Public health perspective

What we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy
~Institute of Medicine

Evidence-based policies

• Increase alcohol taxes & fees
• Remove youth-oriented products from the market
• Reduce alcohol advertising
• Support state control

Organize campaigns with diverse communities & youth
Threats to public health

- Alcohol-related harm
- Cost/burden of responding to that harm
- Alcohol products that are low-cost, accessible and attractive to youth
- Alcohol ads & promotion that saturates the youth demographic
Alcohol is the most harmful drug in the U.S.

- 79,000 deaths annually
- 5,000 deaths under age 21 annually
- 1.6 million hospitalizations and 4 million ER visits in 2005
- Injuries from motor vehicle crashes, fires, falls, drownings
- Illnesses such as hypertension and various cancers
- Homicide, suicide, domestic violence, other crimes
Threat: Cost from harm

Economic costs to the U.S. from alcohol in 2006: $224 billion
- Lost productivity: 72.2%
- Healthcare costs: 11.0%
- Criminal justice costs: 9.4%
- Other costs: 7.5%

- Binge drinking resulted in $171 billion (76.4%).

- However, most excessive drinkers are not dependent on alcohol

Threat: Cheap alcohol, low taxes
Threat: Youth-oriented products
Threat: Youth Overexposed to Alcohol Promotion
Threat: Youth Overexposed to Alcohol Promotion
Threat: Youth Overexposed to Alcohol Promotion
Threat: PR framed as public health
Threat: PR framed as public health
Policy Recommendations

World Health Organization:

- Increase alcohol pricing
- Reduce outlet density
- Limit alcohol marketing

WHO Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol, 2010
Policy Recommendations

The most effective alcohol policies:

• Increasing alcohol taxes
• Minimum legal purchase age
• Government monopoly of retail sales
• Restrictions on outlet density
• Lowered BAC limits
• Restrictions on alcohol ad exposure

Legislative Activity

States
• Bills to increase alcohol taxes: 10 states
  Victories: Maryland, Connecticut
• Bills to ban caffeine in alcoholic beverages: 11 states
  Victories: California, Iowa
• Bills to restrict alcohol advertising in various media; 5 states
  MA, NJ, NY - on public property, either partial or full
  NH – in campus publications; MS, VA – out of home

Federal
• Including alcohol in Federal Guidelines on Restaurant Menu Labeling
Efforts to Decrease Regulation

Federal
- Senate and House bills to reduce beer tax rate
- Senate and House bills to lower beer tax rate for small brewers
- House bill to reduces spirits tax rate for small distillers

State
- 5 states with bills to decrease alcohol taxes
- Rhode Island: Proposed tax holidays
- Nebraska: Defined flavored malt beverages as beer
- Ohio: Increase max alcohol content in beer 12% to 21% ABV
- Washington: Initiative 1183
Where can we find agreement?

- Alcohol poses serious threats to public health.
- The problem of drinking-related harm has not been eliminated.
- We want to make a difference in the amount of alcohol-related harm.
- We need to use strategies with the best chance of making a difference.
Sarah M. Mart, MS, MPH
Director of Research

p 415.257.2485 (direct)

e sarahm@alcoholjustice.org

alcoholjustice.org