

## **RRForum receives NIAAA Small Business Innovation Research Award for Program to Address Over-Service**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Waltham, Massachusetts** — The Responsible Retailing Forum (RRForum) has been awarded a Small Business Innovation Research Award from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to conduct Phase 1 formative research on *SSTOP* — *Stop Service to Obviously-Intoxicated Patrons*.

Modeled after the highly effective ID-checking program developed by RRForum under an earlier SBIR award, *SSTOP* will employ Pseudo-Intoxicated Mystery Shoppers (“*P-I/MS*”) to measure the prevalence of over-service in the community. Licensees will be able to view a video on the RRForum website showing the conduct of the *P-I/MS* — actually, actors trying to purchase or be served an alcoholic beverage while exhibiting distinct signs of intoxication — and to learn whether their own staff refused or offered to serve alcohol to the Mystery Shopper. Staff will be able to take a brief, online interactive training on over-service refusal skills adapted by Klein Buendel from the Way2Serve Responsible Beverage Service program.

*SSTOP* emerged from pilot programs with the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, both funded through education grants from the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association.

Steve Sander, Alcohol & Marijuana Education Program Coordinator for OLCC, noted: “The *P-I/MS* project provided valuable aggregate data on the issue of over-service. Initially, owners were somewhat mistrusting because they thought they were going to receive a violation for selling to the mystery shoppers. But once businesses realized what the project was all about, they responded very positively and were in strong support of the project continuing mainly because there was no violation associated with the project, it was educational, and it gave owners a picture of how their business and staff handled visibly intoxicated customers.

“The hospitality industry truly defines surrounding neighborhoods and that is why it is so important that education on best practices, as well as server incentives, are consistent,” Kathie Durbin, Division Chief of Licensure, Regulation and Education at the Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control, explained. “The *P-I/MS* program is a great way to build relationships and prevent over service through responsible alcohol policies. It was surprising to learn the different level of standards sellers and servers use to identify an intoxicated patron, and how this program raised those standards.”

The Phase 1 formative research on SSTOP will be conducted this fall in Amherst, MA; Corvallis, OR; San Luis Obispo, CA; and Stillwater, OK. These college communities are four of the six communities which are piloting the ITGA Alcohol Responsibility Program that RRForum is developing in a strategic alliance with the International Town & Gown Association.