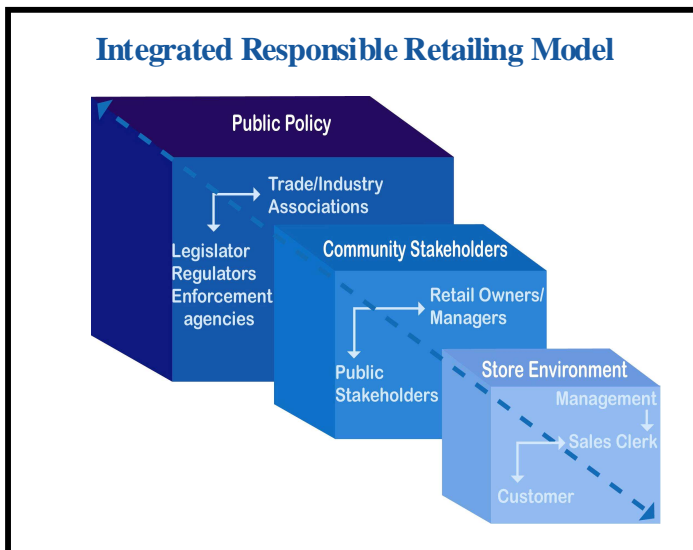


September, 2011

Responsible Retailing System Model

CONCEPT

Since 2003, the Responsible Retailing Forum (RRF) and state alcohol regulators have been validating a new approach for preventing underage sales. The new model shifts emphasis from *enforcement only* to assisting licensed establishments to adopt best practices for "Responsible Retailing"—an umbrella term for the many hiring and training practices, point-of-sale protocols, employee policies, supervisory procedures, and communications directed to customers, that together combine to prevent the unlawful sale of beverage alcohol to minors, to intoxicated customers, or to individuals who furnish alcohol to minors ("third-party" sales).



The model emerged from a report for the federal government, *Best Practices for Responsible Retailing*¹, that views Responsible Retailing as a continuing system that operates on three inter-related levels: (1) individual licensees, (2) communities, and (3) policies. Following recommendations of the *Best Practices* report, the model calls upon public and private stakeholders to

assist licensees in adopting RR practices and to work cooperatively in a problem-solving approach to underage alcohol access and use within the community. The RR practices contained in the *Best Practices* report became the basis for Assurances of Voluntary Compliance negotiated by state attorneys general in which national supermarket chains (Wal-Mart, Kroger, Safeway), convenience stores and gas stations (7-Eleven, ExxonMobil, BP) and pharmacies (CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid) agreed to specific RR practice changes to reduce underage sales.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

The RRF model is an effort to implement, at the level of community, the same RR practices adopted by national chains as stipulated in their agreements with state attorneys general. The approach is to set up a single system that support the needs of all participating licensees, both on-premises serving establishments and off-premises alcohol retailers. The model incorporates each of the three important levels of RR:

(1) Store-level component: The model supports both off-premises retailers and on-premises serving establishments in adopting Best Practices. Participating licensees go online to:

- Conduct a *Self-Assessment* of current practices
- Establish a written *Alcohol Sales Policy* for staff to follow in checking and authenticating IDs and refusing sales / service to underage or visibly intoxicated customers or to adults who may be purchasing alcohol in behalf of an underage customer

Licensees receive *linkage* to in-person, online and computer-based training for clerks and servers and RR *resources* (e.g., specialty calendars, signage) and communications for staff and customers to reinforce ID-checking and respect for the legal drinking age.

Licensees also receive feedback on actual staff performance as observed by Mystery Shoppers—young, *legal-age* inspectors who ask to purchase or be served alcohol. The Mystery Shopper will hand out a Green Card following a correct ID check or a Red Card if an ID is not checked. Reports are additionally sent to owner-operators and managers. *Individual Mystery Shop results are confidential; but aggregate data is published and shared with all stakeholders.*

Community-level component: Community stakeholders—alcohol regulators, law enforcement and public safety agencies; retailers and their associations; distributors; and local prevention organizations—are asked to work collaboratively to (1) adapt the model to the laws and customs of the community, and to (2) develop community-level resources to support the efforts of licensees, e.g. availability of clerk/server training, a safe-ride home for impaired individuals, etc.

Policies: The third component is an examination of how an effective RR system can be expanded and sustained. Stakeholders will consider how the costs of a continuing RR program can be distributed among retailers and other private sector stakeholders. Policies are needed that promote licensee participation, such as public recognition, mitigation of penalties for retailers in good standing, reductions in alcohol liability insurance premiums, and mandatory participation for licensees cited for sales violations.

HOW THE SYSTEM IS ADMINISTERED

The program is administered by RRF Field Services LLC, the research and technical assistance arm of RRF, which oversees the Mystery Shop program and issues quarterly reports on aggregate Mystery Shop performance and relevant information and concerns of licenses, law enforcement and licensing. RRF is assisted by a Steering Committee of stakeholders representing retailers, distributors and producers, law enforcement, licensing, and public health / prevention.

ABOUT THE RESPONSIBLE RETAILING FORUM

Originally a project of Brandeis University and Florida State University, RRF is now a 501(C)3 non-profit organization whose dual objectives are (1) to identify and promote Best Practices for RR, and (2) to engage diverse stakeholders in examinations of RR strategies, technologies and policies. RRF conducted formative research and pilot studies for the RR System model through unrestricted awards from Diageo. Additionally, RRF helped design, and currently administers, a distributor-based RR program, *Respect 21*, for MillerCoors. Expansion of the RR Systems model has also been supported by a Small Business Innovation Research award from the National Institutes of Health to RRF Field Services to work with state alcohol regulators and retail association partners in developing sustainable RR systems for cities and states.

¹ *Report on Best Practices for Responsible Retailing*, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Conference Draft, March 2002. Available at www.rforum.org/.