



Quick Guide: Minors and ABC Establishments

The following quick guide addresses common questions regarding the sale, service, consumption and possession of alcoholic beverages by minors. It also addresses the presence of minors in licensed establishments. For the purpose of this guide, anyone under the age of 21 is deemed a minor.

RELEVANT LAW

The following laws govern the sale, service and consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors; the presence of minors in licensed establishments; the employment of minors by license holders; and identification checking requirements:

- D.C. Official Code § 25-781 (Sale to minors or intoxicated persons prohibited)
- D.C. Official Code § 25-782 (Restrictions on minor's entrance into licensed premises)
- D.C. Official Code § 25-783 (Production of valid identification document required)
- D.C. Official Code § 25-784 (Sale or distribution of beverages by minor prohibited)
- D.C. Official Code § 25-785 (Delivery, offer, or otherwise making available to persons under 21; penalties)
- D.C. Official Code § 25-1002 (Purchase, possession or consumption by persons under 21; misrepresentation of age; penalties)

LEGAL DRINKING AGE

The legal age to purchase, possess and consume alcoholic beverages in the District of Columbia is 21.

SALE OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

A licensee shall not sell, serve or deliver alcoholic beverages to anyone under the age of 21.

PASSING DRINKS TO MINORS

In general, it is illegal to buy an alcoholic beverage for the purpose of giving it to a person under the age of 21.

PRESENCE OF MINORS INSIDE ESTABLISHMENTS

A licensee holding an off-premises retailer's class A license shall not permit a person under the age of 18 to enter the premises between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. when District of Columbia public schools are in session during the regular school year. This requirement does not apply to supermarkets where the sale of alcohol constitutes no more than 25 percent of the supermarket's gross annual receipts.

IDENTIFICATION CHECKING

Licensees are required to take reasonable steps to ascertain that a patron is of legal drinking age. A licensee is prohibited from selling an alcoholic beverage to any patron that fails to present identification upon the request of the licensee.

EMPLOYMENT OF MINORS IN LICENSED ESTABLISHMENTS

Licensed establishments may not permit persons under the age of 18 to sell, serve or deliver an alcoholic beverage. Persons over the age of 18 and under the age of 21 may sell, serve or deliver alcoholic beverages but may not work as a bartender.

OFFENSES BY MINORS

It is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to engage in any of the following acts:

- Passing drinks to other persons under the age of 21;
- Purchase, attempt to purchase or drink an alcoholic beverage;
- Falsely represent their age or possess or present a fake identification with the intent to obtain an alcoholic beverage; or
- Present fake identification for the purpose of gaining admission to any on-premises retail establishment, an event covered by a temporary license, or any premises covered by an Arena C/X license.

PENALTIES

Both licensees and unlicensed individuals that fail to abide by the rules governing alcoholic beverages and minors may face criminal penalties. In addition, licensees that violate these rules may face fines, as well as possible suspension and revocation of their alcoholic beverage license.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, visit ABRA.DC.Gov or contact ABRA at 202-442-4423 or ABRA@DC.Gov.