



COUNTY OF ORANGE – HEALTH CARE AGENCY

PRESS RELEASE

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SURVEY SHOWS CONTINUING WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS IN ORANGE COUNTY

Just released findings from statewide survey shows disparity in availability of healthy and unhealthy products.

(Santa Ana, California) - New research shows that in Orange County the availability of e-cigarettes has grown by 12 percentage points and nearly 21% since 2013. This finding is part of new research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

Today, throughout California, health supporters held 13 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.

“Overall, the findings show a disparity in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Amy Buch, Division Manager of the OC Health Care Agency’s Health Promotion Division. “Stores play a critical role in our community’s health. We know there are many efforts taking place among Orange County retailers to help to promote healthy options to their customers. This report reminds us of the importance of working with retailers to support their efforts in making healthy options readily available.”

The survey found the following for Orange County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 83% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 57% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 79% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- 36% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 64% sell alcohol.
- 84% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 56% sell them on unlocked shelves.
- The percentage of Orange County stores selling e-cigarettes increased from the last time this survey was conducted, up from 57% to 69%.

“In Orange County, we have seen an expanded availability of e-cigarettes. There has also been an increase in use of electronic cigarettes by Orange County teens,” Buch said.

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

“This survey found that our community’s youth are exposed to many unhealthy messages and choices. We want to assure that young people are receiving healthy messages and that the retail environment supports their healthy decisions,” Buch said.

The survey found the following for Orange County:

- Only 13% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 69% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 67% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 38% of stores place tobacco products or ads in kid-friendly locations, such as at ‘kid-level’ (three feet or below) or near candy or toys.
- Over 1 in 4 (26.7%) Orange County stores selling tobacco are near a school.
- 85% 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, 83% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

“The OC Health Care Agency Health Promotion Division’s Tobacco Use Prevention Program (TUPP) is committed to continuing to work with local partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for Orange County residents,” Buch said.

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.

The Tobacco Use Prevention Program (TUPP) collaborates with community organizations, public agencies and committed individuals to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in Orange County.

TUPP offers tobacco education for youth and adults, as well as free tobacco cessation and prevention services. Information about cessation services for adults and teens is available by calling (866) NEW-LUNG or (866) 639-5864. For more information about TUPP can be found online at

www.ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/promo/tupp