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New survey shows Colusa County needs a better balance of healthy and accessible products in stores that help make the healthy choice the easy choice

COLUSA, CA – JUNE 2020 – New research shows that most stores near schools in Colusa County sell flavored tobacco products. 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.

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 Colusa County, 30% of surveyed stores still have tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, such as at 'kid-level' (three feet or below) or near candy or toys.

"The findings show that while we have made some progress in combatting tobacco, our community's youth are still surrounded by unhealthy choices," said Amanda Pitts, Colusa County Public Health. "Tobacco advertising shouldn't be somewhere that's meant to be seen by kids. Overall, we need a better balance of healthy choices. 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 Colusa County:

- 86% of stores surveyed sell flavored, non-cigarette tobacco products such as grape e-cigarettes. These products are available in the vast majority of stores near schools (80%).

- Over 80% of stores sold chewing tobacco, which is 25% higher than the state average (56%).
- More stores in Colusa County sold flavored tobacco products such as e-cigarettes, little cigars and chew (86%) than fresh fruits and vegetables (36%) when surveyed.
- More than 50% of surveyed stores in Colusa County sold sugary drinks at the checkout counter. California teens consume the equivalent of 39 pounds of sugar each year from sugary drinks.

“The continued availability of flavored tobacco products are 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 Daisy Velasquez, Colusa County Public Health. “Colusa County Public Health is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for Californians.”

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 is in our community stores and how that influences 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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