

Mandatory Alcohol Server Training Deadline Draws Near

July 4, 2022



A new law requiring training and certification of alcohol servers and their managers goes into effect on July 1. Under Assembly Bill 1221 and Assembly Bill 82, every alcohol server and their managers must be trained and certified by August 31.

AB 1221 defines an alcohol server as anyone that is employed at an ABC on-premises licensed establishment who is responsible for checking identifications, taking customer orders, and pouring or delivering alcoholic beverages.

Alcohol servers and their managers must have a valid Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) certification from the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). Servers and their managers must pass an online ABC administered RBS exam by August 31 to be certified. If they are newly hired, they must pass the exam and be certified 60 days from the first date of employment.

ABC developed the RBS program by holding meetings around the state with stakeholders to gather input to determine the best method of meeting the new training mandate. Based on input, ABC created the RBS training portal.

The portal provides access to an alcoholic beverage training service and certification program to address the requirements of AB 1221.

RBS Training and Certification is a Three-Step process:

1. Register with ABC as a Server on the RBS Portal
2. Take RBS training from an approved RBS Training Provider
3. Return to the RBS Portal to take ABC's alcohol server certification exam.

The portal allows servers and managers to complete these steps. They can register as a server, search for training providers, and complete the exam all in one place.

“The development of the RBS portal is a major accomplishment. The entirety of the certification process is online, including the ability to accept online payments,” said Licensing Division Chief Jaime Taylor. “The RBS training program is designed to provide licensees, managers, and servers with the tools and knowledge needed to promote responsible consumption, reduce youth access to alcohol, and make communities safe.”

Alcohol servers and their managers play an important public safety role. More than 9,000 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes in California between 2009 and 2018, according to the Centers for Disease Control. A Rutgers University study shows some states that implemented responsible beverage service laws saw a drop in deaths involving underage drinking drivers.

Oregon was the first state to adopt a mandatory alcohol server program in 1986, and by 1989 single-vehicle nighttime crashes were reduced by 23 percent according to a joint study by the Prevention Research Center and University of Minnesota. By working with approved training providers, ABC hopes to reduce incidents like these, as well as other alcohol-related harm.

Prospective RBS training providers are still being encouraged to submit their applications to ABC on the RBS Portal. ABC reviews the trainer applications to determine if they meet the standards for certification to train servers to serve alcohol safely and responsibly.

ABC protects communities through education and by administering prevention and enforcement programs designed to increase compliance with California's alcoholic beverage laws.

ABC is a department of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency.