

## Illegal Sales to Minors

### Discussion Guide for Focus Groups with Retailers

#### 1. Introduction (5–10 minutes)

##### Introduce yourself and purpose of the discussion:

- Here to discuss ideas about sales in your stores...not to sell products.
- Specifically, we're talking with store owner/managers about alcohol, tobacco and snack food sold in your stores. But, you will **NOT** be asked to disclose confidential information about your store's involvement with vendors.
- Your participation is voluntary and you can decline to answer any question for any reason. There are no risks associated with the study or benefits expected as a result of this study. Your responses will be confidential and will not be used in any marketing or sale of products.
- We will be audio (or video) taping the group.

##### Ground rules:

- No wrong answers
- Everyone's opinion is important
- Everyone is to talk, but not at one time
- Type of store will be in report, but not name of respondent or specific store

##### Introduction of group members:

- First name only and type of store
- Owner or manager
- Number of years worked in retail

#### 2. Barriers to Eliminating Sales to Minors Warm-Up (10–12 minutes)

First, could you tell me briefly about your store and what kind of community it serves—retirees, tourists, families, young kids, mixture, business folks, etc.?

Is your business mostly food? Liquor? Tobacco?

Okay, let's talk just for a minute about the cigarettes and chewing tobacco sales in your store. What kinds of problems do you face with cigarette sales to minors? That is, on a day-to-day basis, what types of things make it hard to prevent sales to minors?

Do you have problems, such as...?

- Intimidating/aggressive minors?
- It's hard to tell their age?

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- It's hard to calculate the math to determine their age?
- Fake IDs?
- Pressure from tobacco reps? What kind?
- Clerk training? Clerk turnover?

Would you say your tobacco sales have increased or decreased over the past year?

On average, what percentage of your annual volume is directly related to the sale of tobacco products? I'm not asking you for total sales or sales volume, just the percentage of the whole.

### 3. Clerk Training/Usual Store Practices (10–15 minutes)

Now, let's talk about the clerks in your store and some of the policies in your store.

What kind of training is in place for clerks regarding the sale of tobacco products to minors? (A lecture? Video? Brochure? Calendar to check IDs? Calculator to check IDs?)

Would any of these things be useful? Why? Why not?

Please tell me a little bit about what you discuss in the training of your clerks (such as, carding anyone who looks under 30, etc.)

What kinds of tobacco-related trainings have you been to? A "We Card" training?

Were these useful? Why? Why not? Who put them on?

What kinds of signs are posted for tobacco sales? Any "We Card" signs?

Does your store use scanners at check out counters? If so, are the scanners set to require an ID check at the time of a tobacco purchase? Do you think this is/would be an effective way to reduce tobacco sales to minors?

What are your store policies regarding self-service tobacco displays?

### 4. Laws Affecting Tobacco Sales to Minors (12–20 minutes)

What county or city ordinances/laws are in place that affect tobacco sales to minors? (Samples: prohibiting self-service tobacco displays, conditional use permits (CUPs) or licensure laws)

What about fines—are you aware of any? For the store? For the clerks? For the minors?

How do you generally learn about new laws that impact the retail sale of tobacco?

What would be the easiest way for you to learn about new laws that impact you and your store?

- Direct mail brochure (From who: health department, attorney general, city administrator, local law enforcement?)
- Web site
- Training video or CD-ROM

## 5. Assistance for Reducing Tobacco Sales to Minors (12–15 minutes)

Thinking about what you said earlier about the problems faced in your stores and the laws we just discussed, what do you think could be done to make it easier for clerks not to sell tobacco products to youth?

What types of materials or tools do you think would assist clerks in eliminating illegal tobacco sales to minors?

What kind of signs can be produced to assist in getting the message across to clerks in your stores? What type of content do you think would have the greatest impact? What if they were to focus on laws, fines, health messages, etc?

Do you prefer signs that speak to the health issues of smoking? Do you prefer messages that mention penalties for selling tobacco to a minor? Or signs with images of disfigured smokers, etc.? (shock value?)

Which would be more effective—signs for break rooms or employee areas or signs for the public to remind them of the law and support you in your action in not selling tobacco to minors?

On the other side of the counter, what kind of signs would help deter youth from trying to purchase tobacco products from you?

Would you be willing to post “health promoting” posters to dissuade youth from trying to buy tobacco products? Such as a poster with the message, “400,000 people die from tobacco use every year—don’t be one of them”? Other ideas?

Would it be useful to have some of these health-promoting messages available in small items, such as penny cups, clocks, or pull/push door signs? What if these items replaced similar tobacco industry items?

Would it be useful to remind clerks about the laws in employee paycheck stuffers?

Should these and other materials be in multiple languages?

## 6. License (5 minutes)

If retailers were to be licensed to sell tobacco (as they are for alcohol), do you think it would help control sales to minors? Okay, but if it were instituted, what kind of fee do you feel would be reasonable?

- Flat fee
- Fee based on volume of sales
- Fee based on geographical location (e.g., stores closer to youth sensitive areas [near schools] would have a higher fee)

How much would you expect this annual fee to be? In comparison to other business license fees you pay, do you feel that a fee of \$50, \$100, or \$500 is unreasonable?

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Does your store have regular patrons, or is it a place where patrons regularly see, recognize or greet each other. For example, do you talk with your regular customers about things that are happening in the neighborhood or news of the day?

Do you think your store plays an important role or provides an important service for the neighborhood? What would that be?

If some of your regular customers or people from the neighborhood came to you with concerns about what was happening in your store (selling liquor, tobacco, adult magazines to underage buyers) how important would that be and what would you be likely to do in response?

How close do you live to your store?

**8. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)**

This is what I heard.... Does that sound about right?

What one thing would you \_\_\_\_\_? (This question could change depending upon the group, or if there is ONE main thing you'd like to know, etc.)

**Thank you for participating.**

**We appreciate the insights you provided on these topics.**