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New Survey Reveals Stanislaus County Kids Still Bombarded with Tobacco and Alcohol Ads

Stanislaus County – New research shows that Stanislaus County stores that sell tobacco are heavily marketing unhealthy products to kids and youth, especially in the areas around schools. 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 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. Over 140 stores were surveyed in Stanislaus County.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county between the accessibility and marketing of products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Anuj Bhatia, DrPH of the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency Public Health Division. “We found that unhealthy products like tobacco and alcohol are more readily available than healthy items like fruits, vegetables and low- or non-fat dairy products. Stores play a critical role on our community’s health, and this survey shows that offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health.”

One of the major goals of this research was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth.

“This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages and choices, particularly near their schools. 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 Bhatia.

The survey found the following for Stanislaus County:

- Nearly half (48.3%) of surveyed 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. Among stores located near schools, nearly three quarters (72.2%) market tobacco in these kid-friendly locations.
- Only about one in ten stores in Stanislaus County (11.5%) advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but eight in ten (81.6%) storefronts advertised unhealthy products. Stores near schools had even more unhealthy ads, with nine in ten (88.9%) displaying unhealthy storefront advertising.
- Nine in ten stores (90.8%) sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals. Even more concerning, *all* of the stores surveyed near schools in Stanislaus County sell these candy-flavored tobacco products.
- Only 27.6% of stores sell non- or low-fat milk and 37.9% had any fresh fruits and vegetables, but nearly 84% sell alcohol.

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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.