



## *Gift-giving in the Season of Peace:*

### *What can we do about violent video games?*

This is a season of gift-giving and the many faiths of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) wish our gifts to be messengers of hope, understanding, love and peace. ICCR and its national coalition of over 275 faith-based institutions are concerned that video games with extreme violence are often the item most likely given or purchased for children and adolescents.

Behavioral science research has warned that playing violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in children and youth. In many cases, these types of video games encourage and reward players for performing acts of violence and brutality that include beating women, shooting police officers and committing racially motivated acts of violence. Games with extreme violence are labeled for “mature audiences” (ages 17 and older) by the industry ratings board.

The holiday season is a time of celebrating with loved ones the breaking in of light into a troubling and hurting world. Let us be instruments of light. Like the lights that brighten Muslim homes after a month of holy fasting, like the small amount of oil that remained lit for eight days at the Jewish Temple of Divine Service, like the star that guided shepherds and kings to the birth of Christ, like the candles that represent the principles of Kwanzaa – virtues of an exemplary life, let us draw on our spiritual strength, trusting in our enduring power to guide and exemplify the way to peace.

ICCR wants to make sure everyone understands these industry-created standards are put in place to prevent children’s access to violent video games.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO?**

There are four things you should know before video games are purchased:

1. Know the video game rating symbol (games are labeled with suggested age appropriateness rating symbols such as M-Mature, T-Teen, E-Everyone, etc.)
2. Know the video game content descriptors (the reasons why the game got the rating symbol.)
3. Be aware of T-Teen rated games (13 and over) as the criteria for graphic violence has changed over the years.
4. Know the retailers’ sale’s policies on video games to minors. Talk to the managers of stores that sell video games. Ask what the policies and practices are to prevent children from purchasing violent video games.

#### **Recommended Resources For More Information:**

- *Video Game Retailer Chart* (highlights retailers video game policy), <http://www.iccr.org/issues/violence/featured.php> or call ICCR at 212-870-2316
- *National Institute for Media and Family/Video Game Report Card*, annual video game report card (release date 11/20/07), [www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org)
- “*Virus of Violence*,” a documentary by Lt. Col. David Grossman on video game violence, [info@killology.com](mailto:info@killology.com)
- “*Decade of the Child*,” [www.pcusa.org/children/peace/violentvideogames.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/children/peace/violentvideogames.pdf)
- *Common Sense Media*, [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)
- *KidsRisk Guide on Media and Kids*, [www.kidsrisk.harvard.edu](http://www.kidsrisk.harvard.edu)

The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility  
**VIDEO GAME RETAILER COMPARISON CHART**  
**Actions Taken By Retailers to Prevent Sales to Minors of Mature (M) Rated Video Games**  
*(as of November 20, 2007)*

Elements of An Effective, Responsible, and Well-Monitored Video Game Sales Policy	Best Buy	Block Buster	Circuit City	Game Stop	Sears & Kmart	Target	Toys "R" Us	Wal- Mart
<b>POLICY</b>								
Has a policy on the sales of video games to minors	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>POLICY IMPLEMENTATION</b>								
<b>a. Disclosure</b>								
Provides information about policy/program in Corporate Social Responsibility Report	***					***		
Provides information about policy/program on Website	*	*		*		*		*
Provides information about policy/program on website in the Video Game section		*		*		*		*
Displays video game policy in stores	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Discloses results of programs that verify that cashiers are requesting identification for purchase								
Provides organizational chart that defines responsibility for and oversight of policy development								
<b>b. Identifying M-Rated Games</b>								
At the register: M-rated games are identified by cashier and identification requested	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
In store: Places signs about the rating system	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
In store: Separates M-rated games from other games							*** On top shelf	*** On top shelf
In-Store: Does not allow M-rated games to be played in store	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Has created other means to identify M-rated games					* Enlarges "M" in circulars	* Enlarges "M" in circulars		
<b>c. Data Collection and Analysis</b>								
Has process to collect data about performance by store/company	*	*	*	*		*		*
In store: Store conducts audits to ensure that identification is being requested from customers seeking to buy M-rated games	*** All stores audited each mo.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

(over)

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Has created and discloses benchmarks and indicators to evaluate performance								
Has established and discloses long- and short-term goals for program								
Discloses progress made towards goals, benchmarks and indicators								
<b>d. Training</b>								
Conducts employee training program	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Conducts ongoing employee education	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Has additional training during holidays and other peak sales periods	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Rewards employees for compliance	*	*						
Includes disciplinary action for non-compliance	*	*	*	*	Sears-N Kmart-Y	*	*	*
<b>e. Advertising and Sales</b>								
Does not advertise M games in media Geared to audiences 17 and under	*	*			*	*	No "M" game ads in teen mags	*
Does not sell 'AO' games	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Has refused to sell certain M games	*				*	*		*
Enables customers to shop online by game rating	*	No online shopping	*	*	*	*		*
Asks online shoppers of M games to attest to being 17 or older	*	No online shopping	*	*	*	*		*
<b>f. Accountability and Responsibility</b>								
Senior managers assigned responsibility	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Senior manager compensation tied to compliance								
Store manager evaluation tied to compliance		***		***				
<b>g. Industry Efforts</b>								
Participates in ESRB Retailers Council (ERC)	*	*	*	*	*	*		*

This chart is excerpted from the report *"Retailers and Violent Video Games: Progress Made But Disclosure Needed."* The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, 2006. [http://www.cbisonline.com/file/SRIVideoPolicy\\_Final.pdf](http://www.cbisonline.com/file/SRIVideoPolicy_Final.pdf)

\*\*\* = "Good Practice" Many categories selected for inclusion are considered to be progressive and proactive practices in the industry, as noted in the report, *"Retail Guidelines for the Sale of Violent Video Games."* The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, 2006 <http://www.iccr.org/issues/violence/videogameretailguidelines121305.pdf>

Lines highlighted in yellow indicate that no retailer has implemented this practice - - we encourage all retailers to take these actions.

This chart is the result of information gathered from the retailers noted by members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. It is intended for informational purposes only. We have made every effort to ensure the information is reliable, but make no guarantee as to its accuracy or completeness. We appreciate the cooperation and disclosure provided by the retailers noted in this chart.