



San Joaquin County Public Health Services

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NEW SURVEY REVEALS SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY YOUTH STILL BOMBARDED WITH TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL ADS

STOCKTON (March 8, 2017) – New research shows that in San Joaquin County youth are continuing to be the targets of unhealthy advertising with 85% of stores near schools advertising tobacco and alcohol products. This finding is part of new research through the *Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community* campaign released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

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. This campaign is designed to raise awareness of how communities, and specifically youth, are negatively impacted by the saturation on unhealthy products and product marketing in the retail environment.

Today, throughout California, health advocates are holding 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.

“This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages and choices,” says Maria Mendez, local countywide Smoking & Tobacco Outreach/Prevention Program (STOPP) coalition chairperson. “We need to change what information and options our kids are exposed to and work to surround them with healthy choices and messaging instead.”

The survey found the following for San Joaquin County:

- Only 8% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 82% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 85% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products—one of the highest rates in California.
- More than 40% of stores placed 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 42% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.

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

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and large discrepancy in our county in that the accessibility and marketing of products that promote a healthy lifestyle are low, whereas accessibility and marketing are high for those products that don’t,” says Dr. Alvaro Garza, San Joaquin County Public Health Officer. “Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and this survey shows that offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate that balance toward health.”

The survey also found that unhealthy products are far more accessible than healthy products. The survey found the following for San Joaquin County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 91% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 40% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables.
- Thirty percent (30%) of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 77% sell alcohol. Alcopops—an alcohol product targeting youth—are sold at 91% of stores.
- 82% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 21% sell them on unlocked shelves.

In an effort to address these issues, San Joaquin County Public Health Services developed a countywide initiative, *Refresh San Joaquin*, to improve the health of local residents by increasing access to and availability of healthy foods and beverages and decreasing promotion of unhealthy products like tobacco. The public health department is working with local farmers and community-based organizations to support local retailers in their efforts to promote and sell healthier products.

“San Joaquin County and the STOPP Coalition are committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make healthy choices the easy choices for all residents,” says Dr. Garza.

For state and county-specific data and more information on *Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community*, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com. For more information regarding *Refresh San Joaquin* or STOPP contact Ashley Lewis at alewis@sjcphs.org.

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