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Survey Shows Continuing Widespread Availability of Tobacco Products in Placer County

AUBURN, CA – March 8, 2017 – New research shows that in Placer County the availability of e-cigarettes has increased over 38% since 2013. Other tobacco products that are more available in Placer County since 2013 include menthol cigarettes. These findings are 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 advocates held 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest of its kind. It builds upon 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 continuing discrepancy in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Cassie Call, Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program. “Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help recalibrate the balance toward health.”

The survey found the following for Placer County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 90% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 54% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 77% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- 49% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 80% sell alcohol.
- 79% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 66% sell them on unlocked shelves.
- E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in Placer County in stores from the last time this survey was conducted, with 88% of surveyed stores now selling e-cigarettes.

“The expanded availability of e-cigarettes are of particular concern and reflect the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years,” said Cassie Call, Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program.

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 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 Cassie Call, Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program.

The survey found the following for Placer County:

- Only 10% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 61% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 67% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- Approximately 30% 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.
- 4% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- 89% 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, 85% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

“The Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program and Placer County Public Health are 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.”

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 64% of stores.
2. Tobacco chew is sold at 80% of stores.

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

The Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program is committed to decreasing the tobacco use rates and presence of tobacco in Placer County. As a Local Lead Agency of the California Tobacco Control Program, the Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program has conducted health education interventions and behavior change programs at the local level to ensure residents of Placer County are able to fulfill their ultimate well-being.

About Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program

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