



Energy Drinks:
Where the Science Meets Main Street

June 30, 2009 | Fashion Institute of Technology | New York, NY



Policies and Persuasion: Educating Youth About Energy Drinks

Isabel Burk, MS, CPP, CHES

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SUNY YOUTH SPORTS INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 2000 • McNeil Building • Cortland, NY 13045 • (877) 828-881 • www.youthsportsny.org

Caffeine and other stimulant ingredients can present problems for youth, particularly when consumed in multiple quantities. There are health risks, liability issues, questions of ethics and sportsmanship.

While it is useful to teach children and teens the facts about energy products, two decades of prevention research has proven that it is more important to provide a safer environment by reducing the risks that surround youth.

School districts, leagues and clubs, athletic directors, recreation departments, and/or community agencies can develop and enforce policies concerning energy products, and implement public awareness campaigns. Consistency and frequent reminders make the policies more effective.

Environmental factors (such as limitations on the physical and economic availability of energy drinks/products through laws, codes, taxes, and regulations) **and** school/local/community-wide policies can reduce the initiation of energy drink usage and prevent its spread. Making the products less available helps youth resist their impulses.

Policies and regulations can limit marketing and promotion of energy drinks to youth, can limit access to these drinks and can reduce the number of outlets where energy products can be obtained. For instance, localities can regulate how energy products are placed in stores, or add a minimum age for purchase. Advertising makes these products seem desirable, so ideally marketing of energy products should be reduced or contained, to reduce the number of ads that youth view. Just as regulations phased out tobacco advertising directed at youth, so can regulations phase out energy product promotion to youth. Schools can change their policies to prohibit possession or use of energy products at any time on school grounds or at school-sponsored functions. Recreation departments and agencies can ban energy products for safety and ethical reasons, prominently labeling the policy as promoting healthy youth.

Schools may be liable if a coach recommends an energy product but a student has a negative reaction to the product. School policy should require coaches to limit their advice to youth, suggesting a balanced food intake and good sleep schedule. Youth can be directed to seek the guidance of a dietician or physician for detailed energy needs, if desired.

The school policy on energy products must be widely disseminated to reach the target audiences of students, parents and community members. Ask each student-athlete to sign off upon receipt of the policy. Also, publish the policy in all athletic programs, in all extra-curricular permission slips, on the school / league website. Ask coaches to verbally review the policy at least once a season.