

News Release

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More Alcohol Advertising on Television And Underage Youth Are Seeing It

Youth exposure to alcohol ads on TV increased 41% from 2001-2005. Industry reforms overwhelmed by historic increases in advertising.

Washington, DC - Youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television grew substantially from 2001 to 2005, according to a new study released today by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University. Most of this growth could be traced to an historic increase in alcohol advertising on cable television, particularly by distilled spirits companies.

The report, [Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Ads on TV 2001-2005](#), also shows that the tighter standard for alcohol ad placements - a 30% maximum for underage audiences of programs or publications carrying alcohol - adopted by alcohol industry groups in September 2003 has been overwhelmed by the growth of alcohol advertising on television.

"More spending on television, especially on cable, translates into kids seeing more and more alcohol ads," said David Jernigan, executive director of CAMY. "Twenty state attorneys general and the Institute of Medicine have said the alcohol industry needs to do a better job of shielding our kids from its advertising."

CAMY's analysis of 1.4 million alcohol ads placed on broadcast, cable and local television at a cost of nearly \$4.7 billion between 2001 and 2005 found that:

- **Overall, spending on televised alcohol ads jumped by 32% and the number of ads increased by 34% from 2001 to 2005.** Annual expenditures grew from \$780 million in 2001 to just over \$1 billion in 2005.
- **Alcohol ad placements above the 30% threshold have trended downward.** In 2005, 8% of placements (24,530 ads) were on programs with underage audiences greater than 30%. In contrast, in 2001 11% of ad placements (or 25,459 ads) were on programs exceeding the 30% maximum.

- **Youth exposure has increased, even as the percent of alcohol ads more likely to be seen by youth than adults fell in recent years.** Youth ages 12 to 20 (the group most at risk of underage drinking) who were exposed to alcohol advertising saw an average of 217 alcohol ads on television in 2001, and 309 such ads in 2005. The percent of alcohol ads more likely to be seen by youth per capita than adults fell from 25% in 2001 (56,852 ads) to 20% in 2005 (60,811 ads).
- **Fueled by increased distilled spirits spending, alcohol advertising on cable has skyrocketed.** Beer and ale advertisers more than doubled their spending and ads on cable from 2001 to 2005. However, spending and ads placed by distilled spirits companies in 2005 were more than 23 times what they were in 2001.
- **Nearly all the alcohol advertising more likely to be seen by youth per capita than adults was on cable television.** In 2001, 60% of youth overexposure was on cable television, while in 2005, 93% of overexposure was on cable. On three cable networks - Comedy Central, VH1 and BET - youth were consistently overexposed to alcohol advertising every year from 2001 to 2005. In 2005, youth were more likely to see alcohol advertisements on these networks than young adults ages 21 to 34, a group often mentioned as the industry's target audience.
- **Programming popular with teens is filled with alcohol advertising.** Since 2001, alcohol ads have appeared every year on 13 or more of the 15 programs most popular with teens ages 12 to 17. In 2005, over 1,300 alcohol ads costing nearly \$38 million were on 14 of the 15 programs with the largest teen audiences, including *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Monday Night Football* and *CSI*.

In 2003, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine recommended that alcohol companies immediately reduce their maximum for youth audiences to 25%, and move towards 15%, roughly the percentage of youth ages 12 to 20 in the general population 12 and above. In 2006, attorneys general from 20 states wrote to the Federal Trade Commission asking it to explore with the industry moving the threshold to 15%. In early December, Congress passed legislation requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to report annually on rates of youth exposure to media messages encouraging and discouraging alcohol use.

"Despite the industry's efforts, youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television is moving in the wrong direction," said Dr. Jernigan. "Underage drinking is our biggest youth drug problem, and studies have repeatedly found that the more alcohol ads kids see, the more likely they are to drink. More effective ad placement standards and ongoing, independent monitoring of alcohol industry practices will help parents and policymakers make certain that our kids are not overexposed to alcohol advertising."

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