

Integrated Responsible Retailing Model

A New Model of Responsible Retailing

In 2001, a team of national experts produced a federal guidance document, Report on Best Practices for Responsible Retailing, reflecting the experiences and insights of retailers, alcohol control boards and other state regulatory and enforcement agencies ("R-E agencies"), state attorneys general, and academic researchers. The Best Practices identified in that report have been further developed by the Responsible Retailing Forum into an "Integrated Responsible Retailing" model. This model portrays effective Responsible Retailing as a continuing system; and it calls upon R-E agencies, wholesalers/distributors and other private and public stakeholders to assist retailers by providing the resources and mechanisms needed to sustain the Responsible Retailing system.

The Integrated RR model involves three distinct levels:

Integrated Responsible Retailing Forum



Store Level

An effective Responsible Retailing system has, at its core, (a) point-of-sales protocols for verifying age and refusing sales to customers who may be underage (and/or intoxicated), and (b) store practices regarding hiring, training and supervising sales clerks. The Integrated Responsible Retailing model recognizes that the problem of underage sales is not so much "solved" as "managed." The model emphasizes the role of managers in reinforcing correct age verification/sales refusal conduct through explicit store policies, through training, through monitoring employee performance and through their own personal conduct.

Community Level

The 2nd tier of an Integrated Responsible Retailing model is a community context which connects the public and private sectors in a collaborative, problem-solving approach to underage sales and use. R-E agencies have the dual role of enforcing laws on age-restricted products and also of assisting retailers to identify, adopt and sustain Responsible Retailing practices that are appropriate for that community. Retailers are seen not merely as objects of enforcement who are "compliant" or "non-compliant." Rather, retailers and their wholesalers/ distributors are seen as active partners with R-E agencies to identify and address community-level patterns of underage acquisition and use. This model, based upon the principles of "Community Policing," allows public and private stakeholders together to address the actual patterns of underage access and use of alcohol and other age-restricted products within the community and to consider coherent strategies to reduce use and abuse by minors.

Policy Level

The 3rd tier of an Integrated Responsible Retailing model consists of the public policies at the state (or local) level that encourage the adoption of effective Responsible Retailing practices. Some states, for example, mandate Responsible Retailing training for stores and their employees. Others create positive incentives—such as reductions in liability insurance, or mitigation for violations—for establishments which engage in approved Responsible Retailing programs. Two important policy issues are: (a) linking non-compliance to remedial training and (b) establishing a stable funding mechanism so that training, materials and mystery shopper inspections can be sustained.