

RR Forum

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project

Year 1 Report

Responsible Retailing Forum
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The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

ABOUT THE RR FORUM:	About the RR Forum	2
PHASES & HIGHLIGHTS:	Background of the RR Forum.....	2
	Phase 1	3
	Phase 2	3
	2007 Highlights	3
ALBUQUERQUE, NM	Project partners.....	4
	Successful Age Verification Compliance	4
	Pseudo-Intoxication Inspections	4
	Issues in Albuquerque.....	4
IOWA CITY, IA	Project partners.....	5
	Successful Age Verification Compliance	5
	Pseudo-Intoxication Inspections	5
	Issues in Albuquerque.....	5
WALTHAM, MA	Project partners.....	6
	Successful Age Verification Compliance	6
	Pseudo-Intoxication Inspections	6
	Issues in Albuquerque.....	6
WORK GROUPS	Retailer Work Group.....	7
	Alcohol Policy Work Group.....	7
	Over-Service Work Group.....	7
	Applied Research Committee.....	7

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

About the RR Forum

About the RR Forum:

The RR Forum, begun as a project of Brandeis University and Florida State University in 2003, brings together diverse stakeholders—regulators, law enforcement and state attorneys general; public health agencies and advocates; retailers, distributors and producers; training organizations; and researchers—for the dual purpose of (1) identifying and promulgating Best Practices for RR, and (2) examining RR policy from the perspective of various stakeholders. The work of the RR Forum was lauded by the Federal Trade Commission in its September 2003 *Report to Congress, Alcohol Marketing and Advertising*. In June 2006, RR Forum became a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.

Background of the RR Forum

Since 2003, the Responsible Retailing Forum has been validating a new model of Responsible Retailing (“RR”) derived from a report prepared as a federal guidance document, *Best Practices for Responsible Retailing*. The model acknowledges that enforcement is a necessary pre-condition to high compliance with sales-to-minors laws and laws prohibiting alcohol sales or service to intoxicated customers. But enforcement *per se* does not provide retailers with the knowledge and tools to insure that their staff consistently verify age and refuse unlawful sales. The model calls upon public agencies, retailers and their suppliers to work together to sustain a *continuing system* of RR and to address community issues—such as 3rd party sales, fake IDs and furnishing of alcohol to underage users—in a collaborative, problem-solving approach.

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

Phases & Highlights

Phases 1 and 2

2007 Highlights

Phase 1 of the RR Systems project

Phase 1 (2003 – 2005) developed and pilot-tested (1) the tools to assist retailers and (2) implementation strategies to engage different types of establishments, in four study sites: Birmingham, AL; Des Moines, IA; Santa Fe, NM; Springfield, MO.

Phase 2 of the RR Systems project

Phase 2 (begun September 2005) is a community roll-out of this RR quality improvement model. Study sites are Albuquerque, NM, Iowa City, IA and Waltham, MA, with similar interventions conducted in Gettysburg, Selinsgrove and Butler County, Pennsylvania in partnership with the PA Liquor Control Board.

Participating retailers in these communities:

- ◆ are supplied with a Planning Tool for Retailers, which enables licensed establishments to assess their current RR practices and identify Best Practices that may be absent
- ◆ are provided with RR resources and assistance in adopting policies that may be absent, and
- ◆ receive periodic feedback on store performance in checking IDs and refusing over-service, as observed by young, legal-age Mystery Shoppers and by actors exhibiting visible signs of intoxication.

The objectives of Phase 2 are (1) to assess different strategies for getting retailers to participate in the RR system, (2) to measure the impact of the model upon licensees that do participate, and (3) to engage retailers and community stakeholders in examining the actual problems of alcohol access and use in the community.

Highlights of the 2007 RR Systems Project

- ◆ Licensees that employ Best Practices for RR perform age-verification at a very high level.
- ◆ Mystery Shopper visits show improving patterns of clerk / server performance. Mystery Shopper feedback gives managers an opportunity to speak with all staff about proper ID checks and steps to take with intoxicated customers and about the importance of following protocols consistently.
- ◆ Although licensees, law enforcement and regulators are all committed to preventing alcohol sales to underage customers, problems of over-service are emerging as even greater concerns.

