



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community Survey Findings Released

El Centro, CA – Retail stores play a vital role in keeping communities and people healthy and our economy strong. The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community survey provides information about the availability and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products in our local stores, and it is an important way to understand what consumers face – young and old- in the retail environment. The results are an opportunity to educate consumers and retailers on marketing practices at the point-of-sale, make our stores healthier places in our community, and ultimately, engage concerned citizens and community groups to promote healthy changes in the retail environment that will benefit everyone.

“Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and although this survey highlights some improvement in Imperial County, certain offerings and messaging are still out of balance, tipping toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health,” said Janette Angulo, Deputy Director of the Imperial County Public Health Department. Of the 143 stores surveyed in our county, 62.6% have electronic smoking devices, showing a 9.6% increase from 2013. Additionally, the number of local stores selling chewing tobacco and menthol cigarettes is still high, with over 65% and 91% of stores, respectively, selling the products. Although the percentage of stores that sell little cigars/cigarillos and flavored non-cigarette tobacco products remains high, it decreased by 7.9% and 25.8%, respectively. When looking at the nutrition component, a significant change was seen in the number of stores with sugary drinks at the checkout: it decreased from 55.7% to 10.6% in 3 years.

“Survey information indicates that our community’s youth are overwhelmed with unhealthy messages and choices. We need to change what information and options our kids are exposed to and work to surround them with healthy choices and messaging instead,” said Monica Veliz De Leon, American Cancer Association Community Outreach Manager and Chair for the Coalition for a

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Tobacco-Free Imperial County. In Imperial County, 30.1% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, while 82.1% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. Additionally, over 33% of stores place tobacco products or ads in kid-friendly locations, such as tobacco ads at 'kid-level' (three feet or below) or tobacco products near candy or toys, and 76.4% of stores sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals.

Yesterday, throughout California, health advocates held thirteen press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest its kind. It builds upon an initial research released three years ago in March 2014 and provides insights into changes in the availability and marketing of the studied products during this time. Information was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores, as well as tobacco-only stores.

Imperial County is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for the community. *Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community* is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and STD prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com. For more information about the local tobacco control or nutrition programs or Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Imperial County, please contact Angela Ramirez, Health Promotion Manager, at (442)265-1367.

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