

News Release

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Online Tool Estimates Youth Exposure to Alcohol Ads on Radio

Interactive tool provides data for 75 media markets, representing almost half of U.S. population ages 12 and older

Baltimore, MD - A new online tool from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health determines the extent of exposure to radio alcohol advertisements among young people ages 12 to 20 in 75 different media markets. This free and user-friendly tool (www.camy.org/radiotool) is the first service to provide parents, health departments and other key audiences with access to customizable information on youth exposure to radio alcohol advertising.

“Despite the proliferation of things like smart phones and tablets, radio continues to be a popular source of media among youth,” said David Jernigan, PhD, CAMY director. “This tool gives users in dozens of cities across the U.S. the ability to determine the scope to which young people in their community are exposed to alcohol marketing.”

In 2003, trade groups for beer and distilled spirits committed to placing alcohol ads in media venues only when underage youth comprise 30 percent of the audience or less. Since that time, a number of groups and officials, including the National Research Council, the Institute of Medicine and 24 state attorneys general, have called upon the alcohol industry to strengthen its standard and meet a “proportional” 15 percent placement standard, given that the group most at risk for underage drinking –12 to 20 year-olds—is less than 15 percent of the U.S. population. At least 14 longitudinal research studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol marketing, the more likely they are to start drinking or, if already drinking, to drink more.

The tool provides three important measures for each market: the percent of alcohol ads that are out of compliance with the 30 percent standard; the percent which exceed the 15 percent proportional standard; and “youth overexposure,” that is, how many ads in each market were

more likely to be heard by youth per capita than by adults. An earlier CAMY analysis of all 75 markets found close to one-third of advertising placements occurred when proportionately more youth were listening than adults age 21 and above. The analysis also found that 9 percent of the ads in 75 markets failed to meet the industry standards, which accounted for almost 50 percent of all radio listeners age 12 and older. Three brands alone –Miller Lite, Bud Light and Coors Light –placed more than half of these violating ads.

“Alcohol is the leading substance abuse problem among youth in the U.S., and we know alcohol advertising and marketing have a significant impact on youth decisions to drink,” said Robert Brewer, Alcohol Program Leader in the Division of Population Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “CAMY’s radio tool gives state and local health departments a brand new data source to help inform local efforts to reduce youth exposure to alcohol marketing.”

Alcohol is responsible for 4,700 deaths per year among young people under the age of 21. Every day, close to 4,500 young people under the age of 16 take their first drink, and binge drinking (defined as consuming five or more drinks within 2 hours) accounts for more than 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by young people.

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America’s youth. The Center was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center moved to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2008 and is currently funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit www.camy.org.

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