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New Survey finds progress in reducing the availability of harmful tobacco products but more work is needed

Salinas, CA – June 2020 – New research shows the availability of flavored tobacco products within Monterey County such as e-cigarettes, little cigars and chew has increased from 75% in 2013 to 81% in 2019 among surveyed stores near 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.

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 the availability and marketing of 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.

“Our community’s youth are still surrounded by unhealthy choices and messages in the retail environment, especially flavored tobacco products including e-cigarettes,” said Michelle House, Health Program Supervisor, Monterey County Health Department. “Electronic cigarettes are very appealing to youth who are more likely to initiate tobacco use with a flavored product.”

The survey found the following for Monterey County:

- A vast majority of stores (90%) also sold menthol cigarettes.
- Twice the percentage of stores in Monterey County sold flavored tobacco products (90%) than sold fresh fruits and vegetables (43%).
- More than 40% of surveyed stores in Monterey County advertised sugary drinks at the storefront. California teens consume the equivalent of 39 pounds of sugar each year from sugary drinks.
- Most surveyed stores that sold alcohol sold alcopops (79%). These are alcoholic beverages that come in sweet and fruity flavors that can be appealing to kids.
- 86% of surveyed stores sold condoms, but only 31% sold them on unlocked shelves that provide a stress-free environment when purchasing them. This is significant, as Monterey County rates of gonorrhea have increased by 40 percent since 2014 and chlamydia rates increased 28 percent.

“The continued and growing availability of flavored tobacco products are of particular concern as four out of five youth who have used tobacco started with a flavored product,” said Michelle House. “Monterey County Health Department is committed to continuing to work with the community to help our stores offer healthier options to our communities.”

The HSHC campaign is a statewide collaboration between tobacco, alcohol and 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 HSHC, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.



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