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New Survey Reveals Sonoma County Kids Still Bombarded with Tobacco and Alcohol Ads, and Products

Just released findings from statewide survey shows unhealthy products easily edge out healthier ones, and more retailers are now selling e-cigarettes and/or little cigars, popular among youth.

Santa Rosa, CA – March 8, 2017 – New research shows that in Sonoma County the availability of e-cigarettes has grown by more than 10% since 2013. 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.

Today, throughout California, health advocates held 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest of its kind. The survey builds upon an initial research released three years ago in March 2014. For this survey, 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. The results provide new insights into changes in the availability and marketing of the studied products, and will help focus communities interested in seeing improvements in their local stores.

“Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey shows how visible and available unhealthy options are so there’s a lot of room for improvement. It’s concerning that we are seeing even more advertising of unhealthy products as we know this heavily influences what people buy, especially youth,” said Shirlee Zane, Chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors.

The 2016 survey found the following for Sonoma County in regards to the **types of products sold**:

- Of the stores surveyed, 82% sell flavored tobacco products, but only 42% sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 74% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- 45% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, but over 70% sell alcohol.
- 78% of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 66% sell them on unlocked shelves.
- Exterior ads for alcohol were seen at about half of stores (51%) surveyed in 2013 and this time, 54% of stores had ads.
- E-cigarettes are taking up more shelf space in Sonoma County stores than last time this survey was conducted. In 2013, 61% of stores sold electronic smoking devices and in 2016 72% sold. What’s more, the 2016 Sonoma County rate is higher than the CA average of 62%.

The survey found the following for Sonoma County on the **accessibility and marketing** of healthy and unhealthy products to youth:

- Only 11% of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 73% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. Looking only at stores near schools, 41% have storefront advertising for unhealthy products. These local advertising numbers are higher than the State's and also higher than Sonoma County's numbers when the survey was first done in 2013.
- More than 35% 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 22% of stores placed **alcohol ads** at "kid-level" or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.

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

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