

# ServSafe Alcohol Study Guide

## Module One

### Alcohol Laws and Your Responsibility

#### I. The Costs of Not Serving Alcohol Responsibly

##### A. Human Costs

Serving alcohol irresponsibly could lead to people getting hurt and may even result in death.

##### B. Legal Costs

Owners or managers could face fines, lawsuits, or may even be charged with a crime.

##### C. Business Costs

The liquor license could be suspended or even revoked. The bad publicity following an incident could lead to people not coming in and a loss of revenue. Jobs may be cut. Insurance premiums could rise, if they are offered.

You can be held personally liable if you break liquor laws. Serve responsibly.

Being liable means that you are legally responsible. You are legally responsible for your actions when selling and serving alcohol. The things you do and don't do matter.

#### II. Types of Liability

##### A. Criminal Liability

States, cities, and towns write laws about how alcohol is supposed to be served. If these laws are broken, you can be charged with a crime. You could face probation, be charged with a fine, or even go to jail for breaking alcohol laws.

##### B. Civil Liability

“Lawsuits” People may be compensated for injuries that occurred by someone who was negligent because of someone who did not serve responsibly. If you break alcohol laws

and someone gets hurt, you could be sued in court and be forced to pay damages. You are responsible; whether your actions contributed to the injury, or if you didn't do anything to prevent the accident.

"Dram Shop Laws" are a special Civil Liability for people who sell alcohol. These laws allow a person who was not at the location to sue for injuries that resulted from a person who was drinking there. The owner, manager, or server may be sued if an intoxicated guest killed another driver on the way home.

### C. Administrative Liability

Establishments and employees can be penalized by the State Alcohol Agency if they do not follow alcohol laws. State Liquor Authorities grant licenses to sell and serve alcohol, as well as to monitor and enforce the state and local liquor laws. Establishments can have their license suspended or revoked. A server can lose their right to serve alcohol. Fines can be enforced upon the owners and staff.

### III. Laws Restricting Alcohol Service

- Each state has their own set of liquor laws. So do counties, cities, and towns.
  - In most states, it is illegal to sell or serve alcohol to anyone who is under 21 years of age.
  - In most states, it is illegal to serve to someone who is already intoxicated.
  - This holds true no matter who provides the alcohol – the establishment, employees, or guests.
  - Always know your laws and your company's policies!
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- What should you do if you see someone pass drinks off to an underage guest? The best practice is to stop service and remove the alcohol.
  - Parents or guardians cannot legally serve alcohol to their underaged children in most states.
  - It is illegal to possess, consume, or buy alcohol if you are under 21 – regardless of how you got it.
  - In some establishments, it is illegal to enter if you are under 21.
  - It is illegal to use a fake or altered ID. It is the server's job to check for genuine IDs.
  - In some states, the minimum age to serve alcohol is 21. (NC is 18.)
  - Alcohol laws hold the servers and the establishment liable for serving an intoxicated person.

- Even guests can be held responsible for passing alcohol to underage or already intoxicated drinkers.
- In most areas, it is illegal to drink on the job.
- It is illegal to serve outside of the stated hours on the liquor license. You must follow the “cut off time”.
- In some establishments, it is illegal to bring alcohol onto the premises.
- Always know your state and local laws, and well as your company’s alcohol policies!
- In some states, games involving alcohol are illegal (beer pong, quarters, etc.) because it encourages drinking too much.
- Alcohol may also lead to other illegal activities such as drug use, gambling, prostitution, etc.
- States hold the owners and operators liable if they discriminate. This can include discriminating against race, color, gender, sexual orientations, age, disability, creed, or religion. Best practice is to treat everyone the same.
- You cannot legally refuse to serve alcohol to a woman who is pregnant. This is an example of discrimination.

## Module Two

### Recognizing and Preventing Intoxication

- I. What Is Alcohol?
  1. The kind of alcohol we drink is called Beverage Alcohol, or Ethanol. This is made by fermenting plants or grains and breaking them down with yeast. Beer and wine are made through this fermentation process.
  2. Liquor products are distilled. This removes the water from the Ethanol and makes the drink stronger.
  3. It is important to know the strengths of different types of alcohol. Proof will indicate the strength of a liquor. If you divide the proof by 2, you will determine

how much alcohol a drink contains. For example, a 100-proof whiskey contains 50% alcohol.

4. The ABV is the alcohol by volume, or the percentage of the drink that is alcohol.
5. Alcohol strength varies. Liqueurs can begin at 20% for a schnapps to 40% and up for spirits such as vodka or rum.
6. The typical alcohol content of a beer is 4-6%. Craft beers range higher. The typical alcohol content of a glass of wine is 12-14%.

