

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statewide Survey Shows Continuing Widespread Availability of Tobacco Products in San Mateo County**

San Mateo, CA — New research shows that in San Mateo County, 74% of stores that sell tobacco carry a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar. 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.

Throughout California today, health advocates are holding 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest of its kind in the state. This builds upon initial research released three years ago in March 2014 and provides insights into changes in the availability and marketing of studied products. Data was collected during the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience stores, liquor stores, and tobacco-only stores; of those 512 were surveyed in San Mateo County.

**The survey found the following discrepancies between selling unhealthy and healthy products in San Mateo County:**

- 65% of stores selling tobacco sold “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 37% of stores sell fresh fruits or vegetables.
- 37% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 60% sell alcohol.
- 65% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 37% sell them on unlocked shelves.
- E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in San Mateo County in stores from the last time this survey was conducted, growing from 31% in 2013 to 54% in 2016. The expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern and reflects the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years.

Another survey goal was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. This survey found that San Mateo County’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages and choices.

“Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey shows accessibility and marketing is out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options,” said Edith Cabuslay, Program Services Manager with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Alcohol and Other Drugs, San Mateo County Health System. “Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health and change what options our community and particularly our kids are exposed to. The San Mateo County Health System is committed

to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to help make the healthy choice the easy choice for everyone.”

**The survey found the following for San Mateo County in regards to advertising to youth:**

- Only 9% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 61% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 60% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.
- More than 34% 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 31% of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- 74% 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, 76% of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

Additional survey findings include:

- Alcopops are sold at 59% of stores.
- Tobacco chew is sold at 52% of stores.

**About Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community**

*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](http://www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com).

**About San Mateo County Health System**

The mission of the San Mateo County Health System is to help everyone who lives, works, plays, and studies in San Mateo County live longer, better lives. San Mateo County is a 744-square mile area stretching from Daly City to East Palo Alto and past Pescadero. More than 740,000 people live here. Visit us at [www.smchealth.org](http://www.smchealth.org), and follow us at [facebook.com/SMCHealth](https://facebook.com/SMCHealth) and [twitter.com/SMCHealth](https://twitter.com/SMCHealth).

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