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Young people could be targets for unhealthy products in local stores, according to report

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New data reveals high rates of stores in San Bernardino County with advertisement, pricing and product placement practices that suggest young people could be targets for unhealthy products, according to health advocates.

These findings are part of new data released on March 8 on the availability, pricing and marketing practices of tobacco, alcohol, condoms and healthy/unhealthy food products in stores that sell tobacco in California.

The large survey collected information from more than 7,100 diverse retail stores -- including convenience, supermarket, liquor, discount, pharmacies and tobacco-only stores -- in all 58 counties, with the goal of shedding light on what products are available and promoted in the communities. Public health representatives, community volunteers and youth participated in the survey, which was conducted from April through June of last year.

"The amount of kid-friendly flavors found in tobacco and alcohol products, the location of unhealthy products within the store, and the amount and location of advertising left no doubt in my mind that young people are being targeted," said Addison Saenz, program manager at Public Strategies and member of the San Bernardino County Tobacco Control Coalition.

Survey results show that 77.2 percent of stores in San Bernardino County have advertising for unhealthy products on the outside of stores while only 21.0 percent have healthy advertising, such as for milk or fruit and vegetables.

The findings also show that electronic cigarettes are widely available in San Bernardino County, alarming health officials and community partners. In all, 64.7 percent of stores surveyed sell e-cigarettes. The number of stores selling e-cigarettes increased by 14.9 percent from 49.8 percent in 2013 to 64.7 percent in 2016.

The survey includes state, regional and county level data with new insights on the density of stores selling tobacco and their proximity to schools; types of tobacco and alcohol products being sold; advertising and placement of such products in

stores; the availability of e-cigarettes; and the availability and promotion of unhealthy and healthy food options, including low- or non-fat milk and fresh fruits and vegetables.

----- ADDITIONAL survey findings in San Bernardino County include:

- 73.9 percent of stores sell alcohol.
- More than 13.9 percent of stores have alcohol ads that were placed under three feet (at "kid-level") or were placed near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- 17.6 percent of stores sell non- or low-fat milk.
- A majority of stores (86.4 percent) sell flavored tobacco products in sweet flavors that are clearly meant to appeal to youth, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals.
- 96.9 percent of stores sell Swisher Sweets, also known as cigarillos, for less than \$1.

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, regional and county specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, visit www.healthystoresforhealthycommunity.com.

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