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Project Partners

Albuquerque MS Results

Pseudo-intoxication Inspections

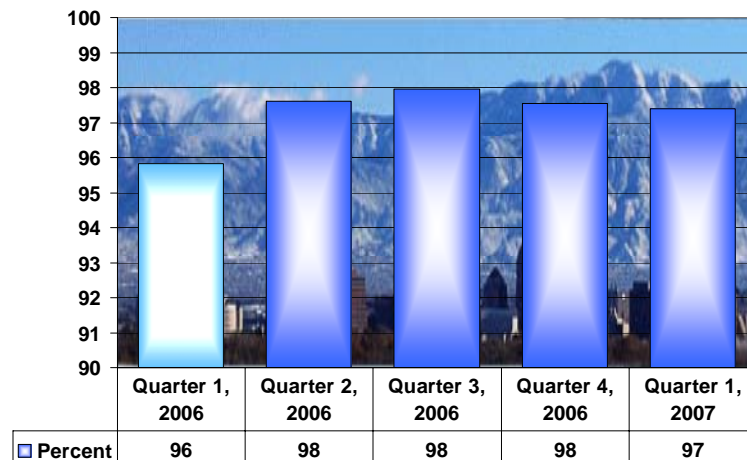
Issues in Albuquerque

Project Partners:

NM Alcohol and Gaming Division, NM Dept. of Health, NM Petroleum Marketers Association, NM Grocers Association, Joe G. Maloof Distributing Co.

The NM RRForum was begun in September 2005. Approximately 60 licensees—all off-premise establishments: C-stores/petroleum marketers; grocery stores; package stores—have been participating in the project. There were a total of 335 Mystery Shops conducted in Albuquerque between February 2006 and February 2007. Albuquerque's overall compliance rate for this time span is greater than 95%.

Albuquerque: % Successful Compliance Age Verification



Pseudo-intoxication inspections:

The purpose of these inspections is to provide retailers with feedback on clerk performance in recognizing and refusing sales or service to intoxicated customers. Licensees were inspected in June – July 2006 by pseudo-intoxicated mystery shoppers displaying distinct signs of intoxication: 25% of licensees were willing to sell an alcoholic beverage to a visibly intoxicated customer and 75% refused sales. In April – June of 2007, the protocol was repeated: 100% of retailers refused sales to an intoxicated customer.

Issues in Albuquerque:

Most of the off-premise licensees are company- or franchisee-operated stores of large chains that display high levels of age-verification performance. New Mexico is an intensive enforcement environment in which clerks/servers and licensees are both severely penalized for unlawful sales. One of the principal goals for the following year is to enhance cooperation and communication among retailers and law enforcement, including a Ride-Along program for retailers to accompany alcohol law enforcement agents.

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

Iowa City,
Iowa

Project Partners

Iowa City MS Results

Pseudo-intoxication Inspections

Issues in Iowa City

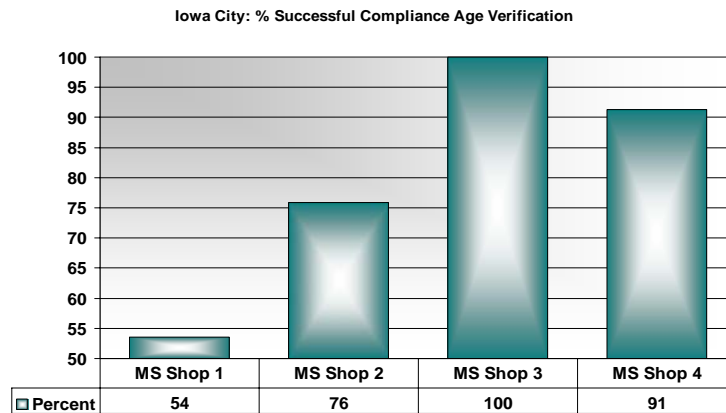
Project Partners:

IA Alcoholic Beverages Division, IA Dept. of Health, IA Office of the Attorney General, IA City Police Department, IA Petroleum Marketers / Convenience Store Association, Fleck Distributing Co.

The Iowa City RRForum was begun in July 2006. 32 on-premise establishments—mostly taverns / restaurants around the University of Iowa campus—and 3 off-premise establishments have been participating in the project. There were a total of 143 Mystery Shops conducted in Iowa City between January and May 2007 by young, legal-age inspectors. Iowa City's overall Pass rate for this time span is 80%.



