

**Advisory Board on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse**



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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March 29, 2011

Senator Kevin Meyer
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 103
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 15 – Alcohol Offenses Committed by Sex Offenders, Child Kidnappers

Dear Senator Meyer,

On behalf of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I would like to express our support for your efforts to protect children and youth from falling victim to sexual exploitation, trafficking, and kidnapping. While there is no specific data reflecting how often a young person gains access to alcohol through a convicted sex offender or child kidnapper, there is data that shows that young people gain access to alcohol at least one third of the time from adults or friends.

The Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality reported in February 2011 that, between 2006 and 2009, 93.4% of the 709,000 adolescents aged 12-14 who reported drinking alcohol gained access to the alcohol — for free — from other people. Of those, 13.5% were given the alcohol by an unrelated adult. In Alaska, 34.7% of traditional high schools students participating in the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that they had used alcohol in the past thirty days and that they got that alcohol from someone else. While we don't know who provided that alcohol, or whether they were a convicted sex offender or child kidnapper, we do know there is connection between providing alcohol to minors and victimization.

Recent new coverage of sexual exploitation of young Alaskan women by Channel 2, KTUU news highlighted the role of drugs and alcohol in this form of victimization. Young people are often ensnared in human trafficking and sexual exploitation through the provision of drugs and alcohol, among other "grooming" efforts. By creating an aggravating factor to target individuals who use alcohol to coerce, induce, or otherwise attempt to engage a young person in sexual activity will help to address this problem.

Given the traumatic and potentially lifelong harm that can result from situations in when predators use alcohol (and other drugs) to prey upon young people, SB 15 provides a balanced approach to increasing the penalty for individuals who engage in this sort of victimization and exploitation. We appreciate your efforts on behalf our most vulnerable youth.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart
Executive Director