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Density of Tobacco Retailers Fact Sheet

Overview: Proximity and density of tobacco retailers within communities influences smoking behaviors through greater exposure to tobacco advertisements and increased availability of tobacco price promotions at the point of sale.¹⁻⁶ Higher density of tobacco retailers within a community discourages quit attempts by triggering real-time cravings; providing cues to smoke; and promoting impulse purchase of tobacco products, especially discounted products.^{2,5,7-9} Adopting and/or amending local tobacco retailer licensing ordinances to include zoning and conditional use permits can reduce the density of tobacco stores near schools, youth sensitive areas, and residential areas.

Density of Tobacco Retailers

- Managing the density of tobacco retailers is an important component to comprehensive tobacco use prevention and control strategy.¹
 - Tobacco retailers are less likely to request identification or enforce state laws on the sale of tobacco products to young people (13-18 years of age) in areas with a higher density of tobacco retailers.¹⁰
 - Higher density of tobacco retailers in a community is associated with increased susceptibility of non-smokers starting to smoke in the future.¹¹
 - The price of tobacco products is lower in communities with a higher density of tobacco retailers and shorter travel time to tobacco retail outlets.¹²
 - Higher density of tobacco retailers within communities increases exposure to tobacco product advertisement and access to discounted tobacco products.^{1,13,14}
- In the United States, the number of tobacco retailers is disproportionately high, considering the consumer demand for tobacco products.¹⁵
 - For every 10,000 consumers in California, there are approximately 96 tobacco retailers.¹⁵
- Tobacco retailers are more prevalent in low-income communities and communities with a large proportion of Hispanic; foreign-born residents; African American; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) populations.^{1,13,14,16}



California Tobacco Control Program
Density of Tobacco Retailers Fact Sheet

Impact of Tobacco Retailer Density on Tobacco Use

- Higher density of tobacco retailers per area or population:
 - Is associated with higher prevalence of smoking,^{4,10,12,16-21} increased cigarette purchases,²² and reduced smoking cessation over time.^{2,3}
 - Middle school youth exposed to tobacco products in a retail setting multiple times per week are twice as likely to ever smoke or start smoking within 12 months of a visit to the store, compared to those with less retail exposure to tobacco products.²³
 - Increased density of tobacco retailers within one mile of schools increases the likelihood that youth will purchase cigarettes from tobacco retailers rather than getting tobacco products from social sources.²²
 - Higher density of tobacco retailers within three-quarters to one mile of a young person's home is associated with greater access and exposure to tobacco products and advertising and increased frequency of smoking.²⁴
 - Higher density of tobacco retailers around an individual's home increased the odds of ever smoking by 53 percent and current smoking by 47 percent.²¹
 - Increases access to tobacco products and renormalizes smoking behavior.²¹
 - Increases exposure to retail advertisements and promotions and discourages quit attempts by triggering real-time cravings, cues to smoke, and promoting the impulse purchase of tobacco products.^{5,7-9}
 - Increases resident access to tobacco products, while reducing the distance to obtain tobacco products and the price of tobacco products.^{12,24}

Strategies to Influence Tobacco Retailer Density

- Adopting local tobacco retailer license (TRL) ordinances that are more restrictive than state law:
 - Are effective policy methods for prohibiting and/or restricting the underage tobacco product sales, reducing the point of sale marketing of tobacco products to young people, reducing the rate of tobacco initiation among young people, and reducing consumption of tobacco products among adults.²⁵
 - Should include fees to support enforcement of TRLs at the local level.
 - Can restrict use of coupons, regulate placement of tobacco products and advertisements, and control the location and the density of tobacco retailers with a community.^{25,26}
 - In California, as of June 2016, 126 municipalities have ordinances requiring businesses that sell tobacco to obtain a local TRL.²⁷

California Tobacco Control Program
Density of Tobacco Retailers Fact Sheet

- Adopting zoning laws or conditional use permits (CUP) can reduce or limit the number of tobacco retailers within a community.
 - Federal, state, and local governments can adopt zoning laws to regulate how land and property is used.²⁵
 - Zoning laws typically specify the areas in which residential, industrial, recreational, or commercial activities may take place.²⁵
 - A CUP is a type of zoning law that adds certain conditions to the use of land, even if that use is consistent with existing zoning laws.²⁵
- In California, nearly 60 municipalities have adopted local tobacco zoning or CUP ordinances that do one or more of the following: 1) prohibit the sale of tobacco products within a certain distance from schools, 2) prohibit tobacco retailers from being within a specified distance from other tobacco retailers, and 3) limit the number of tobacco retailers within a community.²⁸

California Tobacco Control Program
Density of Tobacco Retailers Fact Sheet

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California Tobacco Control Program
Density of Tobacco Retailers Fact Sheet

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