



**SOLANO
COUNTY**

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2017

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Survey Reveals Solano County Kids Still Bombarded with Tobacco, Alcohol and Sugary Drink Ads

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

SOLANO COUNTY - Eight of ten stores in Solano County that sell tobacco products have storefront advertisements for unhealthy products which include tobacco, sugary drinks and alcohol. But, what is more concerning, is that nearly three of five (57 percent) Solano stores near schools had tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, nearly 25 percent higher than the average across the state. Similar data were seen for marketing of alcohol near candy, toys or below three feet high, and for the promotion of sugary drinks. 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.

Today, 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 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 have made progress over the years to reduce tobacco use, but pervasive advertising and promotion of tobacco products which appeal to youth results in kids starting to smoke," said Dr. Bela Matyas, Solano County's Health Officer. "Our local data show that tobacco products are available in sweet and fruity flavors including cherry and chocolate that appeal to kids, that stores near schools market tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks in kid-friendly locations, and that this is happening in our county at a higher

rate than in California as a whole. We are committed to protecting our kids and the health of our community. Over the past year, we have worked successfully with retailers and partners in four Solano cities to increase healthy options while reducing promotion of unhealthy products.”

Survey results show that of the stores that sold alcohol, 65 percent had alcohol ads that were near candy or toys or were below three feet high—at a child’s eye level. This is more than 30 percent higher than the state average.

Also alarming is the finding that availability of electronic smoking devices increased from being sold in three out of five stores in 2013 to nearly four out of five stores (76 percent) in 2016. This is fourteen percent higher than the state average.

“This expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern as we see a spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years,” said Dr. Matyas. “Recent studies link e-cigarette use with addiction to future conventional cigarette smoking.”

Additional survey findings from Solano County show the lack of balance between healthy products and unhealthy products and that sometimes unhealthy ones are priced lower:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 93 percent of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 41 percent of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 76 percent of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- Only 27 percent of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but 55 percent sold sugary drinks at check-out and nearly 72 percent sold alcohol.
- 89 percent of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 39 percent sell them on unlocked shelves.

“Our survey data illustrate that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages, prominent placement, and many unhealthy products,” said Sahra Pak, Public Health Nutritionist, a coordinator of healthy store makeovers for Solano Public Health. “We are working with retailers and community members to change the messages and the products so that making the healthy choice really is the easy choice.”

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and sexually transmitted disease 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.

In Solano County, the interest in improving our retail choices and the collaborations are strong and growing. A Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community committee meets throughout the year. For more information on future meetings or to volunteer in a store makeover, contact Felicia Flores-Workman at (707) 784-8901.

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

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