

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MERCHANT EDUCATION

What is merchant education?

Merchant education typically refers to efforts to inform those whose job responsibilities include selling alcohol or tobacco about the relevant laws around the sales of those products, especially the laws pertaining to legal ages of purchase. Merchant education should also teach useful skills to help merchants detect and refuse underage buyers.

Why is merchant education important?

Even underage youth often get their alcohol or tobacco by purchasing it themselves from a store. Well-trained merchants will know not to sell to young people, which decreases accessibility. There is a proven link between decreased accessibility and decreased use. There is little research that links merchant education by itself to reduced underage use, but there is research showing that merchant education coupled with comprehensive compliance checks leads to reductions. For merchants, getting trained can help them feel comfortable that they are supporting community norms against selling alcohol or tobacco to youth. They also can get discounts on alcohol liability insurance or lesser penalties from the Administrative Law Court if they get administrative violations against their alcohol license.

How do I reach the merchants?

Merchant education is done in many different ways, including holding a workshop they come to and going to the store to deliver the information. The most successful merchant education programs have involved multiple components, including repeated merchant contacts, mail or on-site visits, undercover buying operations, economic incentives and disincentives, community outreach, and media advocacy.

Can I do merchant education alone?

You should strongly consider using other partners for merchant education. A young person might be a powerful person to give testimony to the harm of underage drinking. Law enforcement officers can be very useful for sharing the specific laws and impressing the importance of the issue.

Are there guidelines for what should be covered in merchant education?

DAODAS, LRADAC, and Circle Park have all supported the development of a state merchant education program that covers all the recommended elements of a merchant education program, including state-specific laws. This program, the Palmetto Retailers Education Program (PREP), has a website: www.prepmerchanted.org.

How often should I offer merchant education?

You will likely need to offer multiple sessions each year because (1) it may take many sessions to train all the merchants in your community and (2) turnover is high at

many of these sales positions so it will take multiple sessions to account for new employees. PREP certification is for two years.