

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE UNDERAGE DRINKING IN OREGON

PRESENTED TO GOVERNOR KULONGOSKI

FROM THE LEADERSHIP FOR ALCOHOL-FREE KIDS

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Priority, Visibility and Norm Change

Over and over we find that Oregonians are unaware of the seriousness of the underage drinking problem or tend to dismiss it as a “rite of passage”. Communities and agencies, in turn, do not accord the issue as high priority. Given that the consequences of doing nothing are severe, the following recommendations are offered to combat underage drinking in Oregon:

1. Immediately marshal state resources and seek private and non-profit partners to launch a statewide media campaign aimed at adult audiences. The campaign must reach adults in all parts of the state. The campaign should aim to:
 - Give adults accurate information about underage drinking practices and the consequences including Oregon laws and liability issues.
 - Increase the specific actions adults can take to reduce the problem.
 - Decrease adult conduct that facilitates underage drinking, especially furnishing alcohol to minors.
 - Be launched immediately after focus group testing of messages occurs. After 6-12 months of campaign, use survey research to assess impact and refine the campaign.
 - Foster local community campaigns that will reach local civic groups such as Rotary, Chambers of Commerce as well as parents and other adults.
2. Use the Governor’s Public Information office to raise the visibility of the issue. The Governor should play an active role in a statewide media campaign and include references to the issue in speeches as appropriate. Once a month issue a press release or press story about an example of Oregonians doing the right thing on this issue, e.g. a parent who provides good supervision, a community that develops alcohol free events and other opportunities for their kids, the wine industry which regularly advertises in a responsible manner. These stories will be prepared and supplied by whoever manages the statewide media campaign.

(National Academy of Science Recommendation Reference: 6-1, p. 3)

3. Develop a strong powerful statewide coalition on underage drinking that is independent of state government but includes representation from state government and endorsement of the Governor. The state also needs strong leadership on alcohol and drug issues within state government. The current fragmentation of responsibility impedes progress on this issue. To improve this situation the following should be done:
 - The Leadership for Alcohol Free Kids should continue its work on a statewide strategy and a program of policy advocacy. The Governor will be invited to endorse and participate in the Leadership for Alcohol Free Kids. The coalition should include state agencies with major responsibility for this issue, cities and counties, local law enforcement, youth organizations, parent groups, as well as representatives from business, faith and ethnic minority communities.
 - Seek funding for coalition staff work and ensure well-managed staffing that efficiently manages meeting time.
 - The coalition should complete an annual report on underage drinking that charts the state's progress on the issue.
 - Ensure that the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs is performing its statutory duties of alcohol and drug program leadership, strategy development and quality control over state funded programs.
 - Restructure membership of the Governor's Council so that a high level representative of OLCC and the Department of Education are included. Consider ways to merge or coordinate with the Governor's Council on DUII. At a minimum, there should be a liaison member.
 - Fold the Governor's Underage Drinking Task Group under the auspices of the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
 - Ensure that the Governor's Council has sufficient staff to support its work with high quality products and to assist in efficient meeting management.
 - Each group needs to be large enough to ensure all major parties are involved but small enough to work effectively. Generally membership should not exceed 20.
 - Each group should have leaders who are influential, articulate and willing to devote their time and effort to the issue.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 12-4, p.11)

4. Ensure funding for the Oregon Healthy Teen Survey as it is the primary tool for assessing the progress on this and other public health issues.
5. Given Oregon's broad free speech laws and the difficulty of impacting national-based advertising, use the power of community action and national prevention/advocacy networks to combat advertising which is attractive to or targets youth, encourages unsafe practices or is offensive to ethnic or other community

members. Aggressively advocate for an independent third party review system for complaints about alcohol advertising as was recommended by the Federal Trade Commission. Also routinely remind alcohol companies to follow their codes of conduct.

- Support Oregon Attorney General's involvement in the National Attorneys General Association's work on underage drinking, advertising standards and third party review.
- Support the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association's work on the same issues. Support OLCC's work with and membership in this organization.
- Ask the Governor to support third party review of alcohol advertising by making his position on the issue known to members of Congress.
- Seek new national networks to help pursue these issues.
- Publicly recognize instances of responsible advertising.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 7-2, p. 4)

Enforcement of Liquor Laws

Research has found that liquor laws are quite effective in curbing alcohol consumption including that of our youth. Compliance checks reduce illegal sales and regular enforcement is related to reduced overall consumption and violence. Oregon has excellent laws but, as the Governor's Task Force on Underage Drinking found, Oregon's laws are poorly enforced primarily due to a lack of resources. We believe that better use of current funds and effective coordination between enforcement partners can make a difference. Therefore, we request that the Governor:

1. Dedicate sufficient state and federal funds to strengthen compliance check programs to:
 - Ensure they cover the entire state and meet a minimal standard for frequency.
 - Develop an inter-agency agreement that allows some federal OJJDP funds and other resources to flow to the OLCC to offset some compliance check costs.
 - Promote compliance check models that represent multi-agency partnerships of local law enforcement, local coalitions and the OLCC and include retailer assistance and other enhancements.
 - Remove bureaucratic roadblocks to effective state, local and coalition partnerships. The state and the Department of Human Services have some contract requirements which get in the way of partnerships between local coalitions, local law enforcement and non-profits. For example, ORS Chapter 430 requires DHS to use counties as the funnel for local grants. This overcomplicates the process of granting funds to city enforcement agencies which do the bulk of the compliance checks.

