

RESPONSIBLE BEVERAGE SERVICE: OFF-SALE TRAINING

An Overview of RBS Off-Sale Best Practices A Resource from the Binge and Underage Drinking Initiative

In 2017, the California State Legislature passed AB 1221 which required all businesses with an on-sale alcohol license* to receive responsible beverage service (RBS) training.

RBS training is intended to improve the safety of employees, customers, and the community as a whole by training employees on how to more safely serve and complete sales involving alcohol. While this legislation is a great step forward for reducing alcohol-related harm, there is no such requirement exists for off-sale licenses.*

Like on-sale, off-sale license locations can be the source of alcohol-related harms and have their own unique challenges. These potential harms can be mitigated by ensuring all employees at an off-sale establishment receive RBS training.



*DEFINITIONS:

ON-SALE ALCOHOL LICENSE:

Locations where you can purchase and consume alcohol on site (i.e. restaurants, bars, clubs).

OFF SALE ALCOHOL LICENSE:

Locations where you can purchase alcohol, but cannot consume it on site (i.e. liquor stores, convenience stores).

Some of the risks associated with off-sale license locations include:

- A strong correlation between the concentration of off-sale licenses and violent crimes as well as other risky drinking behaviors such as drinking and driving.^{1,2,4,7}
- The sale of products with high alcohol content and special promotions can encourage an increase in binge drinking and other dangerous behaviors.^{3,5}
- Increased access to alcohol and the potential increase in the sale of alcohol to minors.^{1,6}
- Low performance standards for off-sale license types are often correlated with public nuisance activities such as littering, public urination, vandalism, etc.^{5,8}

These risks can be reduced by establishing sensible standards and adopting best practices such as RBS training.





SOLUTION #1: ENSURE RBS TRAINING IS COMPREHENSIVE.

For RBS training to be effective, participants should learn both the social and physical healthy impacts of alcohol on individuals and communities, and learn about liability issues and their responsibilities when selling alcohol to the public. Communicating the risks associated with poor serving practices is necessary to strengthen compliance. Additionally, it is important to highlight the benefits of creating positive social environments and how alcohol-related harms that can be reduced thanks to the practices highlighted in the training.

SOLUTION #2: REQUIRE ALL EMPLOYEES AND THEIR SUPERVISORS TO BE RBS TRAINED.

It is important that all staff and their supervisors complete RBS training so that both staff and those supervising them understand the proper procedures that need to be followed regarding alcohol sales. Also, such training can educate supervisors regarding liability issues and how to reduce these risks when completing transactions involving the sale of alcohol.



SOLUTION #3: REQUIRE RBS AS PART OF CUPs and NCBOs.

Conditional use permits (CUPs) and non-conforming business ordinances (NCBO; also known as deemed approved ordinances) give local governments the ability to set conditions and performance standards for off-sale outlets. Including RBS training as a requirement in CUPs and NCBOs ensures both new applicants for off-sale licenses as well as existing license holders complete these trainings.

SOLUTION #4: HAVE A DEDICATED COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Having a dedicated compliance officer is a cost-effective means of ensuring RBS training requirements are completed and important practices such as checking IDs consistently before completing a transaction are followed. In addition, a compliance officer can partner with local businesses to ensure they are aware of new changes to the laws impacting them, are aware of resources to aid them in staying compliant with these laws, and work with businesses to remedy other issues before they become a public health and safety issue.



SOLUTION #5: OFFER RBS REFRESHER COURSES.

Every year, new state and local laws change the landscape for businesses and new products introduced into the market may have some special concerns surrounding them that employees and their supervisors should be aware of. Requiring refresher training courses will also ensure business partners are up to date on the local laws and regulations that pertain to the sale of alcohol and know the most recent best practices for operating more safely.



SOLUTION #6: REQUIRE RBS TRAINING FOR DRIVERS DELIVERING ALCOHOL.

As a result of the pandemic relief legislation, both on-sale and off-sale alcohol outlets were granted the privilege to make drinks to go and deliver alcoholic beverages. Studies show that third-party delivery platforms have not traditionally taken the necessary precautions to ensure alcoholic beverages are being kept out of the hands of minors and inebriated people.⁹ In order to prevent this, we must require those delivering alcohol to undergo RBS training.

ACTION STEPS

- Contact _____ (IPS, regional provider, etc.) to find out more about responsible retailer programs.
- [Sample municipal code from Imperial Beach, CA, that outlines RBS off-sale training requirement](https://library.qcode.us/lib/imperial_beach_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_9-chapter_9_05) or go to (https://library.qcode.us/lib/imperial_beach_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_9-chapter_9_05)
- [Assembly Bill 1221](#).
- Share information on the current [ABC Licensee Education on Alcohol and Drugs \(LEAD\)](#) training for off-sale establishments.
- [Click here](https://www.abc.ca.gov/education/lead-training/register-for-online-lead-training/) to register for a LEAD training, or go to (<https://www.abc.ca.gov/education/lead-training/register-for-online-lead-training/>)
- Interested in speaking with your local city council member or state representative? Reach out to the BUDI learn how you can best advocate for your community.
- Report liquor stores that are not complying with the best practices and are endangering customers on the [Department of ABC's website](#).
- Work with local organizations concerned with issues related to alcohol <https://publicstrategies.org/>.

REFERENCES

1. American Public Health Association. (2019, November 5). *Addressing Alcohol-Related Harms: A Population Level Response*. Addressing alcohol-related harms: A population level response. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2020/01/14/addressing-alcohol-related-harms-a-population-level-response>
2. City Health. (2021, March 2). *Preventing violence in American cities with Safer Alcohol Sales*. Policy Reports. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from <https://debeaumont.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SaferAlcoholSalesReport2021.pdf>
3. Courtney, A. L., Casey, B. J., & Rapuano, K. M. (2020). A neurobiological model of alcohol marketing effects on underage drinking. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement*, (s19), 68–80. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2020.s19.68>
4. Jernigan, D. H., Sparks, M., Yang, E., & Schwartz, R. (2013). Using public health and community partnerships to reduce density of alcohol outlets. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 10*. <https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.120090>
5. Jernigan, D., & Ross, C. S. (2020). The alcohol marketing landscape: Alcohol industry size, structure, strategies, and Public Health Responses. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement*, (s19), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2020.s19.13>
6. Morrison, C. N., Byrnes, H. F., Miller, B. A., Wiehe, S. E., Ponicki, W. R., & Wiebe, D. J. (2019). Exposure to alcohol outlets, alcohol access, and alcohol consumption among adolescents. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 205*, 107622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107622>
7. Mosher, J. F., & Saetta, S. L. (2007). (publication). *Best Practices in Responsible Alcoholic Beverage Sales and Service Training*. Ventura, CA: Ventura County Behavioral Health Department.
8. Sacks, J. J., Brewer, R. D., Mesnick, J., Holt, J. B., Zhang, X., Kanny, D., Elder, R., & Gruenewald, P. J. (2019). Measuring Alcohol Outlet Density: An overview of strategies for Public Health Practitioners. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 26*(5), 481–488. <https://doi.org/10.1097/phh.0000000000001023>
9. Hirata, E. (2022, July 20). *Minor Decoy Delivery Operations* [PowerPoint slides]. Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.