

Being an Advocate Matters

Policy Issues Impacting Substance Abuse in Florida - 2005-2006

Issue Statement: Keg Registration

Underage drinking is a serious problem in Florida. Underage drinking cost the citizens of Florida 3.8 billion dollars in 2001. Florida ranks 8th highest among the 50 states for its cost of underage drinking per youth. (1). Keg parties can be a significant source of large quantities of cheap alcohol for underage youth (2). Inexpensive alcoholic beverages available in large quantities can lead to underage binge drinking and many dangerous consequences, including car crashes, drowning, falls, risky sexual behavior, assaults and alcohol poisoning. Currently, Florida does not have a system to track kegs to the person who purchased them. When police arrive at underage keg parties, people often scatter. Without keg registration, there is no way to trace who purchased the keg. Keg registration helps law enforcement agencies track the purchaser. Adults who illegally provide alcohol to underage youth may be deterred only if they believe they will face legal or financial consequences for providing alcohol to people under age 21(2). Keg registration encourages adults to think twice before purchasing kegs and allowing underage youth to drink from them. Keg registration is a tool to identify and punish adults who buy beer kegs for underage youth.

Data Supporting Statement:

According to the 2004 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, 32.3% of middle and high school students reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days and 16% reported binge drinking. 51% of 12th graders said they drank alcohol in the last 30 days and 27% reported binge drinking. In 2003, an on-line alcohol survey of Florida college students was conducted by the Florida Higher Education Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention. 45% of the undergraduate students surveyed reported binge drinking and 16.5% reported frequent binge drinking (3). Adults over age 21 are a major source of alcohol for underage drinkers. A survey of 9th graders, 12th graders and 18- 20 year olds showed that adults aged 21 or older were the most common source of alcoholic beverages, surpassing bars and convenience stores. Because adults age 21 or older are the main source of alcohol for underage youth, strategies to reduce this source are a priority (2,4). Keg registration is one strategy to help law enforcement agents identify the adult providers of alcoholic beverages to youth.

In a national opinion survey on alcohol policies, 61% of adults 18 and older were in favor of keg registration (5). 25 states and the District of Columbia currently have keg registration laws (6, 7). Florida currently does not. Keg registration laws (sometimes called keg tagging laws) require wholesalers or retailers to attach a tag, sticker, or engraving with an identification number to kegs exceeding a specified capacity (two to eight gallon minimum depending on the State). At purchase, the retailer records identifying information about the purchaser (e.g., name, address, telephone number, driver's license). A refundable deposit may also be collected for the keg itself, the tapper mechanism used to serve the beer, or both. The deposit is refunded when the keg and/or tapper are returned with the identification number intact. In some States, keg laws specifically prohibit destroying or altering the ID tag and provide penalties for doing so. Other States make it a crime to possess an unregistered or unlabeled keg (6). The purpose of keg registration is to help law enforcement agencies track the source of the keg if minors have been served.

MADD has published a position statement on keg registration. MADD supports the requirement that all kegs and other large containers of alcoholic beverages be registered at point of purchase in order to facilitate identification of those who purchase illegally or to provide to youth under age 21 (7). MADD Florida has identified keg registration as a legislative priority for 2006.

According to Ellen Ward, Executive Director of Texans Standing Tall, "Keg registration is a relatively new policy strategy, but there are strong indications that when combined with the enforcement of other underage drinking laws, there is a positive effect. The Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center conducted a study of 97 cities across the country with various alcohol regulations. The LSU report found

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that cities with keg-registration laws were more likely to have lower alcohol-related traffic fatality rates" (8,9).

The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council document entitled "Reducing Underage Drinking, a Collective Responsibility" recommends that states implement keg registration (10). The Florida Office of Drug Control white paper "Changing Alcohol Norms- Florida's Initiative to Lower Youth Drinking" recommendation 3-3 is to establish and implement keg registration in Florida (11).

Recommendation:

The State of Florida should enact a keg registration law in order to increase our law enforcement agencies' ability to enforce underage drinking laws, reduce youth access to alcohol and to hold adults who provide alcohol to minors responsible for their actions.

References

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