

Stop Illegal Alcohol Sales – Prevent Teen Drinking!

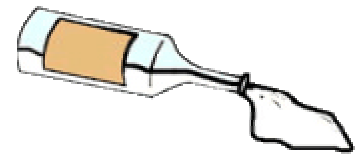


*Working together
to reduce underage
drinking through
policy change*

Support Alcohol Compliance Checks and Minimum Administrative Penalties

Too many Minnesota teens are drinking:

- **Underage drinking is a major problem in Minnesota.** The 2004 Minnesota Student Survey¹ found that 63% of high school seniors in the state drink alcohol. Four-in-ten Minnesota 9th graders report drinking in the past year.
- **Binge drinking is a major problem in Minnesota.** More than one-third of 12th grade boys and one-quarter of 12th grade girls report binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the two weeks prior to taking the Minnesota Student Survey.¹ Fifteen percent of ninth grade boys and ninth grade girls report binge drinking.
- **The average American child tries alcohol before the age of 13.** Youth who drink before they turn 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who start drinking at 21.²
- **Underage drinkers consume 19.7% of all alcohol consumed in the United States.**³



Teens and alcohol are a dangerous mix:



- **Alcohol use by underage drinkers is a major public health and public safety problem in the United States.** According to the Centers for Disease Control, alcohol is a key factor in the four leading causes of death among young people in America: traffic crashes, homicides, injuries, and suicides.⁴
- **Alcohol affects adolescents differently than adults.** Exposure of the developing brain to alcohol may have long-lasting effects on intellectual capabilities and may increase the likelihood of alcohol addiction.⁵
- **The earlier children drink, the more likely they are to have alcohol-related problems.** Younger drinkers are more likely to be the victims or perpetrators of violence, to drive drunk or ride with a drinking driver, to drop out of school, to have unplanned and/or unprotected sex, and to sustain alcohol related injuries.⁶
- **Underage drinking impacts the U.S. and Minnesota economy.** The consequences of underage drinking are estimated to cost our nation more than \$58 billion per year¹ and the citizens of Minnesota \$1.0 billion in 2001.⁷

Alcohol is easy for underage youth to get:

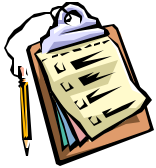
- **Underage youth are able to get alcohol from licensed establishments.** Surveys from around the country have found that youth are frequently able to buy alcohol in stores, bars, and restaurants:
 - A national survey of over 6,000 teenagers revealed teenagers usually get their alcohol from persons 21 or older. The second most common source for high school students is someone else under age 21, and the second most common source for 18- to 20-year-olds is buying it from a store, bar or restaurant.⁸
 - A University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program research project found that young females who attempted to buy beer without an ID at liquor, grocery or convenience stores were successful in one-half of attempts.^{9,10}
 - In the 2004 Minnesota Student Survey, 11% of Minnesota high school senior boys reported that they had purchased alcohol from a store in the past month.¹

Compliance checks work:

- **What are compliance checks?** A compliance check is a tool to identify alcohol establishments that sell alcohol to underage youth. Youth, with parental consent, are trained to conduct compliance checks under the close supervision of a law enforcement officer. Minors participating in compliance checks cannot lie about their age and must present their own identification if asked.

- **How do compliance checks prevent underage drinking?** The goal of compliance checks is to prevent illegal alcohol sales. Compliance checks demonstrate to retailers and the public that Minnesota is serious about reducing illegal sales and preventing underage drinking. The goal is not to penalize retailers, but to encourage alcohol licensees to "police" themselves and to adequately train, supervise, and back up their employees.
- **Studies show that compliance checks are effective.** The National Academy of Sciences recommends compliance checks and mandatory administrative penalties as an effective tool to reduce underage drinking.¹¹ Several studies found that after compliance checks were conducted, sales to underage patrons reduced from 60-80% to 25-30%.^{12,13} A recent report from New Hampshire found that after implementing an enhanced enforcement program, there was a 64% reduction in retail alcohol sales to underage youths, and declines in alcohol use and binge drinking among high school students.¹⁴
- **What are minimum administrative penalties?** Alcohol license holders can be assessed civil penalties by the licensing authority, including fines and/or license suspensions or revocations. An adult who sells or provides alcohol to minors can also be charged criminally with a gross misdemeanor.

Compliance checks are inexpensive and easy to administer:



- **Why should compliance checks be required?** In many communities, alcohol compliance checks are low priority. However, there is strong evidence that conducting two checks per year on each licensed establishment would dramatically reduce illegal sales to underage youth. Just like food inspection in restaurants, it makes sense to mandate that each establishment licensed in Minnesota be checked at least once – and preferably twice – per year.
- **Have tobacco compliance checks been effective?** Tobacco compliance checks have been required in Minnesota since 1997, and they have been very effective in reducing sales to teens and a major factor contributing to the 36% decline in youth tobacco use since 1998. The law enforcement community now accepts tobacco compliance checks as a standard component of police practice.
- **What about the costs of compliance checks?** License fees for on-sale and off-sale businesses should cover the costs of licensing – including enforcement. Law enforcement agencies that regularly conduct checks report little additional expense associated with checks. In addition, checks can be used constructively as a community-policing tool and can help reduce alcohol-related problems, such as drinking parties and car crashes, that consume a good deal of police time.



- 3/09/2005

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