



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Kings County Health Department

Keith Winkler, REHS
Director of Public Health Services

Milton Teske, M.D.
Health Officer

330 Campus Drive
Hanford, California 93230

*Mission: To promote and protect the health and well-being of our community.
Vision: Optimal health for all*

Debbie J. Grice, BSN, MPA
Deputy Health Director Nursing & Community Services

Jeff Taber, MPH, REHS
Deputy Health Director Environmental Health Services

Telephone: (559) 584-1401
Fax: (559) 582-7618



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CONTACT:

Oralia Vallejo

oralia.vallejo@co.kings.ca.us

559-394-5727

559-852-2602



2016 Tobacco Retailer Survey Shows Continuing Widespread Availability of Tobacco and Alcohol Products to Kids in Kings County

Hanford, CA – March 8, 2017 – New statewide data released today showed an alarming increase of the availability of e-cigarettes from 21.5% in 2013 to 66.4% in Kings County of all tobacco retailers. This finding is part of new research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

Today, throughout California, health advocates held 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest of 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. In Kings County, Kings County Tobacco Control Program staff, youth, and volunteers surveyed 110 tobacco retailers.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Dr. Milton Teske, Health Officer, Kings County Dept. of Public Health. “Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health.”

The survey found the following for Kings County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 80.9% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 31.8% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables.
- 43.6% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 84.5% sell alcohol.
- E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in Kings County in stores from the last time this survey was conducted in 2013, up more than 308.8%.

“The expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern and reflects the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years,” said Juan Tafolla, chairperson, Kings County Tobacco-Free Partnership.

Another goal of the study was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth.

“This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated 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 Cela Nichols, Prevention Coordinator, Kings County Behavioral Health.

The survey found the following for Kings County:

- Only 14.5% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 78.2% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 80.5% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 33.6% 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.
- More than 32.3% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- 80% 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. Similarly, 80% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

“Kings County Tobacco-Free Partnership 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 Californians. As a parent of 3 teenagers I am particularly concerned about the rise of electronic nicotine delivery device use by youth and their availability in our community,” stated Juan Tafolla.

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.

Additional survey findings include:

1. Alcopops are sold at 53.8% of stores.
2. Tobacco chew is sold at 68.2% of stores.
3. 58.1% of stores that sell alcohol have storefront ads.

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.

The Kings County Tobacco Control Program is a program of the Kings County Department of Public Health that is funded by a grant from the California Department of Health Services under grant CTCP-13-16.