

Youth Access to Tobacco Facts and Figures

How does your city measure up?

Why it's important to stop kids from using tobacco

- Initial use of tobacco occurs almost exclusively during the teen years. Almost all adult tobacco users report initiating tobacco use before they were legally allowed to buy it. ¹
- The earlier children smoke, the more likely they are to become heavily addicted and the harder it is for them to quit. In as little as 2 weeks of use, nicotine changes brain chemistry and addiction sets in. ²
- Tobacco use is associated with alcohol and illicit drug use. People who start smoking as children are almost four times as likely to be regular users of an illicit drug as those who do not smoke as children. ³
- One of three teens who currently smoke will die prematurely of a tobacco-related disease. ⁴
- Although California has one of the lowest youth smoking rates in the nation, approximately 18.9% of Solano middle and high school youth are current smokers (2001). The state rate of youth smokers is 16%.⁵

Why it's important to enforce PC308(a)

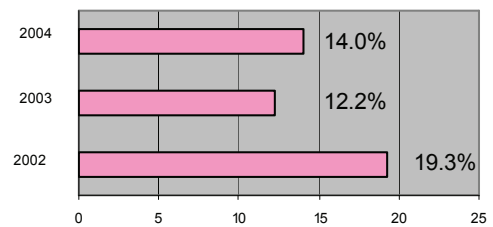
- While the vast majority of kids in a 1992 survey received their first cigarette for free from friends or others, typically at age 12, 50% had purchased their own cigarettes within 10 weeks of their first puff. Studies indicate that only 5% of young smokers steal cigarettes. ⁶
- 96% of Californians agree that communities should enforce laws that prevent tobacco sales to minors. 64% of Solano County adults think the laws banning the sale of tobacco products to minors have not been adequately enforced. (1999) ⁷
- Only 35% of Solano youth feel that the police work with youth in their community to try to catch storeowners who sell cigarettes to minors (1999). ⁸
- Numerous studies have shown that making cigarettes as inconvenient, expensive, and difficult for kids to obtain as possible not only reduces the number of kids who try smoking or regularly smoke, but also reduces the number of cigarettes consumed by kids who do smoke. ⁹
- Eliminating tobacco sales to teens will interrupt and break the chain of progressive addiction, in which a teen progresses from experimenting with tobacco to becoming an addicted lifelong smoker. ¹⁰

LOCAL DATA ON TOBACCO SALES TO YOUTH

STAKE Act investigations in Solano County showed a countywide illegal tobacco sales rate of 23.8% in 2002 and 24% in 2003. Stores in Vacaville may or may not have been part of this non-random survey.

The Tobacco Prevention and Education Program conducted a Youth Purchase Survey in Vacaville during the fall of 2004. Of the 20 stores visited, 3 (15%) illegally sold tobacco to minors.

State Illegal Tobacco Sales Rate (Percent)*



*Youth Purchase Survey

According to data obtained during an interview with Police Department staff, no sting operations were conducted in Vacaville in 2002, 2003, or 2004.

VACAVILLE

PC308(a) says:

- No person, business, firm, or corporation can knowingly sell, give, or in any way furnish tobacco products (including paraphernalia designed for smoking or ingesting tobacco) to a person who is under the age of 18.
- A person who violates the law is subject to either a criminal action for a misdemeanor or a civil action punishable by a fine of \$200 for the first offense.
- Tobacco retailers are required to ask for proof of age (evidence of majority) in the form of a document issued by a federal, state, county, municipal government, or a branch of the military. Failure to examine the identification for validity and proof of age is a violation of PC308(a).

Who is cited for the violation:

- The clerk who sold the tobacco product and owner of the establishment may both be issued a misdemeanor citation under the law.
- The owner does not need to be present to be cited, but it must be proved that the owner had knowledge that his or her employees sell tobacco to minors.

The Money Factor:

A federal law known as the Synar Amendment requires states to enact and enforce laws that make it illegal to sell tobacco to minors. States must also reduce the illegal tobacco sales rate to no more than 20% and conduct random scientific surveys to assess compliance with youth access laws. Up to 40% of the state's block grant funds may be withheld if the illegal sales rate rises above 20%. In California, this amounts to \$100 million. **Solano County could lose approximately \$1 million in funds for drug and alcohol treatment programs.** In 2001, California's illegal sales rate was 19.3%.

Sources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1994.
2. *Addictive Behavior*, 1991; *Tobacco Control*, 2002.
3. Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 1994.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996.
5. 2002 National Youth Tobacco Survey—California; 2001 California Student Tobacco Survey, California Dept. of Health Services.
6. J.R. DiFranza, 1994; 1999 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, Florida Dept. of Health.
7. 1999 and 2001 California Tobacco Survey.
8. 2001 California Tobacco Survey.
9. "Where Do Youth Smokers Get Their Cigarettes?", Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (see article's citation #13).
10. *Addictive Behaviors*, 1992.

*Data Collection Methods

Youth Purchase Surveys: The Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) conducts periodic surveys of randomly selected tobacco retailers to measure their compliance with PC308(a). TPEP collected the most recent survey data June through November 2004 in the cities of Dixon, Rio Vista, Vacaville, Fairfield, and Suisun. California DHS also conducts Youth Purchase Surveys as mandated by the Synar amendment.

STAKE Act Investigations are conducted under the auspices of the Department of Health Services, Food and Drug Branch (FDB) throughout the state in response to complaints about illegal tobacco sales to youth. FDB assesses fines and visits stores that were previously fined. FDB data cannot be considered a random sample or used as data indicative of the illegal sales rate for a city or county as a whole.

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