## II. Alcohol's Path Through the Body

1. Alcohol moves similar to food, but it does not need to be digested to enter the bloodstream.
2. A small amount of alcohol is immediately absorbed in the mouth. It then moves to the stomach where some is absorbed into the bloodstream by the stomach wall. After this it moves to the small intestine where most of it is absorbed into the bloodstream.
3. Once alcohol is in the bloodstream, it travels quickly through the body, and can reach the brain in only a few minutes.
4. What happens when alcohol reaches the brain? It is a depressant. It slows down or reduces brain activity such as judgment, memory, and motor skills.

## III. BAC and Factors that Affect It

- BAC stands for Blood Alcohol Content, sometimes called concentration.
  - BAC is how much alcohol is in a person's bloodstream, or the percentage of the blood that is alcohol.
  - It takes very little alcohol to be in the blood stream before the brain is affected.
  - 0.08% is the legal level for intoxication when driving in most states. At this limit, motor skills are significantly impacted. However, a drinker can be impaired at lower levels. BAC levels of 0.30 or higher will result in a coma or death.
  - Binge drinking is drinking large amounts of alcohol in a short amount of time. Always monitor a guest's drinking.
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- How do people sober up after drinking? Time. They must wait it out.
  - There are many myths.... Drinking water keeps you hydrated, caffeine will make you alert. Vitamins don't remove alcohol. Eating greasy foods slows the absorption rate. Vomiting empties the stomach contents.

- The liver must break down alcohol in the bloodstream. A healthy liver can process about ONE drink per Hour.

#### Factors Affecting BAC...

- The type of alcohol you drink
- How much and how fast you drink
- Body Size – if you are smaller, there is less blood to dilute the alcohol
- Fat Content – lean muscle passes alcohol faster than fat
- Gender – women have a smaller amount of the enzymes needed to break down alcohol
- Age – older people have slower enzymes
- Food – helps slow the rate of absorption.
- Carbonation – alcoholic beverages with bubbles speed the absorption rate
- Some people will show a combination of these factors!

#### III. Risk Factors for Intoxication

##### Red Flags...

- People who are stressed, depressed, or angry.
- People who are tired, or who are sick and on medications.
- People who have had liver transplants, cirrhosis of the liver, or who are diabetic
- Listen to your guests. When you know a person is at risk, you will watch them closer.

#### IV. Assessing Levels of Intoxication – Counting Drinks

##### How to Count Drinks -

Drink Equivalencies that count as ONE STANDARD drink...

A 5-ounce glass of wine at 12%

A 12-ounce beer at 5%

A 1.5-ounce 80-proof liquor pour

A 1-ounce 100-proof liquor pour

- The size of the drink and its contents will affect how it's counted. For example, some cocktails may contain several standard drinks. The amount of liquor in a beverage divided by the amount of liquor in one standard drink will calculate the number of drinks a person has been served.
- For example, if someone is served a 3-ounce glass of 80-proof whiskey, this is technically counted as two standard drinks.

How to evaluate a guest's level of intoxication...

Being able to estimate a guest's BAC helps you to decide whether or not to continue serving them.

1. Count the number of standard drinks served. You can keep track with tally marks on a napkin or coaster, on the guest's ticket, or by holding receipts.
2. Estimate the weight of the guest
3. Use a BAC chart to determine their intoxication level. These are only a reference. The BAC charts are based on one processing one alcoholic beverage per hour. They do not take all factors into account.

## V. Assessing Levels of Intoxication - Observing Guests

Look for physical and behavioral changes! You should start observing guests from the moment they enter the establishment and continue to do so until they leave. A change in a behavior is more revealing than the behavior itself.

## VI. Signs of Intoxication

### 1. Relaxed Inhibitions

Drinkers are overly friendly, depressed, extremely quiet, extremely loud, make rude comments, use foul language

### 2. Impaired Judgment

Drinkers lose the inability to make sensible decisions, they complain about the strength of a drink, drink faster, switch to bigger or stronger drinks, make irrational or argumentative statements, become careless with money

### 3. Slowed Reaction Time

Drinkers talk or move slowly, they can't concentrate, lose focus, become forgetful, become drowsy, are glassy-eyed, lose eye contact or can't make eye contact, excessive blinking

### 4. Impaired Motor Coordination

Drinkers stagger, stumble, fall, bump into things, sway, drop objects, are unable to pick up objects, spill drinks, miss their mouth, have slurred speech

- Experienced drinkers can handle their alcohol better than others. They have a high tolerance. A person's tolerance does not affect their BAC – just their ability to hide the effects. Some people can also show signs of intoxication after only one drink.

## VII. Preventing Guests from Becoming Intoxicated.

It is most important to serve safely and provide good service!

1. Offer water to prevent dehydration.
2. Offer food to keep alcohol in the stomach. Foods that are high in fat and protein are best. Try to avoid carbs as they digest quickly, and salty foods, as they can lead to more drinking.
3. Offer non-alcoholic beverages like soda or coffee. This may allow for the drinker to still feel like a part of the group.
4. Pay attention to how drinks are poured and mixed. Measuring liquor is the best way to avoid over-pouring. Use a jigger or pour spout. Make sure free-pour bartenders are accurately trained.

