



# HCTAYC

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY TRANSITION AGE YOUTH COLLABORATION

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Regarding the Sale of Alcohol Near Schools:

We, the Substance Misuse/Abuse Policy Committee of the Youth Advocacy Board, are writing as we have SIGNIFICANT concern regarding the potential of businesses selling alcohol close to a school. The Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) is an organization driven by youth with systems experience, we come from families and communities that have been touched by the child welfare, justice, mental health, and homelessness systems. Alcohol is a persistent, devastating problem within our lives. From parents, caregivers, and friends that misuse and/or abuse this substance, to life-altering decisions made in our own lives, alcohol and the generational trauma it has caused is no stranger to us.

Since 2017 we have been advocating for the implementation of county-wide, youth-created policy recommendations on Alcohol & Other Drug issues. In our experience of gathering data from the lived experience of our peers and ourselves, we know that early exposure to alcohol is a significant contributor to life-long misuse. Members of our committee are students at local high schools, as well as former students of local high schools. We are certain that regardless of security precautions, students at high schools will be capable of stealing bottles of alcohol from businesses in close proximity (and have discussed doing so around some of our current high school enrolled members). Youth in focus groups across the county reported that early use of alcohol is a result of it being easier to get than it is to participate in other, more positive activities. Young people in our community already feel that there is nothing to do other than party, and having alcohol being sold 600 feet **or less** from a high school would only further cement this belief.

We have concerns regarding adults hanging around such a business under the influence, and/or buying alcohol for students. We have concerns regarding drunk driving increasing in the immediate area. We are concerned that increased availability of alcohol could contribute to a rise in violence, peer violence, domestic violence, and domestic disturbances in the area. Additionally, traffic congestion at the beginning and end of the school day, before and after major school events will make safety enforcement and monitoring for illegal alcohol transfer more difficult. This issue may even become more impacted as a result of adults getting off of work and traveling to such a business to acquire alcohol.

Another concern we have is about the impact of having alcohol retailers close to tribal housing. Our Native American members are discussing how alcohol, in particular, contributes to damaging their families and culture.

Our concerns are numerous, yet so are the potential solutions to the problem of youth substance misuse and/or abuse. Increasing the proximity of alcohol retailers to schools is NOT one of these solutions. We challenge businesses to INSTEAD provide sustainable funding so that schools can hire social workers to work with students and families struggling with substance misuse and abuse. Instead of adding to our community's problems, why don't we instead work toward solving them?

In Power,  
HCTAYC Youth Advocacy Board Substance Misuse/Abuse Policy Committee Members