



## Kids as young as 10 buying booze

**Young people need better advice on drinking as a study found that most convenience stores and supermarkets are selling alcohol to minors.**

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Young people need better advice on drinking as a study found that most convenience stores and supermarkets are selling alcohol to minors.

With Christmas holidays approaching, KELY Support Group executive director Sky Siu Ka-yan reminded parents the responsibility of advising youngsters about booze rests with family members.

Although the law forbids licensed premises from selling alcohol to people under 18, there is currently no age restriction for off-premise retailers.

The non-governmental organization conducted a city-wide study in August on such locations, following a similar one made by Sha Tin District Councillor Scarlett Pong Oi-lan who sent three volunteers, aged 10 to 14, to 14 retail points in Sha Tin pretending to purchase alcohol, recording a success rate of 82 percent.

KELY sent four 15- and 16-year-olds - alone or in pairs - to 56 convenience stores, 33 supermarkets and 23 upscale supermarkets in 12 districts to buy beer. The teens were given Octopus cards without any stored values - an ethical measure to ensure they wouldn't actually leave the stores with alcohol.

About 78 percent of the 112 attempts to were successful, as they had reached the payment stage. About 10 percent of retailers checked the volunteers' identification, and 12 percent asked their ages.

The group also conducted a survey last month asking 927 young people aged between 13 and 21 about their views on underage drinking.

About 61.5 percent believed more effective regulations are needed.

Most of them think young people can access alcohol too easily, and are concerned about the impact of alcohol on health.

Siu said youngsters need to know the social implications of drinking, and how they can minimize harm caused by it.

"At the end of the day, it's possible that young people are going to be drinking anyway," she said. "And when they do that, you want to make sure they're safe."

Siu said there will be follow-up research to come up with a solution on educating young people, and the group hopes to involve the entire community in dealing with the issue.