

# Responsible Hospitality

by Tom Colthurst

## What Is Responsible Hospitality?

Responsible Hospitality (RH)—also called Responsible Beverage Service (RBS)—encompasses a variety of strategies for reducing risks associated with the sale and service of alcoholic beverages. RH programs have three goals: (1) to prevent illegal alcohol service to minors, (2) to reduce the likelihood of drinkers becoming intoxicated, and (3) to prevent those who are impaired from harming themselves or others.<sup>1</sup> Research literature suggests that properly implemented and enforced RH strategies can reduce the incidence of intoxication and adverse alcohol-related consequences.<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

RH can apply to commercial settings where alcohol is sold for either on-premise or off-premise consumption and to social settings where alcohol is offered without charge. Bars, restaurants, and sports facilities are commercial on-premise settings. Liquor stores and other retail establishments like grocery stores and gasoline service stations, depending on state laws, are examples of commercial off-premise settings. Social settings might be private homes, fraternity or clubhouses, or beaches and parks.

In its 2002 report *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, a federal task force recommended that “college presidents, campus alcohol program planners, and student and community leaders explore . . . responsible beverage service policies in social and commercial settings . . . because they have been successful with similar populations, although they have not yet been comprehensively evaluated with college students. . . . [While t]hese environmental strategies are not guaranteed to alter the behavior of every college student, . . . they can help change those aspects of the campus and community culture that support excessive and underage alcohol use.”<sup>6</sup>

A companion implementation guide to *A Call to Action* urged campus and community coalitions “to curtail youth access to alcohol and to eliminate irresponsible alcohol sales and marketing practices by local bars, restaurants, and liquor outlets . . . [by] . . .

requiring use of registered and trained alcohol servers, and instituting responsible server training programs.”<sup>7</sup>

RH strategies include policies and practices designed to prevent alcohol sales to minors and intoxicated guests, thereby reducing the risk of alcohol-related harm and resultant civil and criminal liabilities. The following are recommended RH techniques:

- Promote drinks without alcohol.
- Provide food and nondrinking activities.
- Check for proof-of-age identification.
- Preclude adults from purchasing alcohol for underage youth.
- Serve alcohol in smaller standard sizes, limiting the number of servings.
- Restrict sales of pitchers.
- Eliminate last-call announcements.
- Monitor and slow down or cut off guests who might otherwise become intoxicated.
- Provide adequate security and supervision.

RH may also include arrangements for safe transportation for guests.<sup>1</sup>

## Key Elements of Successful RH

A 2003 National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM) report summarized RH research findings and concluded that successful RH was characterized by “six key elements”:<sup>8</sup>

1. All servers and sellers are at least 21 years of age.
2. Staff are aware of legal responsibility.
3. Staff are aware of the alcohol sales outlet’s policies as well as what sanctions to expect for violations.
4. All patrons who appear to be less than 30 years old are required to present valid age identification.
5. Staff receive training regarding acceptable age ID and follow clearly understood guidelines.
6. Managers regularly check on staff compliance with RH policy and administer sanctions in the event of policy violations.

Based on a national meta-analysis of research on server training, James F. Mosher, a public health attorney with the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, and Traci Toomey, a social scientist at the University of Minnesota, concluded that effective RBS programs require at least five components: (1) training servers in physiological, social, and legal dimensions; (2) training servers in behavioral change and communication techniques; (3) training managers as well as servers; (4) instituting management policies that support server practices; and (5) providing training of at least five hours’ duration.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the scientific evidence, the 2003 IOM panel on underage drinking recommended that “[s]tates should require all sellers and servers of alcohol to complete state-approved training as a condition of employment.”<sup>8</sup> Twenty-one states—and a growing number of local jurisdictions—now either mandate RH training or provide incentives to alcoholic beverage licensees who train staff in accordance with state-approved curricula.<sup>2</sup> The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s online Alcohol Policy Information System provides a map depicting the status of RH legislation state by state.<sup>4</sup>

No national RH curriculum or training standards yet exist. Published over a decade ago, *Responsible Beverage Service: An Implementation Handbook for Communities* remains a useful how-to guide.<sup>10</sup> The “Examples of Higher Education RH Programs” sidebar in this *Prevention Update* describes campus RH programs that for the most part reflect the IOM’s six key elements indicated above as well as the five components that Mosher and Toomey associated in their research with successful programs.

