Alcohol Advertising Regulations

Background
Research has shown that an increased saturation of alcohol advertisements has been linked to higher rates of alcohol intake among our nation’s youth. Alcohol advertising is found in online, physical, and print mediums. The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Trade Bureau regulates alcohol advertising through the Federal Alcohol Administration Act. However, the Bureau enforces the minimum of consumer protection regulations due to lack of resources. Therefore, local and state governments have the opportunity to further protect their citizens with local regulations on alcohol advertising. Common state and local regulations prohibit advertising near and on the premises of places where a considerable youth population exists (schools, parks, churches, etc.).

Current Best Practices
There are two domains of alcohol advertising regulations among states. Placement and composition account for the first domain and promotions account for the second domain.

The placement and composition domain consist of six key components listed below:

- False or misleading – best practices include clearly defining the term “misleading” and prohibiting subliminal techniques in all mediums. Eleven states have successfully implemented all best practices.
- Targeting minors – best practices include identifying minors as anyone under the legal drinking age and prohibiting ads that would reasonably encourage illegal consumption. Nine states have successfully implemented all best practices.

The promotions domain consists of two key components listed below:

- Sponsoring civic events – best practices include prohibiting alcohol wholesalers
and retailers from sponsoring events in public facilities including schools and colleges.2

- Promoting giveaways – best practices include prohibiting rewards programs that provide giveaways to consumers for purchasing products and prohibiting giveaways to underage participants.2

Indiana has been able to implement some of the best practices, though not all, in the promoting giveaways area. Though, no state has been able to successfully implement all best practices in the promotions domain.2 Virginia, Maine, New Hampshire, and Utah are leading the nation with the highest number of best practices.2 However, the best practices involve the current policies in place and do not guarantee the enforcement these policies.

Impacting Your Community
State and city coalitions have the power to decrease the initial consumption of alcohol, binge drinking, and unintentional injuries related to alcohol among youth. The efficacy of regulating alcohol advertisements alone has not yet proven to significantly reduce health harming behavior in youths. However, studies have suggested that ad restrictions are helpful when paired with other environmental policies.4 Policies that have been proven effective are:

- Increasing alcohol prices/taxes for the wholesaler, retailer, and consumer
- Decreasing alcohol outlet density (see Regulation of Alcohol Outlet Density, 1(3) for more information)
- Limiting days/hours of alcohol sales.

References

