

Accessibility To Children Of Video Games With Violent Content

St. Louis County, Missouri
Ordinance Number: 20193

Justification: To restrict access to children of video games with violent content:

WHEREAS...children in recent school shootings were avid fans of violent video games (Columbine, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and Paducah, Kentucky); and

WHEREAS... many medical studies and the American Medical Association have cited links between prolonged playing of violent video games and violent, antisocial and otherwise harmful behavioral patterns causing children to imitate violent behavior, glorify violent heroes, become desensitized to violence and learn that violence is rewarded; and

WHEREAS ... such violence by and between children has become a severe threat to the physical and emotional health of children; and

WHEREAS ... such behavior has become a problem in schools and inhibits education; and

WHEREAS ... St. Louis County has a stake in protecting the physical and emotional health of children; and

WHEREAS, parents and guardians should have the power to control the types of games their children play and to control their exposure to violent materials.

The Laws about Restricted Access Are:

It shall be unlawful knowingly to sell or rent a video game which is harmful to minors to a minor unless that minor is accompanied by a parent or guardian who consents to the purchase or sale.

It shall be unlawful for any person or entity knowingly to admit a minor to a Restricted -17 area of an arcade unless that minor is accompanied by a parent or guardian.

It shall be unlawful knowingly to permit the free play of a video game which is harmful to minors by any minor on premises on which video games are sold or rented.

It shall be unlawful to: 1) rent or sell a video game which is harmful to minors; or 2) operate an arcade with video games which are harmful to minors; *unless* the premises prominently displays a parental warning sign in red lettering at least one-half inch high on white background (see messages below)

Details about the Law:

Where it applies: throughout St. Louis County except in cities with 75,000 or more people and an organized health department.

"Minor" means: anyone under 17 years old

"Harmful to minors" means: as rated by one or more established review boards, the video game mainly appeals to minors morbid interest in violence, is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the overall adult community with respect to what is suitable material for minors, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value as a whole for minors, and contains graphic violence

"Graphic violence" means: visual depiction or representation of realistic serious injury to a human or human-like being where such serious injury includes amputation, decapitation, dismemberment, bloodshed, mutilation, maiming or disfiguration

"Accompanied by a parent or guardian" means:

- (1) In the case of the buying or renting a video game, that:
 - a) the legal guardian is physically present at or within five feet of the transaction, or
 - b) that the vendor has set up an electronic or manual system for the parent or legal guardian to pre-approve the purchase or rental;
- (2) In the case of presence at an arcade, that:
 - a) the person's parent or legal guardian is within five feet of the minor at all times, or
 - b) has appeared with the minor at the arcade and given permission for the person to remain at the arcade and watch or use video games with graphic violence, or
 - c) that the arcade has established a system of pre-approval.

"Arcade" means: any establishment which provides five or more computer video games for use or operation by the public;

"Restricted-17" means: placement of video games which are harmful to minors in a designated area separate and apart from those video games which are not harmful to minors

Signs that have to be prominently posted in at least one and one half inch red lettering:

SELLING / RENTING VIDEOS - PARENTAL ADVISORY DISCLOSURE MESSAGE

Video games in this establishment may contain graphic violence and / or strong sexual content. Games which are designated "AO" have been determined by the entertainment standards review board to contain content suitable only for adults; games designated as "M" have been determined to contain content suitable for persons age 17 and older; games designated as "T" have been determined to contain content suitable for persons age 13 and older; games designated as "E" have been determined to have content suitable for persons age 6 and older; and games designated as "EC" have been determined to have content suitable for persons age 3 and older.

ARCADE: PARENTAL ADVISORY DISCLOSURE MESSAGE

Video games in this establishment, which are marked with a red dot, may contain graphic violence not suitable for persons under age 17.

Penalties: A person or company that violates any part of this law may be fined not more than \$1,000.00, or put in prison for not more than one year, or both.

Ordinance approved on October 26, 2000 and became effective on April 26, 2001.