

# PREVENTION WORKS!

*Mission:* To build a safe and healthy Vermont for us all by organizing prevention advocates to work collaboratively on issues of policy, practice and attitude related to substance abuse.

*Vision:* All of Vermont's communities will be safe and healthy.

## A PW! Briefing on Flavored Malt Beverages

# ALCOPOPS IN VERMONT

**GATEWAY DRINK:** Alcopops (flavored malt beverages) are alcoholic drinks, highly appealing to youth because they taste sweet, more like soda than alcohol. They serve as gateway drinks to harder liquor at a time when adolescent brains are still developing. Early alcohol use carries an increased risk of impaired brain development.

**\$200 MILLION:** Underage drinking cost the State of Vermont an estimated \$200 million in 2005. Want to save \$200 million? When you reduce underage access to alcohol, you reduce underage use of alcohol. Reclassifying alcopops will reduce underage drinking.

**EASY ACCESS:** Alcopops are inexpensive. Check your supermarket circular for prices. A six-pack of alcopops is roughly \$1 more than a six-pack of beer. A price increase makes them less accessible to underage youth and aids in reducing Vermont's high rates of underage drinking.

**APPEALING TO TEENS:** According to the 2009 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 36 percent of Vermont's 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders reported that they drank alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey. Of those students, 28 percent of females and 9 percent of males indicated that their drinks of choice were alcopops. In 2001, the Center for Science in the Public Interest reported the results of two national polls conducted by independent firms. Eighty-seven percent of teens said alcopops have sweetened flavors to appeal to young people. Nearly 9 out of 10 youth say taste motivates them to try alcopops. Eighty percent of youth say they drink alcopops because they do not taste like beer or liquor.

**TARGETED AT TEENS:** Alcopop websites contain interactive games, cartoons, chat rooms, bulletin boards, logoed clothing, and downloads including wallpaper and screensavers that have been identified by the Federal Trade Commission as content that appeals to youth.<sup>1</sup>

**MADE FOR TEENS:** Alcopops are designed for "entry-level drinkers," according to an alcohol industry spokesperson.<sup>2</sup>



## PW! Goals

- Alcopops are properly displayed
  - away from non-alcoholic drinks
  - in areas clearly designated for products containing alcohol.
- Alcopops are correctly classified so the Department of Liquor Control can regulate marketing, labeling, and store placement.
- Alcopops are only sold in State liquor stores with labels that indicate they contain alcohol. Prominently placed labels ensure that customers know what they are buying and clerks know what they're selling.
- To lower underage alcohol consumption, the excise tax on alcopops is increased. The prices of alcopops are currently low because they are taxed at the same rate as beer and wine. This makes alcopops affordable for youth and helps keep the underage drinking rates high.
- Alcohol prevention, treatment, intervention, enforcement, and recovery programs are successful in reducing underage drinking when the increased tax revenue from the reclassification of alcopops is allocated to these fields.

<sup>1</sup> The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Clicking with Kids: Alcohol Marketing and Youth on the Internet*, March 2004, Washington D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc, Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2001 What Teens Are Saying About "Alcopops" from website [http://www.cspinet.org/booze/alcopops\\_press.htm](http://www.cspinet.org/booze/alcopops_press.htm).

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