBS strategies for licensed establishments.

A qualitative analysis of 23 state RBS laws determined that RBS legislation was weak across all states overall. Although some states were strong in one or two of the RBS components, almost all states were weak in at least one component (Mosher, Toomey, Good, Harwood & Wagenaar, 2002)

Factors other than server training can also influence serving practices in licensed establishments, such as enforcement of existing ABC laws (Lange et al., 1998), server liability (or dram shop) laws (Buka & Birdthistle, 1999), high-profile server liability cases (Buka & Birdthistle, 1999), and community coalitions to encourage responsible serving practices. These factors can influence the degree of management support for server training and improvements in serving practices, essential for changing server behavior (Wolfson et al., 1996b).

Currently, 47 states and the District of Columbia prohibit sales to obviously intoxicated persons (Florida, Nevada, and Wyoming are the only exceptions). Despite these laws, alcohol sales to obviously intoxicated patrons in on-premise establishments, such as bars, continue to occur 58 to 85 percent of the time. These laws are often not enforced by the police and are ignored by bar and liquor store owners (Toomey et al., 2004).

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RBS has been found to reduce the number of intoxicated patrons leaving a bar, car crashes, sales to intoxicated patrons, sales to minors, and incidents of violence surrounding outlets (Wallin, Norstrom, & Andreasson, 2003).

- 5. **Cost effectiveness report (Washington State Institute of Public Policy – if available)**
- 6. **Washington State results (from Performance Based Prevention System (PBPS) – if available)**
- 7. **Who is using this program/strategy**

Washington Counties	Oregon Counties

- 8. **Study populations**
- 9. **Quality of studies**

The documents below were reviewed for Quality of Research. The research point of contact can provide information regarding the studies reviewed and the availability of additional materials, including those from more recent studies that may have been conducted.

References

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10. Readiness for Dissemination

11. Costs (if available)

12. Contacts

Washington State Liquor Control Board
MAST—Mandatory Alcohol Server Training
Responsible Vendor Program
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Olympia, WA 98504
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Learn More by Visiting: <http://liq.wa.gov/>

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