Alcopops
Limiting youth access and availability to reduce underage drinking

Jillian Youngblood
Senior Legislative Analyst
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among teens

- Underage drinking accounts for ~20% of alcohol consumed
- $22.5 billion/year
  - Anheuser Busch alone gets $410 million of its income from alcohol consumed by kids
- 1 in 8 youth age 18-20 years are alcohol dependent
- 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth is during binges

Sources:
2. National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, 2002-2006
3. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002
Underage drinkers are starting to drink younger than ever before

• Each day 1,300 kids take their first drink
• Today, most underage drinkers have their first drink between ages 13-14 years\(^1\)
• In New York City alone…
  – 32% of youth aged 12-20 years reported using alcohol in the past month\(^2\)
  – 33% of youth aged 12-20 years reported binge drinking in the past month


Youth drinking is not only common, it’s also dangerous

- Teens who drink have more
  - School and social problems
  - Suicide, homicide and sexual assault
  - Car crashes, burns, falls, and drownings
- Teens who drink are also more likely to
  - Have multiple sex partners
  - Get pregnant or get someone pregnant
- Changes in brain development in teens who drink may have life-long effects

Among underage drinkers, alcohol-related ED visits have nearly doubled.
Younger initiation to social drinking predicts lifetime problems with alcohol use

40% of kids who begin drinking before age 15 will become alcohol dependent in their lifetime

1 in 8 youth age 18-20 are already alcohol dependent*


*National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, 2002-2006
Most NYC teen drinkers began drinking at age 14 or younger

How old were you when you had your first drink of alcohol other than a few sips?

Data Source: 2007 NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Alcopops – What are they?

- Alcopops are premixed alcohol beverages that are sweet and carbonated
  - 4-12% alcohol content, often higher than most beers
  - Alcohol content often predominantly distilled liquor or wine products, despite malt precursor
  - Packaged in bright colors and designs, similar to soft drinks and sports drinks
Why alcopops and youth?

- Sugary, sweet taste of alcopops → increased consumption and more frequent intoxication among younger adolescents, who may not have the palate for other alcoholic drinks

- Teenagers are 3 times more likely to be exposed to alcopops than adults, particularly young women → strongly suggests targeted marketing

- AMA study identified a disproportionate number of underage girls drinking alcopops, particularly during binge drinking occasions

- 34% of youth surveyed believed that alcopops have less alcohol than beer or similar drinks

Limit the sale of alcopops to liquor stores to prevent underage drinking

- Reduce exposure to alcopops marketing among adolescents and underage drinkers
- Reduce underage access to alcopops
Exposure to alcohol advertising $\rightarrow$ increased alcohol use

- Evidence shows that alcohol advertising and packaging increases underage drinking by
  - Making alcohol more appealing
  - Making it seem like everyone drinks alcohol
  - Developing brand recognition and loyalty
Alcopops are packaged to appeal to youth

Which contain alcohol?

Source: Image adapted from Marin Institute at https://secure2.convio.net/tmi/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=118
Alcopops advertising suggests fun

Source: Some images from Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth at http://www.camy.org/gallery/ and the DWI Blog at tp://www.aboutdwi.com/blog/alcohol-ads-in-magazine/
The Task Force on Community Preventive Services recommends to

Limit alcohol outlet density

- Alcohol outlet = place where alcohol may be legally sold
- **Alcohol outlet density =** number of alcohol outlets in a given area

- **Higher alcohol outlet density →**
  \[ \uparrow \text{consumption and alcohol-related problems (i.e., assaults, suicides, injuries, violent crimes and homicides, arrests, motor vehicle crashes)} \]

1 in 7 NYC teen drinkers report purchasing alcohol from retail stores.

How Students Obtained Alcohol, Among Those Who Reported Current Alcohol Use

- I bought it in a store such as a liquor store, convenience store, supermarket, discount store, or gas station (28.6%)
- I bought it at a restaurant, bar, or club (13.6%)
- I bought it at a public event such as a concert or sporting event (12.9%)
- I gave someone else money to buy it for me (6.0%)
- Someone gave it to me (1.3%)
- I took it from a store or family member (16.0%)
- I got it some other way (21.6%)

Data Source: 2007 NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Alcopops are sold as ‘beer’

- Production involves different processes than beer
  - Initiated with a malt brewing process
  - Subsequently filtered and processed
  - Sweetened flavorings are added, often including distilled liquor or wine products

→ Regulated as ‘beer’
  - Same locations and hours of sale
  - Sold alongside juice, soda, milk, and groceries
85% of NYC retail alcohol outlets are licensed to sell beer.
Other states are taking action

- California, Utah, Maine, and Nebraska have reclassified alcopops as spirits, limiting sales to liquor stores.

- The alcopops industry lobbied and won reversals on similar public health advances to reclassify alcopops in Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan, Oregon, and Washington State.
Proposed NYS legislation will:

• Limit the sale of alcopops to liquor stores only.
• Define flavored malt beverages as alcopops, and clarify distribution and retail networks.
• NOT affect beer, flavored beer, or cider.
• NOT affect the taxes on alcopops.