

Alcohol in “G” & “PG” Movies

Why would our community group or coalition want to do this project?

This project will help participants become more “media literate.”

As new technologies emerge that permit viewers to bypass ads on television, advertisers will move to using product placement both in the movies and on television. The public needs to be reminded that television and radio programming exists to bring consumers to products more than to inform and entertain.

This project is fun. The results of the viewing are educational for adults and will make a great media release: “_____ (name of town) Youth Watch Family Friendly Movies to Screen for Alcohol Promotion.”

What area of underage drinking prevention does this project address?

This project will address alcohol promotion and marketing to underage youth.

Project Description

This project can be done by either middle or high school youth. Youth should choose five popular family friendly movies available from a local movie rental store. Movies with a “G” rating are your best choices because they are clearly intended to be family friendly. It would be alright to include a couple of movies rated “PG” that are widely known to be “family friendly.” Have the group identify movies already out on DVD or video that are popular with people they know. The movie rental store may also have information about which “G” and “PG” rated movies are checked out most frequently.

Watch the movies and identify any scenes where people are consuming alcohol. Notice if any alcohol product is shown. Note the kind and brand of alcohol if visible. Youth may also want to look for other product advertising in the movies they watch to see how prevalent product placement advertising really is.

Report the findings to the media.

Who needs to be involved?

This project needs a group of youth who are willing to get together to watch family friendly movies and at least one supportive adult. There may be a movie rental store that would like to sponsor this project. Hopefully they would be willing to post the results in their store.

One youth should be in charge of renting the movies selected by the group. Another youth should be in charge of organizing the movie viewings. More than one youth should watch each movie. A third youth should prepare a report of the number alcohol products shown and scenes promoting alcohol consumption observed in each of the movies. The report should summarize these findings. A fourth youth should be identified as a media coordinator to lead the group in identifying media messages and

make sure the media releases are prepared and distributed. This person may also be the media spokesperson or another youth may be given this responsibility.

Someone from the group may want to learn more about the film rating system. Information is available at www.filmratings.com.

What resources will we need?

The cost will be under \$50.00 for renting the movies and buying popcorn. If a movie rental store sponsors the project they may donate the movie rental fees. Paper and pencils will be needed for making notes while reviewing the movies. Paper and postage will be needed for media releases.

How and why do we get the media involved?

After the results are compiled the group should identify its two or three main media messages.

- What should be said about the results? Media messages should include something about the findings to get the public's attention. Use language like "Four out of five of the most popular family friendly movies showed alcohol being consumed."
- A message could be that people are or should be concerned about the findings since these movies are clearly meant to be shown to youth.
- A third message should tell people what action they can take to reduce alcohol promotion to youth. Example: Each person should tell one other person about the findings. People could also send a letter to The Classification and Rating Administration, 15503 Ventura Boulevard, Encino, CA 91436, and ask them to take alcohol consumption into consideration when rating movies. They currently do consider drug use.

You may want to include talking points with your media release that address alcohol advertising and promotion to youth more generally.

How and why do we evaluate this project?

The goal of this project is to increase public awareness of alcohol advertising to youth. One way of measuring success is to record the media coverage your project received. The more media coverage the more potential there is for community awareness.

A second goal is to develop the knowledge and skills of the members of the group who did the project. Did youth learn anything about alcohol promotion, working with a store owner, using the media to get attention, or working together as a group? This project is particularly effective in using different skills from different members in order to complete a total project. How well did your group work together? Are you ready for another project?