Educating Lawmakers

about Alcohol Policy to Support Public Health

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Marin Institute

- Frames the issues from a public health perspective
- Monitors and exposes the alcohol industry’s harmful products, practices, and promotion
- Researches and promotes public policy solutions that reduce alcohol-related harm
- Supports communities in advocating for alcohol policies that reduce alcohol-related harm
Alcohol-Related Harm

Alcohol causes more harm than any other drug in the U.S.

- 85,000 deaths in 2000
- 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
Costs from Alcohol-Related Harm

Annual economic costs from alcohol in the U.S. were estimated at $220 billion in 2005.

The annual cost to California is $38 billion:

- $1000 per resident for alcohol-related illness, injury, crime, and traffic collisions.


Recommendations

Alcohol Availability
- Regulate the number of retail alcohol outlets
- Eliminate sales in certain areas

Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages
- Limit the content and volume of alcohol advertising
- Regulate sponsorship activities involving alcoholic beverages
- Regulate new media/social network advertising

Pricing Policies for Alcoholic Beverages
- Raise taxes on alcohol
- Eliminate promotional pricing
- Establish minimum prices
Recommendations

"Increasing the price of alcoholic beverages is one of the most effective interventions to reduce harmful use of alcohol."

"Raise state excise taxes on alcohol, indexed to inflation, particularly on beer, to decrease youth consumption and raise revenue for the effort."

"Increase excise taxes for alcohol in order to reduce consumption and provide funds."

WHO Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol, 2010
AMA Educational Forum on Adolescent Health: Youth Drinking Patterns and Alcohol Advertising, 2003
Recommendations

“Of all the policy options, alcohol taxes is rated as one of the strongest... This may surprise policymakers, but the research is extensive and the findings are convincing.”

The most effective policies include:

- Alcohol taxes
- Minimum legal purchase age
- Government monopoly of retail sales
- Restrictions on outlet density
- Lowered BAC limits
- Legal restrictions on alcohol advertising exposure

Legislative Opportunities

Fact Sheets, Position Papers, Expert Testimony

Charge for Harm (Mitigation Fees and Taxes):
California, Maine, Washington, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Florida, Montana

Eliminate caffeinated alcoholic beverages:
California, New York, Washington

Protecting State Regulation/Control:
Washington, North Carolina, New York
Educational Challenges

In 2009:

- **Campaign Contributions** to Legislators: $887,449
- Contributions to Governor’s **Budget Reform Now PAC**: $671,000
- **Lobbying State Lawmakers and Agencies**: $1.58 million

California’s “No More Hidden Taxes” Initiative in 2010
Other Opportunities to Educate

Reports
Articles
Policy Analysis

Alcohol Promotion on Facebook (2009)
www.GlobalDrugPolicy.org
Partner with Public Health

• Look, and ask, for evidence
  • Scientific consensus
  • Peer-reviewed research
  • Transparent methodology

• Work with public health advocates and agencies

• Support critical public health policies

• Promote and use evidence-based strategies
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