

ALCOHOL FACTS



Alcohol Industry "Responsibility" Advertising

The biggest alcohol companies try to portray themselves as good corporate citizens with advertising and education programs that emphasize "responsibility." These public relations ploys are the industry's attempt to avoid responsibility for the consequences of its products and shift blame to individual consumers. If the alcohol industry is serious about responsibility, it should begin by ending its own irresponsible marketing to underage youth.

Problem: Alcohol industry "responsibility" messages are usually a PR ploy—not valid health education.

- Television ads for alcohol products outnumber "responsibility" messages by 32 to one.¹
- From 2001 to 2003, the industry spent \$2.5 billion on television product advertising, dwarfing the \$92 million spent on responsibility programs by 27 to one.²
- In the same period, youth aged 12-20 were 96 times more likely to see a television ad for an alcohol product than an ad about the risks of underage drinking. They were 43 times more likely to see a product ad than a message about drinking and driving.³
- For young TV viewers aged 16-22, industry sponsored responsibility ads may actually encourage risky drinking behavior and increase alcohol sales.⁴

Solution: To help reduce the problems caused by its products, the alcohol industry should cease marketing to youth and instead fund independent efforts that have more credibility.

- In a major report to Congress, the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine recommended that the alcohol industry take steps to reduce youth exposure to alcohol advertising and contribute to independent efforts to reduce underage drinking.⁵
- Eliminating alcohol advertising in any media for which the youth audience is larger than 15 percent would significantly reduce the number of youth overexposed to alcohol ads.⁶
- Research has shown that among young viewers aged 16-22, industry responsibility messages are considered less informative, less believable, and less effective than independent public service messages.⁷



1. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. "Alcohol Industry Responsibility Advertising on Television, 2001 to 2003." (2005) <http://camy.org/research/responsibility2005/responsibility2005.pdf>
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Agostinelli, Gina and Joel Grube. (2002) "Alcohol Counter-Advertising and the Media: A review of Recent Research." *Alcohol Research and Health* 26(1), 15-21.
5. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2003). "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility." Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking, Richard J. Bonnie and Mary Ellen O'Connell, Editors. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
6. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. "Striking a Balance: Protection Youth from Overexposure to Alcohol Ads and Allowing Alcohol Companies to Reach the Adult Market." (2005) <http://camy.org/research/striking/striking.pdf>
7. Agostinelli, Gina and Joel Grube. (2002) "Alcohol Counter-Advertising and the Media: A review of Recent Research." *Alcohol Research and Health* 26(1), 15-21.