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Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

March 8, 2017

Humboldt County challenges highlighted in state health survey

Today, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released the results of its Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community survey which shows that Humboldt County youth have more access to unhealthy products than the state average.

The survey covers the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco. One striking finding: the research shows the county experienced an 87 percent increase in the availability of e-cigarettes over the past three years.

Research for the statewide report was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 California stores. The study included pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores as well as tobacco-only stores. In Humboldt County, 70 stores were surveyed.

The research revealed that in Humboldt:

- Eighty percent of stores sell "little cigars" or cigarillos in addition to cigarettes, and all of those stores sold cigarillos for under \$1.
- Only 34 percent of stores sell fresh fruits or vegetables.
- Thirty-one percent of stores sell non- or low-fat milk, but 85 percent sell alcohol.

"The expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern," said Jay McCubbrey, PhD said, who works with the Tobacco-Free Humboldt program. "We believe it represents a spike in use by teens and young adults."

Another goal of the survey was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. The study found that in Humboldt County:

- Sixty-two percent of stores that sell alcohol placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.
- None of the sampled stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 61 percent of the storefronts advertised unhealthy products, including 67 percent of stores near schools.
- Alcopops (flavored alcoholic beverages) are sold at 77 percent of stores, significantly higher than the statewide average of 48 percent.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Donald Baird. “Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options.”

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and STD prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For more Humboldt County results and information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.

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