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Reducing Alcohol-Related Traffic Accidents through Server Training

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Alcohol misuse is a serious problem plaguing the United States as well as Missouri. The largest problems stemming from alcohol misuse are impaired driving, underage drinking, and binge drinking. The Harvard School of Public Health lists “property damage, physical injuries, unwanted sexual advances, and encounters with police” as problems stemming from heavy episodic (binge) drinking.² Underage drinking is linked to “youth crimes, suicides, rapes, assaults, alcohol poisoning and unintentional injuries” that costs society “\$53 billion annually.”³ Alcohol is involved in 40% of all fatal traffic crashes.³ Mandatory server training is a program that can address all of these problems but its primary benefit is its potential to reduce motor vehicle accidents.

How does it affect Missouri?

1. Every mile driven by a sober driver in Missouri costs \$.10 per mile.
2. Every mile driven by a legally drunk person in Missouri costs \$2.30 per mile.
3. Every mile driven by someone with Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) greater than .10 in Missouri costs \$5.40 per mile.
4. In every alcohol related crash in Missouri, state citizens, besides the driver, have to pay \$.70 for every drink the driver had. An estimated 46,100 crashes involving alcohol occurred in Missouri in 2000.⁴

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² Kuo, M., Wechsler, H., Greenberg, P., & Lee H. (2003). The Marketing of Alcohol to College Students. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 25(3), 204-211.

³ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2000). Traffic Safety Facts 2000: Alcohol (Publication No. DOT-HS-809-323). Washington, DC.

⁴ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). (2000). *Impaired Driving in Missouri*. Retrieved October 8, 2004, from http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/impaired_driving_pg2/MO.htm

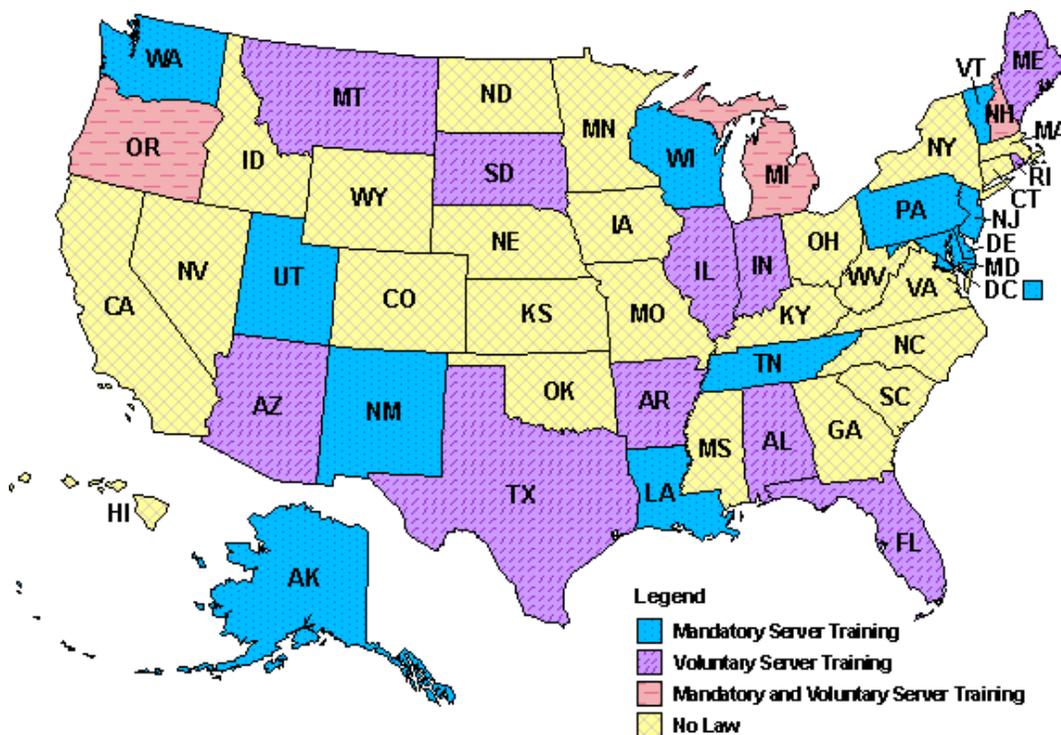
Server training

Server training is a program that promotes Responsible Hospitality (RH) by educating the staff and management of establishments serving alcohol. Server training is designed to keep communities safer by changing the environment in which customers consume alcohol. To do this, the Higher Education Center (HEC) recommends the adoption of RH policies. The Higher Education Center's mission is to assist institutions with developing and instituting alcohol and drug prevention programs. Responsible Hospitality policies are designed to prevent illegal alcohol service to minors, reduce the likelihood of drinkers becoming intoxicated, and prevent those who are impaired from harming themselves or others. These programs show the staff how to recognize fake ID's, how to know when to stop serving an intoxicated patron and may other skills. A server training program, according to NHTSA, has the potential to lower nighttime DUI crashes by 17%.⁵

