



# Spot the Mystery Shopper Campaign

## Overview

The Responsible Retailing Forum (RRForum) offers the Spot the Mystery Shopper (STMS) campaign to help licensees guard against underage alcohol sales and thus demonstrate their commitment to reducing underage drinking in the community. What's different about this program? We provide clerks and servers with a financial incentive to check the IDs of young customers.

## Here's how the program works:

### Feedback to Licensees

In each community, RRForum sends professional Mystery Shoppers to visit randomly selected alcohol outlets and attempt to purchase alcohol. All of the Mystery Shoppers are of legal drinking age, but they are young enough—usually age 21 to 24—to trigger an ID check by the clerk or server.

When clerks or servers correctly check ID, the Mystery Shopper hands them a congratulatory Green Card which states that RRForum will notify management about their good work. To do so, RRForum mails a report to the licensee, along with resources about best practices, key information to share with staff, and RRForum signage to announce publicly the licensee's commitment to responsible retailing.

When clerks or servers fail to ask for ID prior to fulfilling or ringing up the Mystery Shopper's order, they will not receive any on-the-spot feedback. Instead, RRForum will send a follow-up letter to notify the outlet's owner/operator that staff failed to check ID. Note: RRForum will never publicly identify a licensee whose staff failed to check ID. That information is provided to the licensee and no one else.

### Incentives for Staff

Even well-trained staff can lose focus and forget to check ID. To motivate staff to do a better job, the STMS program offers staff an incentive to ask for and check IDs carefully. Here's how it works: RRForum will send licensees a set of cards that with the names and ages of the Mystery Shoppers (e.g., Ann K, age 22, John S., age 21) that can be kept by the register. Any staff member who spots the mystery shopper by carefully inspecting his or her ID will receive a \$50 cash reward.

## Community Reports

RRForum publishes combined results across all of the participating outlets and shares them with licensees and community stakeholders. The reports inform discussions of additional responsible retailing steps that can be taken in the future.

## Sponsorship

The STMS campaign can be sponsored by a licensing commission, distributorship, prevention agency, community coalition, or foundation. The cost depends on how many rounds of inspections are conducted, how many licensees are included in each round, and RRForum's role in presenting the STMS campaign to local stakeholders and participating in community meetings to review results and plan future efforts.

## Benefits of The Program:

Licensees are better prepared to pass law enforcement compliance checks and less likely to be fined or suffer a license suspension. By publicizing their participation, licensees show customers that their establishment contributes to the community by following Responsible Retailing practices.

Clerks, Wait Staff, and Bartenders are incentivized to check IDs carefully, even for customers who may appear to be over the legal purchase age, but under the age that should trigger an ID check.

Sponsors engage licensees in a non-punitive approach to underage sales prevention that promotes voluntary compliance and fosters cooperation among public agencies, alcohol licensees, and their industry partners.

### About the Responsible Retailing Forum

RRForum is a 501(C)3 not-for-profit organization that engages public and industry stakeholders in identifying and promoting effective practices to reduce underage sales of alcohol and other age-restricted products. In 2009, RRForum received a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop sustainable Responsible Retailing systems for cities, states, and trade associations. Organizations sponsoring and assisting in this effort include Diageo, the Distilled Spirits Council of the US, MillerCoors, National Alcohol Beverage Control Association, National Beer Wholesalers Association, American Beverage Licensees, and numerous state regulators, distributors, and retail associations.



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For more information about the RRForum, please visit its website: <http://www.rrforum.org>  
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