



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Jose Arballo Jr., Public Health
Senior Public Information Specialist
Cell: 951-712-3705 Office: 951-358-5599
Jarballo@rivcocha.org

New data shows Riverside County youth still targeted by unhealthy messages in retail stores

Riverside, CA- March 8, 2017- Health officials have stressed the importance of healthy choices for young people in Riverside County, but the youngsters are also bombarded constantly by unhealthy messages as they shop at local markets and convenience stores.

“Our message has always been that young people, if given the option, will often make the healthy choice when it comes to what they consume. But the healthy option is hard to hear when it is drowned out by the constant bombardment of those who target young people with unhealthy messages and options,” said Sarah Mack, director of Riverside University Health System-Public Health.

This information is part of new data released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy and healthy food products in stores that sell tobacco.

Among the findings:

- Only about **39 percent** of stores in Riverside County sell fresh fruits and vegetables, but more than **80 percent** sell flavored tobacco products.
- **Fifty-two percent** of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly **72 percent** sell alcohol.
- In Riverside County, only **11 percent** of stores have storefront advertising for healthy products, but **72 percent** of stores have advertising for unhealthy products.
- A majority of stores in Riverside County (**80 percent**) sold flavored tobacco products in sweet flavors that are clearly meant to appeal to youth, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals.

Sarah S. Mack, M.P.H., Director

Cameron Kaiser, M.D., Public Health Officer



- E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in Riverside County in stores from the last time this survey was conducted, up more than **nine percent**.

Throughout California health advocates are holding 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.

Officials noted that adults are often desensitized to the unhealthy advertising and products in stores, but that research indicates that young people are highly influenced by marketing of products like tobacco and alcohol, even more so than peer pressure.

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.

For state, regional and county specific data and more information on *Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community*, visit www.HealthyStoresHealthyCommunity.com.

Riverside University Health System-Public Health

#