

Overview of Alcohol Advertising Restrictions

Children and adolescents regularly view alcohol advertisements in their environment. Typically, alcohol advertisements are lacking or altogether missing, any information on the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

Alcohol advertising restrictions reduce the exposure of children and adolescents to alcohol advertising that promotes unrealistic messages about alcohol use. Restrictions on alcohol advertising include any policies that limit advertising of alcoholic beverages such as limits on location and placement of messages.

The Federal Alcohol Administration Act (FAA Act) gives the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) authority to regulate the advertising of alcohol beverage products. It provides for the regulation of those engaged in the alcohol beverage industry and for the protection of consumers.

The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau defines an advertisement as any written or verbal statement, illustration, or depiction. Examples include ads in newspapers or magazines, trade booklets, menus, wine cards, leaflets, circulars, mailers, book inserts, catalogs, promotional materials, or sales pamphlets. Also included is anything written, printed, graphic, or other matter accompanying the container: markings on cases, billboards, signs, or other outdoor displays; broadcasts made via radio, television, or in any other media. Though not specifically listed, this definition includes websites and other internet-based advertising such as social media.

The Goal of Alcohol Advertising Restrictions

Alcohol advertising restriction policies are focused on addressing permissive community norms. When youth live in communities where underage drinking is a low priority and adults convey a permissive attitude towards underage drinking, it undermines their ability to grow and thrive in safe and healthy communities.

Communities that restrict alcohol advertisers and advertisements send a message to young people that underage alcohol use is not tolerated by the community.

Why Alcohol Advertising Restrictions are Important to Communities

A study published in the May 2016 issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, found that kids ages 11 to 14 typically saw two to four alcohol ads per day. While television was often the source, outdoor ads, such as billboards and signs outside stores and restaurants, were even more prominent in kids' lives.¹

Communities can play an active role in monitoring the alcohol industry and community coalitions are uniquely positioned to help limit the glorification of alcohol use in their communities.

Parents and peers have a large impact on youth decisions to drink. However, research clearly indicates that alcohol advertising and marketing also have a significant effect by influencing youth and adult expectations and attitudes, and helping to create an environment that promotes underage drinking.²

Reducing the impact of alcohol marketing on young people is an important public health goal since underage drinking is a significant contributor to youth alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes and other forms of injury, violence, suicide, and problems associated with school and family.³

Alcohol Advertising Restriction Examples

Efforts to restrict alcohol advertisements include not only state laws and self-regulation by the alcohol industry, but local ordinances and the voluntary implementation of restrictions by businesses, events, or organizations. Some local ordinances that can be implemented by communities looking to restrict alcohol advertising in their area are:

- Limiting alcohol sponsorships of community events that are popular with families and young people
- Placing limits or controls on billboards in areas where children are present and spend time
- Reducing point-of-sale displays that are in areas of a store young people shop in or in areas that are intended to capture young people's attention
- Prohibiting alcohol advertising inside a store that is visible from the outside
- Placing limitations on the percentage of store window space devoted to advertising
- Prohibiting distribution of sale of any alcohol industry promotional materials to minors (prizes at local events)

Helpful Tips and Suggestions

Outdoor advertising has been growing as companies are moving away from traditional sources such as television and radio. Companies often approach municipalities with outdoor advertising to gain revenue. It is important for community coalitions to counter the argument that alcohol advertising brings in revenue for the community. Using data, community coalitions can present the societal costs of underage drinking, and the public money that will be spent on prevention and treatment services, which far outweighs any potential income in advertising revenue.

Resources and Tools

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The Federal Trade Commission.

Department of the Treasury Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) and in collaboration with the Center for the Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) – Strategizer 32 Alcohol Advertising: Its Impact on Communities and What Coalitions Can Do to Lessen That Impact.

References

1. Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. "Middle-school kids see several alcohol ads a day." ScienceDaily, 17 May 2016.
2. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Alcohol Advertising and Youth. April 2007. Web. August 2017.
3. U.S. Surgeon General. (2007). Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General.

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