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New Survey Finds Tobacco and Alcohol Products Still More Available than Milk and Fresh Fruit

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CA – March 8, 2017 – New research shows that flavored tobacco products continue to be widely sold near schools in Santa Clara County. Additionally, the availability of e-cigarettes has risen 12% since 2013, a concern given a 10% rate of e-cigarettes use among youth in Santa Clara County. These findings are part of new research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms, and healthy and unhealthy food and beverages in stores that sell tobacco in Santa Clara County.

Today, throughout California, health advocates held 13 news events to release results of the survey, which is the largest of its kind. The survey builds on initial research released in March 2014 and provides insights into changes in the availability and marketing of the products studied during this time. For this survey, information was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores selling tobacco products in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, neighborhood markets, gas stations, and convenience stores.

In Santa Clara County data was collected from 392 stores that sell tobacco, which is approximately one-third of the total number of stores that sell tobacco across the county.

The survey found the following for Santa Clara County:

- 80% of stores near schools sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals, while only 41% of stores surveyed sell fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 92% of stores that sell the little cigars, Swisher Sweets, sell them for less than \$1.00, cheaper than a candy bar. This is a significant increase compared to only 69% in 2013. Little cigars are usually the same size and shape as a traditional cigarette, and often packaged in similar ways.
- The availability of electronic smoking devices, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices, increased from 47% in 2013 to 59% of stores selling these products in 2016.
- Fewer stores are selling sugary drinks at the check-out in 2016 (38%) compared to in 2013 (56%).

“It’s unfortunate that it’s easier to find cheap, fruit-flavored tobacco products than it is to find actual fresh fruit and vegetables,” said Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisor. “While the County has taken bold actions to curb the sale of these types of kid-appealing tobacco products to youth, the results released today reveal a need to double down on our efforts to ensure all of our cities have policies in place that protect young people and all of our citizens.”

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

"This survey shows us that we have much work left to do to ensure that our residents have access to healthy food and drink, and aren't bombarded by ads for tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks" said Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer. "We will continue to work with cities, community residents, health advocates, and store owners to enable all residents to make healthy food and beverage choices."

In Santa Clara County, unhealthy product advertising outside of stores far surpass advertising for healthy products, with 65% of stores displaying ads for tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks, while only 12% displaying healthy ads such as for milk, fruit, and vegetables. Similarly, youth are being exposed to these unhealthy ads with more than half (65%) of stores near schools displaying unhealthy ads.

"Even though I go into these stores often, being involved in collecting this data really opened my eyes to just how much advertising we are exposed to," said Prit Pandya, Milpitas High School senior and president of Community Advocate Teens of Today club. "I know it can be hard for people to make healthy choices when it's easier and cheaper to buy unhealthy products, which is why our club is interested in working to change that reality."

Additional Santa Clara County survey findings include:

- 78% of stores sell condoms, but only 54% have them unlocked on a shelf.
- Almost a third (31%) of stores that sell alcohol have ads in kid-friendly locations (near candy/toys, or below three feet).
- More than one-third (37%) of stores near schools have tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations.
- 41% of stores sell non- or low-fat milk, but nearly 64% sell alcohol.

"This campaign really highlights the importance of public and private partnerships as we address the potential to achieve greater health equity and for improving residents' health and quality of life," said Don Tran, Community Development and Health Policy Associate at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. "As co-chair of the Santa Clara County Tobacco Free Coalition, our coalition is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates, business partners, and community stakeholders to identify potential collaboration opportunities and re-calibrate the balance of what is being offered in our community toward health."

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

About the Tobacco-Free Communities Program: Santa Clara County Public Health Department Tobacco-Free Communities (TFC) Program mission is to improve the health of all residents and the workforce in Santa Clara County by reducing illness and premature death attributed to the use of tobacco products.