

'Think before you buy under-18s drink': evaluation of a community alcohol intervention

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Abstract

Hazardous consumption of alcohol by teenagers is a significant public health problem in New Zealand. Concern about supply of alcohol to minors motivated 'Think before you buy under-18s drink', a campaign to reduce alcohol-related harm by discouraging inappropriate supply of alcohol by adults. Two intervention districts and a comparison district, in the South Island of New Zealand, were selected for the purpose of evaluating the campaign. Primary outcome measures were changes in the prevalence of parent supply to their teenager (13-17 years) for unsupervised drinking (SUD), and changes in the prevalence of binge drinking among teenagers. At baseline, 49% of teenagers reported a recent episode of binge drinking. SUD in the past month was reported by 36% of teenagers. Recent purchases of alcohol by under-18s were common (bottle shops: 16%; pubs/bars: 11%). In contrast to teenagers, only 2% of parents reported SUD in the past month. Levels of binge drinking decreased in all three districts. Analysis of data from 474 teenagers who completed questionnaires, at baseline and follow-up, showed decreased SUD in

Ashburton and Waitaki relative to Clutha, although this was not significant (OR=0.73; 95% CI: 0.43, 1.25). Discrepancies between teenager and parent reports of SUD may be due to the latter providing a socially desirable survey response and to differences in the interpretation of what constitutes adult supervision. The lack of a significant association between changes in SUD and binge drinking may be a consequence of teenagers obtaining relatively small amounts of alcohol from their parents and larger quantities from other sources, e.g. peers (some of whom may be able to purchase alcohol legally) and from licensed premises.

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