## What Can My Campus Do?

RH fits within the context of a comprehensive campus policy for alcohol risk management. Such a policy addresses the concerns of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (EDGAR, Part 86—see [www.edc.org/hec/dfsca/](http://www.edc.org/hec/dfsca/)) while promoting a safe, healthy, and learning-conducive environment for students, faculty, staff, and community members. A

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comprehensive policy, based on environmental prevention strategies, discourages underage consumption by, for example, requiring separate physical spaces for legal consumption. For those of legal age, the policy militates against high-risk consumption by, for example, prohibiting drinking games. For their policies to be effective, campuses must provide advance and verifiable notification of their contents and implications to all concerned.<sup>11</sup>

Campuses can implement RH for commercial settings on campus and for campus-recognized functions regardless of location. They can also join communitywide coalitions to support RH policies. The following three approaches are recommended:

1. **Adopt and enforce RH guidelines for on-campus venues that sell or serve alcohol, including cultural and sports facilities (both inside at concession stands and in VIP clubs and luxury boxes and outside where tailgating is permitted),<sup>12</sup> faculty clubs, dining facilities, and student unions.** The student union at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for example, developed policies to reduce high-risk drinking and its negative consequences in conjunction with a campus committee. Some colleges and universities share sports facilities with professional teams, and those facilities may already participate in TEAM (Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management). TEAM is a comprehensive risk-control program that includes management policies, server training, and fan education and is supported in part by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. TEAM, now working with a limited number of colleges and universities, has plans to expand its higher education reach in fall 2004.<sup>13</sup>
2. **Adopt and enforce RH guidelines for parties sponsored by campus-recognized student organizations such as fraternities and sororities, sports teams, clubs, and other student activities.** Agreement with these guidelines and server training can be prerequisites for permission to host a party. The University of California, Irvine; Duke University; Franklin and Marshall College;

## Campus Pubs: Pros and Cons

Some campuses permit the sale and service of alcoholic beverages to those of legal drinking age in student unions or other on-campus venues. Observers see advantages and disadvantages in this practice.

On the one hand, a campus outlet is a potentially more controllable environment than an off-campus licensed establishment. Administrators can use an on-campus alcohol outlet—such as a pub selling beer and wine in the student union—to minimize alcohol as the exclusive or central social activity. They can, for example, offer attractive food and other consumables, games (pool, darts, board games), and entertainment, while at the same time influencing the appeal of alcohol economically by setting prices in relation to alcohol content, so that low-alcohol beers cost less and soft drinks, coffee, and tea cost least.

On the other hand, some claim that the mere sale of alcohol on campus amounts to an acknowledgment that it is *necessary* to enhance social functioning. Introducing alcohol sales, the argument goes, normalizes drinking in a setting not previously perceived as a place of consumption, and such *normalization* can be contagious, leading to an increase in drinking. In society as a whole, expanding the availability of alcohol typically leads to higher levels of consumption.

Read more pros and cons at [www.edc.org/hec/ta/faq/campus-pubs.html](http://www.edc.org/hec/ta/faq/campus-pubs.html). Each campus community must debate and adopt the optimum policies for its own situation. Colleges differ as to the ages of their students, their residential arrangements, and the extent to which they serve community cultural and recreational purposes. Regardless, if campuses do permit alcohol sales, RH policies and practices can help avoid adverse consequences.

Georgetown University; and Stanford University are among the institutions that have enacted such policies (see sidebar “Examples of Higher Education RH Programs” for more information). Stanford makes use of student peers to facilitate party planning workshops.

3. **Join in partnerships with other community stakeholders to promote RH policies and enforcement at off-campus venues such as bars, restaurants, special events, and retail (off-sale) outlets.** The University of Delaware; Framingham State University; University of Nebraska, Lincoln; San Diego State University, and Western Washington University are examples of campuses that belong to communitywide RH alliances involving local retailers, law enforcement agencies, and state alcoholic beverage control (ABC) personnel. During the 2002–03 and 2003–04 academic years, eight California State University campuses worked with local law enforcement and ABC officials to enforce ABC laws and RH policies.<sup>14</sup>

Liability law requires that all institutions of higher education identify and mitigate risks to health and safety, including those associated with alcohol consumption. Research literature and recent recommendations from national authorities point to RH—including compliance monitoring—as an effective intervention. The information in this publication can help you determine what kind of RH to adopt for your campus and community.

