

Health and Human Services Agency

Shasta County

2650 Breslauer Way
Redding, CA 96001
(530) 229-8484
FAX (530) 229-8447

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: April Jurisich, MPH, RD, Supervising Public Health Nutritionist, (530) 225-5150 and
Jennifer Gideon, Tobacco Education Program Coordinator, (530) 225-5134

Alcohol and tobacco products still more available than milk and fresh fruit

Recent statewide survey shows disparity in availability of healthy and unhealthy products

SHASTA COUNTY – New data released today shows it’s easier to purchase a green apple flavored cigar than it is to purchase a fresh apple in Shasta County. The report shows that more than 90% of stores near schools in Shasta County sold colorful packaged sweet flavored tobacco products that are clearly meant to appeal to youth, such as grape, watermelon, and cotton candy, while only 26% of stores surveyed in Shasta County sell fresh fruit or vegetables. Additionally, only 39% sold non – or low- fat milk, but 83% sell alcohol. 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. 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.

Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messages are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. “The expanded availability of e-cigarettes are of particular concern and reflect the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years, since teens who use e-cigarettes are three times more likely to begin smoking traditional cigarettes one year later,” said Jennifer Gideon, Tobacco Education Program Coordinator for Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). The findings show that 75% of stores in Shasta County sell electronic smoking devices; a marked increase since 2013 (41%).

Another goal was to examine marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. The findings show that 76% of stores near schools in Shasta County had unhealthy storefront ads. Research shows that kids are highly influenced by marketing of products like tobacco and alcohol. “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 Gideon. Shasta County HHSA is committed to continuing to work with local retailers and other partners to improve health through changes in community markets and to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.

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.

For more information on how to get involved or to join the Tobacco Education Coalition, call 225-5134. For local resources on quitting smoking, visit www.tobaccofreeshasta.org or call 229-8467. To report a tobacco violation or receive more information on tobacco laws, call 225-5052.

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