

Alcopops: Easy to Drink and Difficult to Avoid

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Accessibility of Alcopops:

Inexpensive pricing and easy access contribute to the appeal and consumption of alcopops by youth. In Wisconsin, since 'fermented malt beverages' (FMB) are regulated separately from liquor, alcopops made with a fermented malt beverage base can be sold at the lower rate of taxation. Due to this classification, existing beer/wine distribution networks can also be used for the alcopop supply chain, drastically increasing store availability. Because these products are colorful, cheap, and accessible, they attract youth. Casual observers can see that alcopops and ready-to-drink cocktails are often cheaper than soda and, in some cases, even water.

when describing consumption of the product or how it makes you feel. Likewise, alcohol use has been portrayed in up to 80% of movies, and of most concern, it is present in up to 40% of child-rated movies, normalizing the use of alcohol beginning at an early age. These movies include Disney classics like Peter Pan, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, and The Hunchback of Notre Dame which all feature scenes portraying the consumption and overconsumption of alcohol sometimes by characters with ambiguous ages. Further, the logo designs and names of many alcopops are also meant to entice a younger buyer by being bright and colorful, featuring a pattern, or using an exciting flavor in the beverage like mountain dew or tea (Figure 2 and 3). Alcopop ads are also extremely common on social media where no age gating exists, and further exposes minors to content tying alcopop consumption with positive themes.

How do sales practices increase Alcopop consumption and awareness?

In addition to the harmful marketing and ad campaigns of large alcohol producers, harmful sales practices at local stores also contribute to youth consumption of alcopops. This includes practices like keeping alcopops intermixed in coolers with energy drinks, soda, and other nonalcoholic products, and placing alcohol beverages lower or near the ground, at toddler or youth eye level. These behaviors further contribute to increased product awareness, acceptability, and normalization of youth consumption. Within Wisconsin, the Counter Tools Retail Assessment Project scanned 781 retailers statewide from 2017 and published the results in 2019 (8). They found 54% of scanned retailers sold alcohol beverages in the same or adjacent cooler as alcohol beverages and 71% had alcohol ads or products within three feet or less of the floor (8). Finally, the simple decision to sell alcopops at a local store can have consequences, as it has been found that the amount of shelf space allocated for alcopops within neighborhood stores is correlated with neighborhood violence (9, 13).

kids. RAND Corporation. Retrieved December 8, 2022, from https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10015.html.

8. CounterTools(2019)Community Advocates Public Policy Institute & Wisconsin