

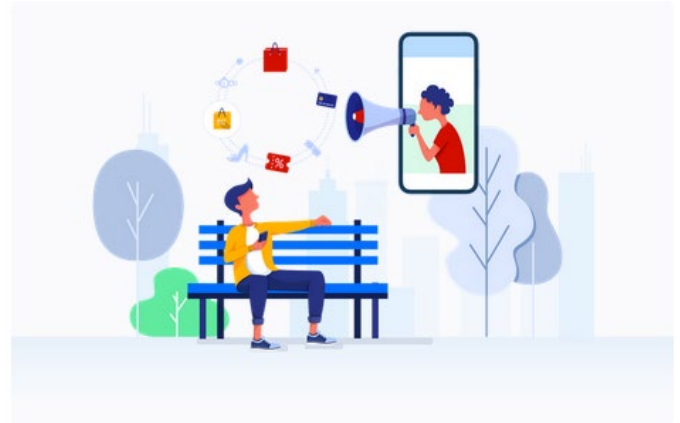
Goal: Protecting Youth from the Harmful Effects of Alcohol, Cannabis, and Commercial Tobacco (Nicotine) Marketing and Promotion

Because underage youth are frequently exposed to alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco promotion and marketing

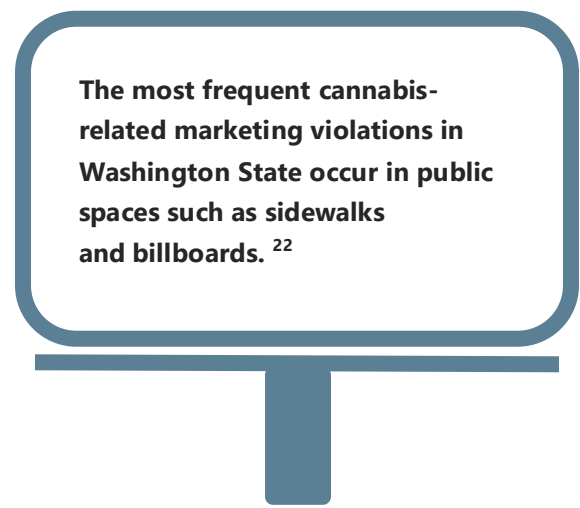
Why It Matters



- Most youth exposure is through outdoor advertisement, social media, and television.¹⁻³ Billboards and radio advertisements are especially influential in rural areas.
- Underage exposure to alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco marketing increases the risk of early use.^{4,5} The earlier youth begin use, the more likely they will develop a substance misuse disorder as an adult.^{6,7}
- Advertisements and social media content normalize substance use which can lead to increased use. The greater the exposure to marketing, the more likely that youth are going to start use early, use more, and engage in risky use.^{3,4,8-15}



- Companies get around marketing and promotion regulations by aggressively marketing on the unregulated social media market, and underage youth can access such content.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Recent testimony to the US Congress revealed the detrimental impact of social media on health of underage youth.¹⁹
- Social media companies are mining and selling personal data of underage youth to advertisers.²⁰
- There are currently no regulations around Kratom or Kratom advertising in Washington, despite the Federal Drug Administration's concerns about unproven medical claims.²¹
- Unregulated vaping and e-cigarette marketing and promotion on social media is hooking a new generation of users on nicotine, jeopardizing hard-won reductions in tobacco use.²²



This brief was a cooperative effort between members of the Prevention Research Sub-Committee, University of Washington Social Development Research Group, the WSU IMPACT Research Lab and the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.

Vulnerable Youth Are Most At Risk

Companies deliberately target vulnerable youth like those from lower income families, Indigenous youth, youth of color, and sexual and gender minority youth.^{1,23-26} Although youth exposure to any type of substance-related marketing is concerning, the disproportionate targeting of vulnerable youth is particularly disturbing.

What Can We Do?

The current regulations are not enough to protect our youth. Below are strategies that can be used to reduce promotion and marketing of alcohol, cannabis, and/or tobacco products to youth younger than age 21.



Hold Industries Accountable to Responsible Promotion and Marketing Standards to Protect Our Youth

Regulations around promotion and marketing of substances highlight the tension between the interests of private businesses operating in a free market economy and promoting the public good (i.e., preventing youth substance use). Protecting youth from harm should be a priority for everyone, and companies should not profit from the exploitation of youth. Washington State needs to pass and enforce stricter regulations, and industries should be held accountable to these standards, such as:

- Avoid marketing/promotion/packaging content and design that appeal to underage youth.
- Avoid branded merchandising intended for use by underage youth.
- Avoid using younger-looking models.
- Avoid sponsoring or participating in events where most of the audience is expected to be underage.
- Avoid outdoor advertisement near places that have a high concentration of underage youth.
- Avoid employing underage youth in brand promotion teams.
- Monitor compliance across all platforms and languages.



Develop Comprehensive Promotion and Marketing Policies

Washington State should develop comprehensive regulations targeting different types of advertising such as television, radio, print media, internet, social media, outdoor advertising, signage, and marketing via location-based devices.

- Create anti-use messages and promote media literacy skills.²⁷ The American Academy of Pediatrics has strongly recommended media literacy education and policy remedies to help prevent adverse effects of marketing on youth.²⁸
- Mandate education programs for retail outlets, and enforce penalties for violating marketing regulations.²⁹
- Adapt comprehensive cannabis advertising regulations from other states such as Colorado.³⁰
- Enforce best practices for cannabis packaging and labeling such as minimum font size for required warning statement.²⁹
- Ban cannabis advertisements on billboards.
- Increase funding for the Liquor and Cannabis Board and communities for cannabis marketing compliance checks.²⁹

Did you know?

Anyone may report an alcohol, tobacco or marijuana law/regulation violation.



Report a violation at

<https://lcb.wa.gov/enforcement/report-violation>

Locate your local Enforcement Office at:

<https://lcb.wa.gov/enforcement/locate-enforcement-office>

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