

Ask the Experts

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Q “What kinds of technology should my restaurant use in order to strictly comply with Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) rules and regulations?”



A **MLCC WEBSITE.** Restaurateurs should be intimately familiar with the MLCC website, michigan.gov/lara (click on Licensing and Regulation on the left). The website is greatly improved and consistently updated. You can keep apprised of MLCC decisions or orders, review minutes from MLCC meetings, check the status of liquor license applications, examine your violation history and spirit purchases, and keep abreast of news affecting licensees. Restaurateurs can also renew their liquor licenses online as well as place spirits orders with the Authorized Distribution Agent (ADA).

SALES TO MINORS. If the MLCC finds a licensee responsible for selling alcohol to a minor, there are serious consequences. The MLCC can assess fines and costs and can suspend or revoke the liquor license. In addition to having staff “card” customers, technology exists to interpret the identification to ensure that the customer is 21 years of age. There are “ID scanners” and software that verify identification electronically and can be used in conjunction with point of sale systems. This technology, if used properly, will prevent a violation resulting from a server or a bartender reading an ID incorrectly.

FOOD TO ALCOHOL SALES. Certain MLCC licenses and permits require the restaurant to maintain a certain percentage of food sales in order to retain licensure. For example, a Sunday Sales Permit, which allows a restaurant to sell sprits on Sundays, requires that at least 50 percent of the restaurant’s gross receipts be derived from the sale of food and

other goods and services. On-premise resort licenses have similar requirements. The MLCC can audit the required percentages at any time, and if the restaurant is not in compliance, the license or permit can be revoked. Your point of sale system can be used to track food and alcohol sale proportions and demonstrate compliance with this requirement.

SERVER TRAINING. The MLCC license requires restaurants keep proof on the premises documenting that employees have completed server training. Rather than digging through files, copies of employees’ certificates should be saved on a computer file, along with a current employee list. The MLCC stipulates that the restaurant have present on the licensed premises, for each shift and during all hours of alcohol service, supervisory personnel who have successfully completed a server training program. Saving employees’ certificates this way will be helpful to the manager on duty if the MLCC or local law enforcement are making routine investigations.