



Facts about underage access to Internet alcohol

Increasing use of the Internet to sell alcohol threatens our youth. According to a survey by the National Academy of Sciences, 10 percent of underage drinkers report obtaining alcohol over the Internet or through home delivery. Because increasing use of the Internet may increase this percentage, NAS recommended tightening controls on Internet access to alcohol. (*Source: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003. "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility."*)

Minors admit buying alcohol over the Internet. An April 2006 survey of minors ages 14-20 by Teenage Research Unlimited found that 551,000 nationwide admitted they have personally bought alcohol online. An alarming 3.4 million (13%) said they have a friend who has ordered alcohol either online or by phone. More than half (60%) say parents wouldn't know if they used the Internet for something they weren't supposed to and 81 percent claim parents trust their judgment when online.

It's happening in Florida. Dozens of unlicensed out-of-states Web sites will currently ship wine and liquor to Florida homes without checking ID. Often, the only thing protecting our children is an easily bypassed legal disclaimer. The Florida Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking has repeatedly demonstrated how easily minors in Florida are able to obtain liquor and other alcohol products from unlicensed, out-of-state Web sites that illicitly take orders and ship alcohol directly to homes. Under the direction of the Coalition, a 20-year-old Florida State University in 2005 student ordered vodka, tequila and wine online from four unlicensed vendors and had the alcohol delivered to him at home with no check of his identification.

It's happening around the country. In Massachusetts, the attorney general sued four out-of-state online retailers accused of violating the state's liquor laws and selling alcohol to underage buyers, and forwarded evidence against three other online alcohol retailers and three shippers that delivered alcohol to underage buyers in violation of state law. In Michigan, the attorney general and Liquor Control Commission conducted a series of stings that found one in three Internet alcohol sites contacted sold gin, Scotch and several bottles of wine to a decoy minor. In Washington state, Gonzaga University students successfully ordered alcohol from five Web sites with delivery by FedEx and UPS with no I.D. checks.