

California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section

2004 California Youth Tobacco Purchase Survey

Executive Summary

Background

The California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section (CDHS/TCS) conducts an annual Youth Tobacco Purchase Survey (YTPS) to determine California's illegal tobacco sales rate to youth, as required by the federal Synar Amendment¹ and the Stop Tobacco Access to Kids Enforcement (STAKE) Act.² CDHS/TCS reports this data every year to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services administration (SAMHSA) via the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

The Synar Amendment requires all states to: 1) enact and vigorously enforce laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors; 2) conduct annual scientific random inspections to assess the illegal sales rate; and 3) report progress to SAMHSA. States that fail to maintain an illegal sales rate no higher than 20 percent risk a penalty withholding of up to 40 percent of block grant funds for alcohol and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. For California, this is equivalent to more than \$100 million for local community programs.

The 2004 YTPS was conducted in March through June by the Behavioral Health Institute of the San Diego State University Foundation, a contractor of CDHS/TCS. Youth participants (45.2% of which were 15 year-olds, 54.8% were 16 year olds) were trained and ethnically matched to sampled neighborhoods, and a consummated "actual buy" protocol was used. One purchase was made per store, and seven hundred and twenty-five (725) stores were surveyed.

Survey Findings

- The illegal tobacco sales rate to youth increased from 12.2 percent in 2003 to 14.0 percent in 2004 (non-statistically significant increase).
- Deli, meat and produce markets had the highest illegal sales rate at 31.5 percent in 2004, followed by "other" types of stores, such as discount "dollar stores", gift stores, and doughnut shops, at 23.7 percent. Drugstores and pharmacies sold the next highest at 18.1 percent.
- Small grocery and convenience stores sold at the lowest rate of 7.3 percent.
- The presence of STAKE Act mandated age-of-sale warning signs increased marginally from 50.4% in 2003 to 50.7% in 2004.

¹ Federal 1992 Synar Amendment (Section 1926, Federal Public Health Act 1992).

² Business and Professions Code Section 22950-22963 prohibits the selling or giving of tobacco products to minors, and requires retailers to check the ID of youthful-looking tobacco purchasers and post age-of-sale warning signs, with specified language, at all points of purchase. Also see Penal Code 308(a).