

Kittitas County Tobacco Prevention & Control Program

- SYNAR TOBACCO COMPLIANCE CHECKS -

What in the world is "Synar"?

Named for its sponsor, Congressman Mike Synar of Oklahoma, the Synar Regulation requires states to enact and enforce laws prohibiting any manufacturer, retailer, or distributor from selling or distributing tobacco products to individuals under the age of 18. Every February, the local Tobacco Prevention and Control Program receives a list from the state Department of Health of randomly selected tobacco retailers we are required to visit.

Compliance Checks are "imperative to effectively reduce the sale, distribution, and availability of tobacco products to minors" (RCW 70.155.005) and rates are tied to funding received by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health.



Mike Synar (left)

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COMPLIANCE CHECKS 2010

Our annual Synar Compliance checklist included 30 locations. However, some locations go out of business or stop selling tobacco. We do not ask youth operatives to enter establishments that require membership. In 2010, we visited 19 locations.

Compliance Check Rates 2010:
89% of Kittitas County Retailers checked during Synar compliance checks were compliant with the law.
11% were not compliant and sold cigarettes to youth.

YOUTH OPERATIVES

Youth operatives are volunteers from the community who are between the ages of 15 and 17. Each youth operative must have a signed consent form, proof of age, and completed training with the local Tobacco Prevention and Control program prior to conducting checks. The training includes the following information:

- Dress normally. Do not attempt to make yourself look older.
- You must have your ID on you during compliance checks.
- Only carry the cash provided for the compliance check and his/her ID.
- Go directly to the counter and return directly to the automobile. Never reenter the store.
- Ask for a specific brand name. We suggest asking for Marlboro, Camel, or Newport. (About 86% of teen smokers who buy their own cigarettes buy either Marlboro, Camel, or Newport—the three most heavily advertised brands.)
- Always tell the truth. If asked about your age, always answer your correct age.
- Never enter a location where you feel unsafe or attempt a purchase in a place where you feel unsafe.
- Do not attempt to purchase tobacco from someone you know.



SPIT TOBACCO NOT INCLUDED IN SYNAR COMPLIANCE

Budget reductions to the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program has resulted in cutting other compliance checks in the county. During Synar Compliance checks, youth must ask for cigarettes only.

With almost double the state average for spit tobacco use in Kittitas County among 12th graders (HYS), where are the youth getting the spit tobacco?



INTERVIEW WITH AN EX-YOUTH OPERATIVE

How old were you when you completed compliance checks?

I was 15 when I started, because that was seven years ago. I think I did 'em until I was 17 or almost 17.

Tell us about your experiences doing compliance checks?

I was a little bit nervous at first. I thought I was gonna get in trouble and I felt like I was doing something bad. My chaperone reminded me that people aren't supposed to sell to minors. I didn't feel so nervous after the first couple of times.

My very first check in Easton, though, the lady sold to me. I heard that she felt really bad and started crying, because she thought she was gonna lose her job. I didn't feel bad though. I was 15. I was chubby faced and had pigtails. Who couldn't tell that I wasn't 18?

Did you know anyone in high school who smoked?

I knew a bunch of people that smoked. Classmates, not friends. Older siblings were buying 'em.

Do you think that the compliance checks were effective, since kids were getting them from siblings?

The first year more than half of the people sold to me. They sold to me less when I was 17. I felt like I was making a difference.

Do you think the tobacco compliance checks were a positive experience? If so, why?

It was a positive experience. I've always been anti-tobacco. It helped put more of an awareness out there not to sell to minors, double check IDs.



Tobacco Tax And Youth Smoking

“If prices were 10% higher, 12-17 incidence [youth smoking] would be 11.9% lower.”

~RJ Reynolds Executive DS Burrows~



Washington State now ranks 2nd in the United States for state cigarette excise tax. Currently in Washington state*:

- 50,800 high school students smoke.
- 6,600 kids become daily smokers every year.
- 7,600 deaths are caused by smoking each year.

A \$1.00 per pack cigarette tax increase will decrease youth smoking by 10.8%. This means that 700 kids won't start smoking every year in Washington.

For additional copies of this newsletter or for more information on the Kittitas County Tobacco Prevention and Control Program contact Kasey Knutson at (509) 962-7515.

We're on the web at <http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health/tobacco/>

*www.tobaccofreekids.org

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