

**News Release**

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## **Alcohol Regulation on the Internet Failing to Protect Youth**

**Baltimore, MD** - Alcohol is far too attractive and easy to obtain for youth on the Internet, according to a new commentary from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Published in Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, the commentary accompanies a new report from authors Rebecca Williams and Kurt Ribisl at the University of North Carolina that documents the relative ease with which underage youth can purchase alcohol online.

The report by Williams and Ribisl, "Internet Alcohol Sales to Minors," is believed to be the first peer-reviewed study to examine the age verification practices of Internet alcohol vendors and how readily minors can purchase alcohol. Underage purchases were successful in 45 out of 100 attempts.

"The fact that there are literally thousands of online outlets selling alcohol and that purchase attempts by underage persons are successful almost half of the time tells us how insufficient the protections are for our youth," said David Jernigan, PhD, director of CAMY and author of the commentary.

Alcohol is the number one drug for young people, and is responsible for 4,700 deaths per year among young people under the age of 21 in the U.S.

In his commentary, Jernigan also noted that the Internet "marketplace" for alcohol goes beyond the sites selling alcohol and includes the industry's advertising and marketing efforts. For example, a 2011 CAMY report documented the extent to which alcohol marketers are using Facebook and therefore reaching underage youth with advertisements and other content. Despite the fact that youth are overrepresented on Facebook, CAMY researchers found that the 10 leading alcohol brands have almost 6.7 million people "liking" their Facebook pages.

At least 14 studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more.

“The bottom line is that alcohol regulation and enforcement are simply not keeping up with new technologies,” concluded Jernigan. “Tighter controls on content and better technology to limit underage access are needed to reduce alcohol use among young people.”

CAMY 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. CAMY was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. CAMY 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 <http://www.camy.org>.

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