

Balancing Enforcement

Balanced enforcement efforts

The regulatory program of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission regulates the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is widely recognized as causing social and health problems, including crimes of violence, domestic abuse, and alcohol-related traffic accidents. These adverse effects are minimized by licensing and educating people who sell and serve alcohol, and by the enforcement of alcohol laws.

Regulatory staff provides education programs and training to alcohol servers, package store employees, and liquor licensees. The staff works with licensees to help them comply in all areas, but the top priorities are preventing sales to minors and visibly intoxicated persons, preventing disorderly establishments, and minimizing community problems caused by alcohol businesses and their patrons. The premise is that prevention and education are far more effective in reducing the likelihood of liquor law violations.

Regulatory staff spends a great deal of time attempting to reduce the problem of underage drinking. Alcohol is a major contributor in the four leading causes of death of teens: highway crashes, homicides, suicides, and drownings.

Approximately 33% of the OLCC's enforcement resources are directed to prevention of underage drinking. In order to balance our enforcement efforts, the regulatory program uses a variety of approaches to address underage drinking.

Minor decoy

The OLCC offers training to liquor licensees, liquor store agents, and their staff on preventing sales to minors, checking identification, and recognizing false identification. Supervised 18, 19 or 20 year old volunteers, who look under the age of 26, try to buy alcohol at liquor stores, licensed businesses and other locations such as special events. These decoys, if asked for ID, either show their valid ID or say they have no ID with them. Sales of alcoholic beverages to minors, including decoys, and failure to properly check identification result in administrative sanctions to liquor licensees, liquor store agents, or service permittees and possible criminal sanctions to others.

Community partnership response

The OLCC partners with the Oregon Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking (OCRUD) to provide community support and education for licensees. By joining forces with community organizations, OCRUD and the OLCC educate licensees and the public regarding the dangers and impact of underage drinking in the community. The program gives certificates of appreciation to retailers that refuse sales to minors. The names of the retailers are publicized for their success in refusing to sell alcohol to a minor.

Adult decoy

Volunteers who are 21 years of age or older, but who look under 26, attempt to purchase alcoholic beverages from licensed premises. Each volunteer is under the supervision of an OLCC inspector. The adult decoy will attempt to purchase alcohol without showing any identification. There is no

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Promoting Responsible Alcohol Sales and Service

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sanction to the licensee if the adult decoy is able to purchase alcohol. Instead, the OLCC uses this program to check for potential problems and educate licensees. Licensees who sell to an adult decoy may be placed in the OLCC minor decoy program.

School contact

Each spring, the OLCC sends letters to school administrators asking for dates of special events such as spring breaks, prom dances, graduation ceremonies, senior skip days and other events. The responses serve notice of a possible party where alcohol could be available to minors. As part of this program, the OLCC contacts property owners or sponsors of unlicensed events, advising them of the laws regarding providing alcohol to minors or a place for minors to consume alcohol. The OLCC also works with beer and wine wholesalers, hotels and motels, local law enforcement, limousine companies, schools, and the media to raise awareness of underage drinking issues. Additionally, OLCC staff visits schools to talk about alcohol laws and underage drinking.

High-priority identification checking

This program reduces the availability of alcohol to minors by checking identification in a variety of businesses and special events that attract minors. Minors using false identification or found inside these locations are issued criminal citations. This program is conducted with the cooperation of liquor licensees and law enforcement officials.

False ID

The use of false identification among Oregon's youth is a growing problem. It is also becoming more difficult for those who sell and serve alcohol to identify altered or false identification. This program targets those creating or using false identification. The OLCC works in partnership with local law enforcement to issue citations, and seize equipment used in the illegal manufacture of false identification. The OLCC also provides training to retailers to improve their skills in recognizing false identification.

Keg parties

The OLCC conducts compliance checks at keg parties to identify those who sell or furnish alcohol to minors and to identify those who sell alcohol without a license. If there is illegal activity discovered, alcoholic beverages are seized, and in partnership with local law enforcement officials, action is taken against organizers and participants. The OLCC also prevents many illegal keg parties from ever occurring.

Licensed premises visitations

The OLCC is conducting ongoing statewide visits to all retail businesses licensed to sell alcohol. These visits are a proactive educational and consultative approach for ensuring compliance with liquor laws. Materials and educational classes are offered free of charge.

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