

# Minimum Legal Drinking Age Compliance Checks

## Reduce Underage Drinking

### What are Compliance Checks?

Minimum Legal Drinking Age Compliance Checks, aka Alcohol Age Compliance Checks are law enforcement operations where an underage young adult, aged 18-20 works with a law enforcement agency by attempting to purchase alcohol using their own ID or without any ID. If the youth completes an alcohol purchase, the law enforcement agency issues a citation to the individual (clerk, cashier, bartender, server, waiter) who sold the alcohol. The compliance check is not a “sting” since retailers are notified in advance in writing of when the check will occur. Compliance checks should be performed every six months at both on-premises (e.g., restaurants, bars, taverns, movie theaters, etc.) and off-premises retail alcohol businesses (e.g., supermarkets, groceries, liquor stores, convenience stores, gas stations, etc.). Businesses that pass can get positive publicity; while businesses that fail should try to improve their practices.

### Why Compliance Checks?

- ✓ **Compliance checks work.** When regularly performed at least every six months, they are an effective method to prevent alcohol sales to underage people.
- ✓ **Compliance checks may reduce problems associated with underage drinking** including violence, vandalism, injury, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease. Adolescent alcohol use can cause brain damage, cancer, drownings, falls, burns, and unintended shootings. Underage drinking is also a significant factor in sexual assaults, gun violence, homicide suicide, and the development of other substance use disorders.
- ✓ **Compliance checks can be easy once organized.** Establishing semi-annual checks takes work; but once organized, the operations are effective and relatively easy.
- ✓ **Selling alcohol to anyone under age 21 is illegal under most circumstances.** Wisconsin’s rate of underage drinking remains above the national average. (There is an exception for when a person is accompanied by their parent, guardian or spouse aged 21 or older.)
- ✓ **Well-publicized compliance checks send a strong message that providing alcohol to underage people is not acceptable.** In addition to influencing behaviors of licensees, they can influence the attitudes of parents and others within the community, making underage drinking less acceptable and less normalized.

For additional information, see [www.mcw.edu/wisapp](http://www.mcw.edu/wisapp).