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Server Responsibility



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NHTSA Responsible Beverage Service Research and Evaluation Project

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is developing and testing two programs for training individuals in the responsible service of alcohol. One program is directed toward commercial servers of alcohol, while the other is designed for social hosts. Evaluation is a crucial element of the project, and both programs will be fieldtested to assess their effectiveness in preventing incidents of alcohol-impaired driving.

The objectives are similar for both programs. They include:

- raising awareness concerning the drinking-driving problem and what action servers of alcohol and social hosts can take to prevent it;
- increasing the willingness to take action to prevent alcohol-impaired driving among patrons and friends;
- increasing the ability to prevent drunk driving; and
- determining the effectiveness of each program in deterring drunk-driving incidents.

Because of the demand for alcohol server education programs, initial emphasis was placed on the development of the program for commercial hosts. Consequently, of the two programs, this one is the more fully developed. Field-testing was begun in the spring of 1986. This discussion will focus primarily on the training program for commercial servers of alcohol.

The alcohol-service program is delivered in 6 hours of instruction via six modules. An optional seventh module on training has been included for those

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participants who will be expected to teach the program to others (e.g., their employees).

The thrust of the program is to provide servers with a set of strategies they can employ to prevent patrons from becoming intoxicated. The emphasis is on prevention—that is, if alcohol service is performed responsibly, it should not be necessary to terminate service to customers.

The 6-hour program is divided into two segments. All participants receive the first 3 hours of training (Modules 1-4). The last 3 hours (Modules 5 and 6) consist primarily of roleplaying exercises for managers and other individuals responsible for terminating service to patrons. The modular format of the program allows it to be delivered in shorter segments over a period of time, although a 1- or 2-day format is recommended.

Instructional materials consist of videotapes and a detailed instructor's guide providing information on conducting the sessions; performance, knowledge, and attitude objectives; lesson plans; background material on the drinking-driving problem; before-and-after

knowledge and attitude tests; and roleplay scenarios.

The first four modules employ videotapes and discussion. Three of these videotapes depict action in a service establishment. Each videotape is approximately 15 minutes long and each presentation is followed by a discussion of the material on the videotape.

Module One, titled "Awareness," provides an overview of the program and introduces the concept of server liability and its implications in the daily operation of a commercial establishment.

Module Two, "Need for Responsible Alcohol Service," focuses on the immediate need for server intervention by emphasizing the moral and legal responsibility to prevent intoxicated patrons from driving. The physiological effects of alcohol are also addressed.

Module Three, "Prevention," describes strategies to control consumption and reduce the levels of impairment. Such techniques include checking IDs for signs of tampering, serving food and nonalcoholic beverages, providing activities (e.g., entertainment), and observing patrons for signs of impairment. The stricter standard of preventing impairment, not just intoxication, is emphasized.

Module Four, "Intervention," discusses what can be done when customers become intoxicated. A series of scenarios is presented in which patrons' drinking is slowed down, service is terminated, alternative transportation is found, and a fight is broken up. Servers inform managers of the potential problem; however, it is the managers who take action.

Following the above presentations and discussions, managers participate in roleplay exercises (Module Five) that allow participants to test their intervention skills, refine their strategies, and increase their skill and confidence in using intervention techniques.

Module Six, "Responsible Alcohol Service Policy," discusses responsible alcohol service business practices. It encourages managers to generate ideas and work out policies that can be employed in their own establishments.

Several crucial considerations became evident in the development and early pilottesting of this program: It was important that the program be feasible to administer; short enough to ensure participation by bar and restaurant employees; and comprehensive enough to provide the information and skill practice necessary to increase the motivation, willingness, and abilities of servers to deter drunk-driving incidents. In addition, the program had to be developed so as to enable local community and business groups to take over easily and administer it at the end of the NHTSA project.

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It was concluded that the use of videotapes would facilitate program dissemination, ease the instructional burden, and provide greater quality control over the material being presented. To provide servers with both the skills and confidence necessary to intervene, the program also had to include roleplaying exercises.

It was also necessary to protect the livelihood (i.e., tips) of servers. Consequently, the program emphasizes that persons in positions of authority, such as managers or other designated individuals (e.g., head bartender, head waiter, security officer), should be responsible for terminating service to the customer.

An important component of this program is its evaluation. Although there has been a proliferation of server education programs over the last few years, little effort has been devoted to

evaluating the effects of such programs, either in terms of modification of serving practices or in terms of measuring the reduction in alcohol-impaired driving. Accordingly, the effects of the program—on server knowledge and attitudes, on serving practices, on whether servers actually utilize the skills fostered in the training program, and on alcohol-impaired driving—will be evaluated. Areas to be addressed include increased knowledge (physiology of alcohol, drunk-driving problems, determinants of blood alcohol concentration, third-party liability); positive attitude formation (responsibility for preventing alcohol-related problems, motivation to engage in prevention activities); skill and confidence in recognizing signs of impairment and taking action to avoid overservice; reduction of drinking-driving incidents; and the extent of program distribution and use.

Finally, as indicated earlier, a program to train social hosts in responsible alcohol service is also being developed. The program will be approximately 2 hours in length and will include a 20-minute videotape presentation, discussion of strategies, and 1 hour of roleplaying. The current intent is to encourage social clubs (e.g., fraternal groups, civic groups, theater clubs, sports clubs) to adopt policies of responsible alcohol service at their social functions. The program will emphasize that strategies adopted by the club can also be employed at private parties in members' homes. It is clear that evaluation of such a program poses a challenge. However, a responsible alcohol service program for social hosts would be a valuable addition to the available repertoire of community prevention activities.

A final report on the evaluation results of both programs is expected in late 1987. ■

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Server Training Programs: Profiles

Researchers are just beginning to explore the elements of content and format that make for the most effective and useful server training programs (see page 12, "Server Intervention: Will It Work?" and page 20, "NHTSA Responsible Beverage Service Research and Evaluation Project"). However, interest in such programs has been growing for several years, created by hospitality industry demand and—beginning in Madison, WI in 1981—by legislation mandating server training for alcohol licensees in some locales including the State of Oregon. During this time, dozens of programs have been developed by a variety of public, private, and for-profit organizations. A sampling of a few of the programs currently in use is described below. This is by no means a complete list, and no recommendation or endorsement of any program is intended or implied.

- *HEART: Help End Alcohol-Related Tragedies (2 hours for servers, 10 hours for managers; South Carolina Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 3700 Forest Drive, Columbia, SC 29204)*

Server curriculum uses lecture and discussion supplemented by a handbook and a 45-minute videotape. Content includes discussions of variables affecting individual responses to alcohol, characteristic signs of impairment, promotion and sales practices, and intervention tips. Some material (e.g., dram shop legislation, drunk-driving laws) is specific to the State of South Carolina. Managers' program covers the same topics in greater depth and emphasizes dram shop liability, policy development, and management practices.

- *HOST: Hints on Serving Travelers (Remove Intoxicated Drivers/New Jersey, P.O. Box 1614, Wayne, NJ 07470)*

Not really a curriculum *per se*, but an educational and promotional campaign designed to encourage social hosts to adopt responsible serving practices. Materials package includes a brochure that summarizes the 1984 New Jersey Supreme Court