

Online Sale Of Alcohol To Teens Worries Experts

(NAPSA)—Did you know that millions of children are buying alcohol online or know someone else underage who does? In spite of this dangerous new trend, states are moving to increase online wine sales even as they fail to monitor alcohol Web sites to enforce underage drinking laws. That's the word from experts who say a growing number of teens have credit and debit cards that allow them to point, click and drink alcohol ordered anonymously off the Web.

According to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, the Internet can act as a type of general store where computer users including teenagers can purchase almost anything—even beer, wine and liquor—without any age verification.

Results from a recent survey of 14-to-20-year-olds conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) for the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America, Inc. (WSWA) indicate the following:

- Half a million minors ages 14-20 (2%) admit ordering alcohol online themselves, and 3.1 million (12%) report having a friend who does it.

- Nearly one in 10 (9%) say they have visited a Web site that sells alcohol. One-third—nearly 8.9 million ages 14-20 nationwide—are open to the possibility of an online alcohol purchase before age 21.

- Seventy-five percent say their parents aren't able to control what they do on the Internet.

Advocates believe there should be stiffer penalties for overnight delivery companies that break the law and states need more resources to monitor online alcohol activity.

"We know kids are buying alco-



Kat, a minor, ordered 190-proof grain alcohol online. A plain brown box containing the alcohol was left on her doorstep with no signature or ID check for proof of legal drinking age.

hol online, we know states are allowing more Internet wine sales and we know states are not doing even basic monitoring or enforcement of these purchases," WSWA CEO Juanita Duggan said.

She believes that if states aren't encouraged to take action to stop online alcohol sales, parents will have missed an opportunity to stop the trend of Internet alcohol sales to children.

Duggan and local wine and spirits distributors encourage parents to let elected officials and regulatory agencies know how they feel about this issue.

Some say until state and local governments act, the burden falls on parents to be advocates and to make sure they are making the most of the preventive measures at their disposal.

More information and tips for parents on ways to prevent teens from buying alcohol online are available at the Web site www.pointclickdrink.com.