- Review the state’s competitive procurement system to allow for public/private partnerships. The competitive procurement system is designed for profit-making companies and does not facilitate working with non-profits. The state should consider the special advantages of non-profits when contracting for work. Non-profits are mission driven versus profit driven. They have the ability to be efficient, timely, to use volunteers and to receive donations of services.
- Ensure timely and efficient management and issuance of grant funds. Strong consideration should be given to the model the Oregon Department of Transportation’s Traffic Safety Division uses to award grants to local law enforcement. Traffic Safety awards a grant to the Chiefs’ Association and a second to the Sheriffs’ Association. This simplifies and streamlines the grant process plus ensures that local law enforcement will be a major partner on this issue.
- Support OLCC’s efforts to expand and enhance compliance checks including the development of a penalty reduction program for a licensee that contracts with a vendor for bi-monthly decoy programs. This idea has the potential for expanding compliance checks without cost to the state. However, there would need to be a means to certify or ensure the vendor complies with OLCC decoy program standards.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 9-2, p. 6)

2. Support OLCC’s efforts to enhance liquor law compliance including: an enhanced media component for the compliance check program, work with local law enforcement to conduct “Should Tap” operations that reduces adult furnishing, request a statute change to require training of clerks who sell alcohol, develop training for local law enforcement on controlled party dispersal.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 9-7, p.7)

3. Encourage communities to adopt policies and strategies to interdict underage parties and hold adults responsible if they have furnished the alcohol.

(NAS Recommendation reference; 9-12, p.8)

Policy Issues

An effective statewide strategy will require adoption of new policies including changes to legislation. The following actions are recommended:

1. Ask the Attorney General to form a problem-solving task force to improve the enforcement and adjudication of liquor laws. This should include ways to ensure that youth and adults who violate liquor laws (such as Minor in Possession, Furnishing Alcohol to a Minor and Manufacture/ Use of False ID) receive adequate consequences without overwhelming the criminal justice system. For

youth, it is important that there be swift and sure consequences. For many offenses involving youth, citation for a criminal offense is not desirable provided there are consequences such as driver's licenses suspension, fines, and community service. Penalties should be graduated to ensure greater consequences for subsequent offenses. Adjudication alternatives such as administrative hearings and peer/youth courts should be considered. The task force should also consider the requirement that all compliance checks be done randomly since it creates inefficiencies for large urban police departments. They should also try to identify appropriate ways to interdict underage parties on private property. Finally, they should recommend any needed statute changes.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 9-1, p.6; 9-14, p.9; 9-13, p. 8)

2. Adopt a taxation policy that is similar to the National Academy's recommendation: "...state legislatures should raise excise taxes to reduce underage consumption and to raise additional revenues for this purpose. Top priority should be given to raising beer taxes, and excise tax rates for all alcoholic beverages should be indexed to the consumer price index so that they keep pace with inflation without the necessity of further legislative action."
 - a. Ask the Governor to meet with local industry representatives with the goal of reaching an agreement on a tax increase.
 - b. Advocate for use of tax proceeds for a combination of prevention, enforcement and treatment.
 - c. Advocate for a gallonage exemption for small craft breweries similar to the current gallonage exemption for small wineries.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 12-7, p. 12)

3. Ask the State Board of Higher Education to give priority to the issue of drinking on Oregon's college campuses and adopt a comprehensive prevention program.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 10-3, p.9)

4. Work with the Superintendent for Public Instruction, and local school boards, to ensure that all Oregon youth have effective education on alcohol and drug issues and that disciplinary rules regarding illegal alcohol use are consistently applied. Existing Safe and Drug Free Schools funding can support alcohol prevention education.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 10-2, p. 9)

Action Needed by Communities, Parents and Youth

As the National Academy of Sciences report notes, underage drinking is a collective responsibility and the problem will not be significantly reduced unless everyone does their part. In addition to law enforcement and education, action is needed from communities, parents and youth. The Governor is requested to:

1. Use state and federal funds to catalyze community coalition formation around the issue of childhood and teen drinking. Coalitions need to actively support consistent enforcement, take action against norms and advertising that normalizes underage drinking, and promote local policies designed to curtail underage drinking.
 - Utilize federal funds for underage drinking to provide training and technical assistance to help foster community coalitions with particular attention to evidence-based environmental strategies.
 - Encourage existing community groups that deal with youth issues to address the issue of teen drinking.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 11-1, p.10)

2. Support the involvement of youth as advocates via youth action teams, youth involvement on community coalitions and other avenues. Youth can have a powerful influence when they speak out on this issue.
3. Support increased resources for treatment of youth for both alcohol and drug addiction.

(NAS Recommendation reference: 10-5, p.10)