



Get Healthy Philly Initiative: Tobacco Youth Sales

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) recently launched the *Get Healthy Philly* Tobacco Initiative to improve the health and well-being of Philadelphians through policy, systems and environmental change. Limiting the sale of tobacco products to youth by enhancing laws and regulations to restrict access to tobacco products is a major component of this initiative. This will be accomplished through educating merchants that selling to persons under the age of 18 is illegal, innovative enforcement of the youth sales law, and potential zoning restrictions on new tobacco retailers in close proximity to schools. Over the next two years, PDPH strives to reduce the illegal youth sales rate from 20% to 15% citywide as an effort to protect youth from the long-term and short-term health and economic consequences of smoking.

The Challenge

- ❖ Over 1 in 3 youth between the ages of 10-17 can illegally buy tobacco products on their own, which is the highest rate among the six largest U.S. cities.¹
- ❖ Local year-round sales investigations reveal that 1 in 5 tobacco retailers in the City sell cigarettes illegally to youth.
- ❖ In recent years, illegal sales rates have been as high as 40% in certain parts of Philadelphia.
- ❖ Of all of the tobacco retailers in Philadelphia who illegally sell to youth, nearly 4 in 10 are located within 500 feet of a school.

The Action Plan

- ❖ Educate merchants and the public about youth sales laws.
- ❖ Promote the use of 1-888-99-SMOKE to anonymously report suspected youth sales.
- ❖ Provide face-to-face education to merchants who violate the youth sales laws within 30-days of a violation.
- ❖ Limit youth access to tobacco products by:
 - Restricting establishment of new tobacco retailers near schools,
 - Increasing fines and penalties to retailers who sell illegally to youth through legislative action,
 - Issuing citations to merchant violators soon after the violation.
- ❖ Educate Administrative Review, Law and Finance Department staff that oversee appeal hearings on the public health consequences of tobacco sales to youth.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007.