Server training programs

According to the Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS) as of January 2003, 26 states and the District of Columbia had established a state-wide alcohol server training program. The map below shows the status of server training by state. State sponsored server training programs can be split into three categories:

1. Training that is mandated by legislation,
2. Training that is voluntary for every establishment (This can include an incentive for the places that do engage in training.), and
3. A combination of each.⁶



⁵ *Impaired Driving in Missouri.*

⁶ Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS). (2004). *Beverage Service Training and Related Practices as of January 1, 2004.* Retrieved October 8, 2004, from http://alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/index.asp?Type=BAS_APIS&SEC={BBCD6870-F2E3-4D6B-9FC2-9C77758310B1}&DE={A98C5DAE-4E44-4028-A23F-139D22418690}.

Is there research that supports mandatory training?

1. Dr. Dresser, in a multiple year study, found that mandatory programs were much more effective than incentive programs or plain voluntary programs.⁷
2. Mosher found “public health is served by instituting fully mandated programs...”⁸
3. Holder and Wagenaar found that there was a substantial decrease in motor vehicle crash fatality rates after Oregon instituted a mandatory server training program.⁹

Many programs are in use now, including programs conducted by the states’ liquor control agency. However, one of the main benefits of implementing this system is that an online server training program already exists. The University of Nebraska has developed an online server training that, with few alterations, could be used by Missouri or any other state. This program delivers the two benefits usually not associated with server training:

1. It’s free to everyone and
2. Servers can take it whenever they find it convenient.

This program is currently used in Nebraska and Georgia and was developed with help from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program, State of Missouri Alcohol Responsibility Training (SMART), will be ready for use by Missourians on December 1, 2004. The Missouri Division of Liquor Control can check a website anytime to find which servers from which establishments have or have not completed this training.

What are important keys to successful mandatory legislation?

The two key elements to successful mandatory legislation include:

1. Strong legislation with “graduated administrative penalties” and
2. Active and well-funded enforcement. “An active enforcement program cannot create an effective deterrent if there is inadequate staff.”¹⁰

What is the track record of mandatory training?

Oregon measured the change in single vehicle nighttime (SVN) crashes after becoming mandatory:

1. 11% drop after the first year,
2. 18% drop after the second year, and
3. 23% by the end of the third year.⁸

⁷ Dresser, J. (1999). *Comparing Statewide Alcohol Server Training Systems*. Eugene, Oregon Research Institute.

⁸ Mosher, J., Toomey, T., Good, C., Harwood, E. & Wagenaar, A. C. (2001). State Laws Mandating or Promoting Training Programs for Alcohol Servers and Establishment Managers; An Assessment of Statutory and Administrative Procedures. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 23(1), 91-113.

⁹ Holder, H. & Wagenaar, A. (1994). Mandated Server Training and Reduced Alcohol-Involved Traffic Crashes: A Time Series Analysis of the Oregon Experience. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 26(1), 89-97.

¹⁰ Mosher, J., Toomey, T., Good, C., Harwood, E. & Wagenaar, A. C. (2001). State Laws Mandating or Promoting Training Programs for Alcohol Servers and Establishment Managers; An Assessment of Statutory and Administrative Procedures. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 23(1), 91-113.

Washington had a similar reduction in drinking-driver collisions when server training became mandatory after 1996:

1. 24% drop after the first year,
2. 29% drop after the third year, and
3. 34% drop after the fifth year.¹¹

Wisconsin experienced more modest results initially but, as with the other states, the alcohol-related traffic crashes decreased significantly over time:

1. 4% drop after the first year,
2. 15% drop after the third year,
3. 22% drop after the fifth year, and
4. 30% drop after the seventh year.¹²

What would the result of mandatory training in Missouri be?

1. In 2000, there were an estimated 46,100 alcohol-related traffic crashes.
2. Impaired driving crashes, in 2000, cost the Missouri public “\$1.2 billion in monetary costs.”¹³

Conclusion

Alcohol misuse has expensive economic and social consequences for Missourians. If the implementation of mandatory server training in Missouri has a similar affect as in Washington, Missouri could save:

1. \$287 million after the first year,
2. \$347 million after the third year,
3. \$407 million after the fifth year, and
4. Over the next five years, \$1.735 billion.

One way Missouri could work to reduce the cost of alcohol misuse is through mandatory sever training.

Suggested Citation

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¹¹ Washington Traffic Safety Commission. (2002). Overview of Fatalities and Exposure. *Fatality Analysis Reporting System*.

¹² DOT-DMV. (2002). *Magnitude of the Problem: 2002 Wisconsin Alcohol Traffic Facts*. Retrieved October 8, 2004, from <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/safety/motorist/crashfacts/docs/alcohol-section1.pdf>.

¹³ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). (2000). *Impaired Driving in Missouri*. Retrieved October 8, 2004, from http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/impaired_driving_pg2/MO.htm