

Preventing Excessive Alcohol Consumption: Enhanced Enforcement of Laws Prohibiting Sales to Minors

Task Force Finding

Intervention Definition

Enhanced enforcement programs initiate or increase the frequency of retailer compliance checks for laws against the sale of alcohol to minors in a community. Retailer compliance checks, or “sting operations,” are conducted by, or coordinated with local law enforcement or alcohol beverage control (ABC) agencies, and violators receive legal or administrative sanctions.

Enhanced enforcement programs are often conducted as part of multicomponent, community-based efforts to reduce underage drinking. Many also include strategies to increase perceived risk of detection by publicizing the increased enforcement activities and cautioning proprietors against selling alcohol to minors. These messages can be delivered using either mass media or by sending letters to all local alcohol retailers.

Task Force Finding (February 2006)

The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends enhanced enforcement of laws prohibiting sale of alcohol to minors, on the basis of sufficient evidence of effectiveness in limiting underage alcohol purchases. Further research will be required to assess the degree to which these changes in retailer behavior affect underage drinking.

Publications

Elder RW, Lawrence B, Janes G, Brewer RD, Toomey TL, Hingson RW, Naimi TS, Wing SG, Fielding J. Enhanced enforcement of laws prohibiting sale of alcohol to minors: systematic review of effectiveness for reducing sales and underage drinking. *Transportation Research E-Circular* 2007;Issue E-C123:181-8.

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