

National Study Demonstrates that Responsible Retailing Programs Improve Clerk ID-Checking to Avoid Illegal Alcohol Sales to Minors

Researchers with the Responsible Retailing Forum Present Their Evaluation Findings for MillerCoors Respect 21™ Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2015

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Waltham, Massachusetts—Researchers with Responsible Retailing Forum today released the findings of their national study of MillerCoors Respect 21™ program at the RRForum's 13th annual conference. Across several investigations, Respect 21™ was found to increase how often store clerks check ID, a critical step for reducing youth access to alcohol and problems related to underage drinking. The conference, sponsored this year by the Oklahoma Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement (ABLE) Commission, was held at the historic Skirvin Hilton in Oklahoma City.

Working in partnership with the RRForum, MillerCoors launched Respect 21™ in 2005. The participating licensees receive a self-assessment tool for examining their current practices and a H.E.L.P. guide that outlines the basics of responsible retailing. Respect 21™ also provides feedback on whether staff are verifying the age of young customers by employing mystery shoppers: young, but *legal-age* customers who enter a store or serving establishment and attempt to purchase or be served an alcoholic beverage. RRForum's analysis clearly demonstrated that Respect 21™ led to higher rates of ID-checking, consistent with store policies.

"MillerCoors has long believed in and supported working with local retailers and community leaders to reduce illegal alcohol sales to minors," said Diane Wagner, Responsibility Manager for MillerCoors. "Respect 21™ is a key part of that effort, and we are pleased to see that research demonstrates the program's success."

Moving forward, MillerCoors will continue to expand Respect 21™ in college communities. At present, there are 28 such programs, with new programs being established in Missoula, Montana and Tulsa, Oklahoma later this year.

In all, RRForum analyzed the mystery shopper results for four different studies. A study conducted in 2010 and 2011 involved 192 retailers in four communities: Bloomington/Normal, Illinois; Fort Myers, Florida; Joliet, Illinois; and Lubbock, Texas. Before Respect 21™ began, only 82% of the store clerks asked for and checked the mystery shopper's ID. Performance improved across the four months that Respect 21™ operated, culminating with a 95% ID-checking rate by program's end. Similar results were seen in two of the other investigations. In the other program, the initial ID-checking rate was nearly 90%, which left little room for improvement.

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“These are encouraging findings,” said Dr. Brad Krevor, the RRForum’s founder and president. “Although the primary source of alcohol for underage youth are friends and acquaintances, and parents and other adults, 15% to 30% of minors report that they have purchased alcoholic beverages from a retailer. Respect 21™ is an important tool for addressing this problem because it keeps the need to check IDs on everyone’s mind.”

If a clerk, server or bartender requests an ID, the mystery shopper presents a Green Card that explains the purpose of the visit and compliments staff for correctly verifying age. When no ID is requested, the mystery shopper presents a Red Card to signify that the staff member failed to check ID. A few days later, the outlet’s manager or owner-operator receives a follow-up letter, along with additional information on responsible retailing that the operator can use to educate and motivate their staff.

“It’s in the retailer’s interest to be part of this program,” explained Joel Grube, a researcher based at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation and a member of the RRForum research team. “The mystery shopper is old enough to purchase alcohol, so failing to check ID doesn’t get anyone in trouble. But failing the shop means that the clerks need to focus and remember to do this anytime a customer appears to be younger than 30.”

The Responsible Retailing Forum’s mission is to develop, evaluate, and promote best practices to prevent underage sales of alcohol, tobacco, and other age-restricted products and to reduce alcohol overservice at on-premises alcohol outlets. A key point of focus is helping retailers develop and implement management systems for supervising, incentivizing, and monitoring staff performance. RRForum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation based in Waltham, Massachusetts. To learn more about RRForum, please contact RRForum’s President, Dr. Brad S. Krevor at krevor@rrforum.org. The ‘*Report on the Respect 21™ Responsible Retailing Program*’ is under ‘Reports and Articles’ on the RRForum webpage: <http://rrforum.org/communications/>

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