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New Survey Shows Progress, but more work is needed in Sacramento County

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

SACRAMENTO, CA – March 8, 2017 –New research shows that in Sacramento County overall availability of flavored non-cigarette tobacco near schools has decreased 9% since 2013; however, in some neighborhoods single cigarillos are more available and mentholated cigarettes are cheaper. 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.

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.

“We are pleased that the sale of tobacco products shows a reduction, however, the overall findings of the study show a continuing discrepancy in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Kimberly Bankston-Lee, Project Director of the SOL Project and volunteer who helped collect the data. “For example, in East Sacramento, a pack of Newport cigarettes cost an average of 74 cents more than in Oak Park, making flavored tobacco more readily accessible to people of lower income. 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 Sacramento County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 82.8% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 34.4% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables.
- What’s more, 92% of stores that sold a popular brand of “little cigars” sold them individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in Sacramento County in stores from the last time this survey was conducted, up more than 16.4%.

“The availability of flavored tobacco and electronic cigarettes is of particular concern and reflect the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years. It is a social justice issued,” reported Ms. Bankston-Lee.

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 Pleshette Robertson, owner of Sac Cultural Hub Media company, who also volunteered to collect the data for the survey.

The survey found the following for Sacramento County:

- Only 23.0% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 77.3% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 74.0% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 52.3% 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 39.7% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.

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 SOL Project advocates for healthy, safe and tobacco free communities and is funded by the California Department of Public Health.

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