



Clallam County Department of Health and Human Services

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PORT ANGELES, Wash. – More than 40 percent of Clallam County’s tobacco retailers illegally sold to minors in 2015, according to the annual Synar Report. Non-compliance rates rose statewide but Clallam County was significantly worse than the state average of 17 percent.

“It is unacceptable that we have 4 out of every 10 retailers illegally selling tobacco products to minors,” said Clallam County Health Officer Dr. Christopher Frank. “Nicotine is highly addictive and selling tobacco to youth is setting them up for a lifetime of poor health.” Almost 9 out of 10 people who smoke start by age 18, and tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in Washington State and Clallam County.

The Synar Report is the result of federal legislation that requires states to enact and enforce laws to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to minors. Working with local law enforcement, the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board conducts compliance checks using underage teens who attempt to buy tobacco products at licensed tobacco retailers. The reported non-compliance rate is the proportion of retailers who allow the teenager to purchase a tobacco product.

“Retailers who are allowing this to happen in their businesses need to take a hard look in the mirror and put systems in place to prevent tobacco sales to minors,” said Dr. Frank. “As most tobacco users will tell you, it is extremely difficult to stop smoking once you start.”

Retailer education was managed by local public health until 2009 when funding for tobacco prevention in Clallam County was cut. Clallam County Health and Human Services will notify local tobacco retailers in the coming weeks to help make them aware of these recent findings and encourage them to help prevent illegal sales to minors. The Clallam County Board of Health is also exploring cost-effective ways of addressing this problem. Active enforcement of tobacco regulations has been shown to be effective at preventing illegal sales.

While official youth checks determine the rate of illegal sales, anyone can report a violation on the state Liquor and Cannabis Board website.

If you already smoke there are many resources available to help you quit. A good place to start is the Washington State Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

For more information on tobacco use in Washington State visit the Department of Health website (doh.wa.gov).