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## Resource Organizations

### The U.S. Department of Education’s Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

Education Development Center, Inc.  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02458-1060  
(800) 676-1730; TDD Relay-Friendly, Dial 711  
Fax: (617) 928-1537  
[HigherEdCtr@edc.org](mailto:HigherEdCtr@edc.org)  
[www.higheredcenter.org](http://www.higheredcenter.org)  
The U.S. Department of Education’s Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention assists institutions of higher education nationwide in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol, other drug, and violence prevention policies and programs that will foster students’ academic and social development and promote campus and community safety. The Center provides training; technical assistance; assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities; publications; and support for The Network: Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues.

### Governors Highway Safety Association

[www.ghsa.org](http://www.ghsa.org)  
This group represents state governors’ highway traffic safety representatives who distribute federal funds that may be available to support your campus and community RH and related prevention efforts. Over half of alcohol-related traffic fatalities emanate from licensed drinking establishments, underscoring the importance of RH training and enforcement.

### National Alcohol Beverage Control Association (NABCA)

[www.nabca.org/](http://www.nabca.org/)

### National Conference of State Liquor Administrators (NCSLA)

[www.ncsla.org/](http://www.ncsla.org/)

State alcoholic beverage (in some states “liquor”) control agencies license commercial outlets and may administer state-mandated RH training programs. Regional personnel from these agencies can be valuable members of campus and community prevention coalitions. Those states that sell alcoholic beverages at either wholesale or retail levels belong to NABCA; those that license rather than sell belong to NCSLA. The two groups sponsor a Joint Committee of the States to Study Alcohol Beverage Laws, Server Training and Responsible Hospitality Subcommittee. You can find the joint committee’s *Position Paper: National Standards for Server Training* online at [www.ncsla.org/position\\_paper\\_joint\\_comm.htm](http://www.ncsla.org/position_paper_joint_comm.htm). You can also find a link to your state’s liquor or ABC authority. Several state authorities, for example, Pennsylvania ([www.lcb.state.pa.us/edu/](http://www.lcb.state.pa.us/edu/)) and Virginia ([www.abc.state.va.us/education.html](http://www.abc.state.va.us/education.html)), offer extensive information on RH programs.

### The Responsible Hospitality Institute

[www.hospitalityweb.org/rhi/index.htm](http://www.hospitalityweb.org/rhi/index.htm)

The Responsible Hospitality Institute has evolved to become a central clearinghouse and facilitator of national, state, and local networks seeking to create more safe and vibrant places to socialize. The RHI Web site provides a clearinghouse, examples of local hospitality resource panels, and party tips—a menu of planning ideas to promote sociability while ensuring health and safety.



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For additional information, contact:  
The Higher Education Center for  
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention  
EDC, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458-1060  
(800) 676-1730 ♦ TDD Relay-Friendly, Dial 711  
HigherEdCtr@edc.org ♦ www.higheredcenter.org

## Resource Organizations, *continued*

### Responsible Retailing Forum

fcpr.fsu.edu/retail/index.html

The main purpose of the Responsible Retailing Forum is to identify and promote *best practices* to prevent the sale of alcohol and tobacco products to underage consumers, including implementation models. The forum also aims to examine responsible retailing practices and policies from the perspective of diverse stakeholders—public health and enforcement agencies; state attorneys general; health foundations; researchers; retailers and their associations; and producers and their associations/ foundations.

### TEAM Coalition—Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management

www.teamcoalition.org/about/about.asp

The mission of the TEAM Coalition is to provide effective training for alcohol servers in public facilities and to promote responsible alcohol consumption that enhances the entertainment experience while reducing alcohol-related incidents both on the premises and on surrounding roadways. Together with the National Collegiate Athletic Association, TEAM is planning a fan awareness program to start during the fall 2004 college football season.



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## Examples of Higher Education RH Programs

A number of colleges and universities describe their RH policies and practices on their Web sites. These resources can help you get started in developing an RH program in conjunction with your ongoing problem analysis and strategic planning.

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