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Survey Results Released Analyzing Tobacco, Alcohol and Food in Alpine County Stores

Alpine County, CA – June 2020 – New research shows that in Alpine County e-cigarettes and vaping products continue to be unavailable in our stores but other tobacco products that are enticing to young people remain on the shelves. 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.

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community (HSHC) Survey is the largest scientific survey of its kind in the state and builds upon previous research released in 2014 and 2017 to look at changes in the availability and marketing of the studied products over time. Information collected from nearly 8,000 randomly selected licensed tobacco retailers in all 58 California counties included convenience, gas, grocery, liquor, and drug, as well as tobacco stores.

One of the key goals of the survey was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. In Alpine County, none of the surveyed stores had tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, such as near candy or toys or under three feet. However, all stores surveyed advertised sugary drinks on their storefront pointing to another health threat as California teens consume the equivalent of 39 pounds of sugar each year from sugary drinks.

“The findings show that while we have made some progress in combatting tobacco, our community’s youth are still surrounded by unhealthy choices and messages in the retail environment,” said Dr. Richard Johnson, Alpine County’s health officer. “Overall, we need a better balance of healthy choices in our stores. This information is important to examine because the three leading causes of death in California are from heart disease, cancer and stroke – we can largely prevent them by eliminating tobacco use, limiting alcohol use, eating healthy and being physically active.”

The survey found the following for Alpine County:

- 100% of stores surveyed sell flavored, non-cigarette tobacco as well as menthol cigarettes. These widely available products come in enticing flavors making them very appealing to youth.
- None of the surveyed stores sell e-cigarettes or vaping products which are surging in popularity among kids and teenagers.
- 100% of stores surveyed sell alcohol but no stores are located in child-sensitive areas or near schools.

- All surveyed stores carried some fresh fruits and vegetables along with low-fat or non-fat milk allowing our residents and visitors to make nutritious choices.
- 100% of surveyed stores sold condoms on unlocked shelves where people don't have to worry about being embarrassed by asking a clerk to access them. This is important because in California in 2018, bacterial STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) significantly increased.

“The continued availability of flavored tobacco products is of particular concern as four out of five youth who have used tobacco started with a flavored product. Flavors are the tobacco industry’s recruitment tool to hook new customers,” said Johnson. “This is why a sales ban of flavored tobacco products was pursued and recently adopted in Alpine County. Retailers have until July 1, 2020 to sell through their remaining flavored tobacco stock. After July 1st, these products will no longer be allowed to be sold in Alpine County. This is an important step forward in curbing the epidemic of flavored tobacco use among kids and teens.”

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community campaign is a statewide collaboration between tobacco and alcohol use prevention, sexually transmitted disease prevention, and nutrition partners to examine what’s in our community stores and how that impacts public health.

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

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