



Best Practices for Responsible Serving of Alcohol

Serving alcohol comes with a great deal of responsibility. Keeping patrons safe from harm and your establishment safe from liability is a job that falls to every employee. The failure to act responsibly may result in fines, loss of your liquor license, damage to your reputation, increased cost of insurance, or even imprisonment.

Train your staff *– Proper training of your employees will help your establishment proactively avoid alcohol related issues that might potentially occur. Awareness of how much alcohol has been served to a patron, when and by whom should be part of the training process. Proper training is a critical part of creating a responsible and accountable staff. Employees should have alcohol awareness training and complete timely recertification. Employees shall not consume alcohol before, during or after shift.

Have policies in place and posted * – Having specific policies in place and posted when it comes to alcohol can assist your employees in preventing potential problems. Putting policies in place is not difficult and it can have great benefits when an employee encounters an alcohol related issue.

Responsible Service of Alcohol Policy *- Having a written policy that outlines the process will make it easier for staff to exercise good judgement of how and when to refuse service. Have all staff sign this policy and agree to abide by its contents. This shows management’s support and the seriousness of enforcement.

Check IDs - Before serving an alcoholic beverage, employees **MUST** check the identification of guests who appear to be under the age of thirty years old. If unsure, it’s best to err on the side of caution. If you are caught serving a minor, you will not only face fines but risk losing your liquor license for a few days or longer. An ID scanner is preferred, but at a minimum a birthdate calendar should be posted to easily identify date of birth. *

Use a measuring device on all mixed drinks – Using standard measures for pouring drinks can be very helpful in maintaining a level of consistency can help avoid alcohol-related issues.



Best Practices for Responsible Serving of Alcohol Continued

Do not serve visibly intoxicated customers * – It is important that not only bartenders, but all servers, are watchful and know when to say “enough.” If they are slurring words or unsteady, these are indicators that the customer should not be served alcohol. Sometimes it is hard to tell when a customer has had enough but alcohol awareness training programs can help. If a customer comes into your establishment and is already looking like they have had enough, it is your right and obligation to not serve them. The customer might not be happy, but an unhappy customer is easier to deal with than the risk of them harming themselves, disrupting the bar or causing an innocent person harm.

Communication - After a customer has been refused service, let the other servers and bartenders working know about the refusal so they do not mistakenly serve the individual another drink.

Documentation * - Secure the receipt, document contact information of witnesses and key details as soon as you become aware of an incident. Documentation is tangible evidence that should be preserved upon learning of an incident.

Surveillance Video - If something happens at your establishment, you should review and safeguard the surveillance tapes for at least three (3) years. Be sure to copy the surveillance footage prior to recycling the tape.

Safe mode of transport from the premises – Have a designated driver policy or an alternate mode of transportation, Uber, Lyft or Taxi service readily available for those patrons who should not be behind the wheel. Allow customers to keep their car parked in your lot overnight without fear of being towed or ticketed.

Last Call - Consider an earlier last call, offering free nonalcoholic beverages and providing plenty of time for patrons to have their last drink before the establishment closes.

Closing the establishment- No patrons should be on the premises after the establishment is closed.

Sell alcohol responsibly - If you are not sure, DON'T SERVE!

*Examples are available on our website www.hmic.com

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