

Countywide Services Agency

Department of
Health and Human Services

Division of Public Health

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Tobacco Sales to Minors Remain Low in Sacramento County; Education, Tobacco Retail Licensing May Be Helping

SACRAMENTO – The rate of illegal sales of tobacco to minors in Sacramento County remains steady at 16% according to a survey conducted by Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health.

The Public Health Division's Tobacco Education Program conducted its annual Youth Purchase Survey in April by sending under-age student volunteers and adult chaperones to randomly-selected retail outlets in each city and the unincorporated area of Sacramento County.

Of the 288 stores surveyed, 16 percent sold tobacco to minors, down from 21.7 percent in 2009 and about the same rate as in 2010.

No sales to minors were observed in Rancho Cordova.

Of the other areas surveyed:

- Isleton had an observed sales rate of 50%, with one out of two stores selling tobacco to minors;
- Citrus Heights had a sales rate of 24%, with eight out of 33 stores selling tobacco to minors;
- Galt had a sales rate of 22%, with two out of nine stores selling tobacco to minors;
- Folsom had a sales rate of 17%, with four out of 23 stores selling tobacco to minors;
- Sacramento had a sales rate of 16%, with 19 out of 117 stores selling tobacco to minors;
- The unincorporated area of Sacramento County had a sales rate of 13%, with 10 out of 79 stores selling tobacco to minors; and
- Elk Grove had a sales rate of 10%, with two out of 21 stores selling tobacco to minors.

Health officials believe the dip in tobacco sales to minors may be due, in part, to the adoption of Tobacco Retail Licensing ordinances by several local jurisdictions. Tobacco Retail Licensing requires stores who sell tobacco to apply for a license to do so. If a store is caught selling tobacco to minors, their license is subject to suspension or even revocation. The cost of monitoring stores is covered by licensing fees.

The unincorporated area of Sacramento County and the cities of Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Rancho Cordova each have Tobacco Retail License ordinances. All had reductions in tobacco sales to minors in 2011 and 2010 compared to 2009.

“We believe that Tobacco Retail Licensing is a powerful tool for reducing tobacco sales to minors,” said County Health Officer Glennah Trochet, M.D. “We are encouraged by the continued decline in sales to underage youth, but it’s concerning that 16% of stores in our community sold tobacco to minors.

“Since most adult smokers begin before age 18, it is imperative that we continue to educate retailers about the importance of following the law.”

Data is used strictly for collection and educational purposes. Stores in 100% compliance receive a certificate of recognition. Owners of stores selling tobacco to minors are encouraged to work with their employees to prevent future sales. No punitive action is taken towards these stores, although the information is forwarded to local code enforcement officers.

If you would like more information about tobacco and secondhand smoke resources in Sacramento County, contact the Tobacco Resource and Information Line (TRAIL) at (916) 660-5825 or <http://SacTRAIL.com>. SacTRAIL is a resource line that can assist residents with any tobacco-related issue.

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