5. Some establishments limit the number of drinks a guest can be served.

## Module Three

### Checking Identification

#### I. When To Check IDS

- Assuming ages can be dangerous. When in doubt, check it out!
- Always follow company policy, state, and local laws.
- Most places follow a Card everyone over 30 policy
  
- Recheck IDs if you have doubts
- Card a guest even if they have been given a drink ticket or a wristband
- Checking IDs is an Individual Responsibility with a Team Effort

#### II. How To Check IDs

Know what to look for! You must be able to hold and see both sides of an ID to make sure it is genuine. If a guest presents their ID to you in a wallet, ask them to remove it.

##### A. Is it acceptable?

Driver's License, State issued ID card, Passport, Military ID

##### B. Is it Valid?

Does it look genuine and have all of the security features it should?

A valid ID should contain the owner's photo, signature, and date of birth. The ID should not be expired. IDs should be free of any damage.

##### C. Is it Real?

- ID checking guides are useful and should be provided
- UV lights will show security features such as watermarks, reflective images, ghost pictures
- Check for the right thickness and smooth edges
- Check the formatting. Some states use a vertical format for people under 21.
- Flashlights will show any signs of tampering or damage, like cuts, tears, pin holes, bubbles, etc.



- A magnifying glass can help identify micro-print
- An ID should have a magnetic strip and/or barcode on the back. These can be scanned by an ID reader to verify information.
- If you find a fake, do not serve. You can confiscate the ID and call the police.

#### D. Are they old enough to drink?

Check the birthdate and add 21 to their year of birth. It is easy to first add 20 and then add one. Some places also use signs to announce the date of those over 21.

#### E. Does the ID belong to them?

- Compare the photo.
- Look for things that do not change – face shape, eye distance, scars, etc
- Observe physical traits like height and eye color
- Ask questions they should know like their address or middle name, and check for hesitation.
- Have them sign a piece of paper and compare the signatures.
- You can always ask for a 2<sup>nd</sup> form of identification if you are unsure.

## Module Four

### Handling Difficult Situations

#### I. Dealing with Intoxicated Guests

- When people drink too much, you have to stop service.
- Stop service when they show signs of intoxication through appearance or behavior.
- Stop service if you are concerned about the number of drinks they have had. Use the BAC chart for reference.

#### II. How to Stop Service

- Know your company policy to see if you are able to do so.

- Notify a manager.
  - Wait until they order the next drink to tell them. This way resentment doesn't build.
  - Have a back-up person stand close enough to see and hear your conversation, but not so close that the guest feels threatened.
  - If the guest steps away, ask their friends to help convince them not to order more drinks.
  - Be professional and polite. Remain calm.
  - Offer food or non-alcoholic beverages as an alternative.
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- Don't be judgmental. Avoid "you statements" (you had too much)
  - State the facts and deflect the blame with policies.
  - Make the guest feel like you are personally concerned for their safety.
  - Show empathy.
  - Be genuine.
  - Let them know you understand.
  - Stay firm and do not back down in the end.

If you have stopped service and still see that another guest is passing off drinks to someone who is intoxicated

- Tell your manager and any other coworkers
- Stop service to the group
- Quote the law and use good communication techniques

Make Sure They Get Home Safely

- Don't use physical force
- Try to convince them not to drive
- Take their keys only if they offer
- Call someone for a ride
- If they insist on driving, call the police

Dealing with Guest Who Arrive Intoxicated

- Refuse entry
- Offer them food and non-alcoholic beverages

## Guests who Have Designated Drivers

- You are still liable for over serving them. This does not make it okay for them to be intoxicated.
- Some places offer programs for DDs.

## III. Handling Situations That May Become Violent

- Personal safety always comes first.
- Call the police.
- Follow company policy, state, and local laws.

## Anticipate Problems!

- Watch for unruly guests and inappropriate behavior.
- Make a reasonable effort to prevent problems.
- Stay calm.
- Talk with the person.
- Do not become confrontational.
- Never touch the person.
- Inform others.
- Call the police if the safety of others is at risk.

## Incident Reports

- This is a written record of the event.
- They help prepare the establishment for legal action
- Report data also helps determine the effectiveness of policies

## IV. Dealing with Illegal Activities

- Gambling, prostitution, drugs, weapons, and other illegal activities are not allowed and must be reported
- Always consider the safety of others
- Tell a manager, they should decide what to do
- Use extreme caution
- Call the police when necessary
- You are reliable for your actions! If you feel the manager's decision is wrong – go against them.

## V. Dealing with Fake IDs

- Refuse service if you feel the ID is not real.
- You may confiscate the ID.

## VI. Handling visits from Law Enforcement

- Ask for badge identification.
- Notify the manager.
- Follow company policies.
- Be polite.
- Ask questions.
- You have the right to ask them why they are there.
- Take notes.