Iowa City MS Results



Pseudo-intoxication inspections:

Beginning in July 2007.

Issues in Iowa City:

Mystery shopper reports have shown a significant increase in ID-checking in Iowa City establishments. Due to the high turnover among wait staff, responsible server training will be offered on a regular basis for all Iowa City licensees (including non-participating licensees). Year 2 will focus upon enlisting off-premise establishments into the program.

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

Waltham, Massachusetts

Project Partners

Waltham MS Results

Pseudo-intoxication Inspections

Issues in Waltham

Project Partners:

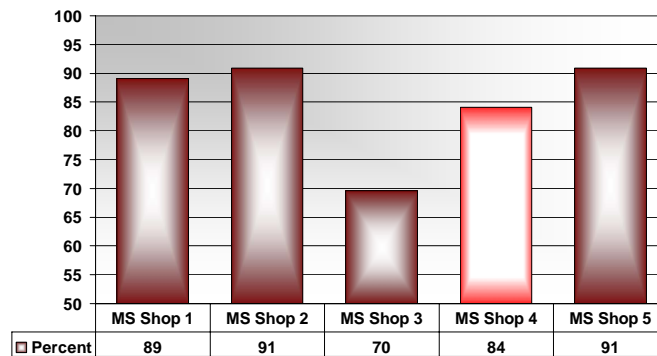
Waltham Licensing Commission, Waltham Restaurant Association, Waltham Package Store Association, Waltham Police Department.

The Waltham RRForum was begun in September 2006. 46 on-premise establishments and 8 off-premise establishments (all package stores) have been participating in the project. There were a total of 213 Mystery Shops conducted in Waltham between November 2006 and May 2007 by young, legal-age inspectors. Waltham's overall Pass rate for this time span is 85%.



Waltham MS Results

Waltham: % Successful Compliance Age Verification



Pseudo-intoxication inspections:

Pseudo-intoxication inspections began in April, 2007. In the first round of inspections, almost 50% of Waltham licensees to date have sole alcohol to an customer who appeared intoxicated.

Issues in Waltham:

The Waltham PD, recognizing that participating licensees are "self-policing" themselves with mystery shops for ID checking, has shifted some underage compliance checks to parking lot surveillance for 3rd party sales. Expanding a prior arrangement with package stores, all licensees will be able to call Brandeis University and Bentley College to confirm student status as corroboration of an ID. Server and clerk training is being scheduled on a regular, quarterly basis and will be available to both on- and off-premise licensees. Protocols for retailers to deal with fake IDs and with intoxicated patrons who may attempt to drive are being developed by the Waltham PD and the other project partners.

The Responsible Retailing Systems Project: Year 1 Report

Work Groups

Retailer Work Group

Alcohol Policy Work Group

Over-Service Work Group

Applied Research Committee

In addition to the national stakeholder meeting and the RR Systems Project, RRFForum maintains several work groups:

Retailer Work Group consists of national retail chains, training companies, mystery shop vendors, attorneys general and researchers who examine operational and performance measurement issues at the level of store and chain.

Alcohol Policy Work Group consists of regulators, producers, distributors, attorneys general and public health advocates who examine topical policy issues. The Alcohol Policy WG is concluding a Report to SAMHSA on implementation challenges on the newly-enacted STOP Act.

Over-Service Work Group consists of researchers, regulators, on-premise licensee associations, producers and advocates who will examine issues of over-service and identify ways in which the retail environment can serve as a platform for communicating to customers and staff alike about the personal, communal and legal responsibility not to sell, serve or furnish alcohol to an intoxicated individual.

Applied Research Committee oversees the evaluation of the RR Systems project and other RRFForum research projects (such as a current project with Walgreens to measure the effectiveness of Mystery Shopper reports conducted at different frequencies). The Applied Research Committee also pursues sponsored research on RR strategies, technologies and policies. The Committee consists of:

- ◆ Heller School of Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University: Brad Krevor, Ph.D., Prof. Steve Fournier, Ph.D. and Prof. Jeffrey Prottas, Ph.D.
- ◆ Boston University School of Public Health: Prof. William DeJong, Ph.D.
- ◆ Prevention Research Center / PIRE: Joel Grube, Ph.D., Director
- ◆ Bottles!: Tom Williams