

---

## NEWS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 8, 2017

**CONTACT:** Evi Hernandez  
Merced County Tobacco Control Program  
(559) 346-9485

## **New Survey Findings Conclude that Placement and Advertising of Alcohol, Junk Food and Tobacco Products in Retail Stores Continue to be Aimed at Young People**

### *The Largest Survey of its Kind in California Analyzing Healthy vs. Unhealthy Products in Retail Stores*

Merced - New data reveals high rates of stores in Merced County with advertisement, pricing and product placement practices that suggest young people could be targets for unhealthy products. These findings are part of new data released today on the availability, pricing and marketing practices of tobacco, alcohol, condoms and healthy/unhealthy food products in stores that sell tobacco.

Health advocates up and down the state released the survey results today, with 13 press events taking place simultaneously throughout California. The large survey collected information from more than 7,100 diverse retail stores – including convenience, supermarket, liquor, discount, pharmacies and tobacco-only stores – in all 58 counties, with the goal of shedding light on what products are available and promoted in our communities. Public health representatives, community volunteers and youth participated in the survey, which was conducted from July through October 2016.

Survey results show that 65.4% of stores in Merced County have advertising for unhealthy products on the outside of stores while only 6.3% have healthy advertising, such as for milk or fruit and vegetables. In the County, 62.1% of stores within 1,000 feet of schools have unhealthy storefront ads and are frequented by our kids. According to Youth Advisory Board member, Shawani, “Unhealthy practices in stores, like what they sell and how they advertise, tempt kids to do things that can harm them”.

“Unhealthy advertisements on storefronts unwillingly conditions kids to engage in detrimental habits”, states Elizabeth Agundis, member of the Merced County Tobacco Control Coalition.

The findings also show that electronic cigarettes are widely available in Merced County, alarming health officials and community partners. In all, 53.5% of stores surveyed sell e-cigarettes. Statewide, the number of stores selling e-cigarettes has risen again from 11.5% in 2011, 45.7% in 2013, to the current 62.3% in 2016. Youth Advisory Board member Daniela states, “There are so many stores that sell tobacco in my neighborhood. Not having healthy options can increase your chance of having low energy, become weak, or even die”.

The survey includes state, regional and county level data with new insights on the density of stores selling tobacco and their proximity to schools; types of tobacco and alcohol products being sold; advertising and placement of such products in stores; the availability of e-cigarettes; and the availability and promotion of unhealthy and healthy food options including low- or non-fat milk and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Additional survey findings in Merced County include:

- Lowest price of cigarettes found was \$4.09 as compared to \$4.51 for California
- 100% of stores surveyed that are near schools, sold the most popular brand of cigarillos (small cigars) for under \$1
- 85.8% of stores surveyed sell alcohol
- 33.3% of stores in low-income areas have a good selection of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables
- 60.9% of stores that sell alcohol in low-income areas have malt liquor, compared to 45% of areas that are not low-income

*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, regional and county specific data and more information on *Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community*, visit [www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com](http://www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com).

The California Health Collaborative (CHC) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization committed to enhancing the quality of life and health of the people of California, particularly the underserved and underrepresented. Guided by its mission of "changing lives by improving health and wellness", CHC implements an array of health promotion and disease prevention programs, public health surveillance systems, and a variety of capacity-building and networking initiatives.

###