Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community

Key Informant Interview

Report of Key Findings and Conclusions



Nevada County Department of Public Health,

Tobacco Prevention Program

Report Author: Lacy Arrowsmith, External Evaluator

**Method**

In coordination with the statewide Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community initiative, program staff conducted key informant interviews with Grass Valley community members and decision makers in November-December 2019 to asses support for retail polices and determine the barriers to regulating the retail environment. Key informants were asked a total of 14 questions; 2 questions were open-ended, 2 were multiple choice and 11 were “in favor/against” with a follow up question asking why the interviewee supports or doesn’t support the policies. The instrument was developed by the Tobacco Control Evaluation Center and modified to fit local data collection needs. Program staff analyzed the data using content analysis and descriptive statistics to identify common themes across open ended and “in favor/against” responses.

Key informants consisted of the Nevada County Behavioral Health Department Director, the Grass Valley Planning Commission Chairman, 1 store owner, 2 nurses and 1 community member (parent).

**Results**

Respondents were first asked whether they thought that chronic diseases were linked to the food, alcohol, condoms and tobacco products available in stores. Five out of the six interviews said yes, while the parent responded no. Those who responded yes talked about chronic diseases that specifically result from tobacco and alcohol use and poor diet. They also motioned food prices and how cheap food is often the most unhealthy. The parent who responded no talked about chronic disease resulting from consumer choice rather than a direct result of the products being offered.

Next, respondents were asked if they had any recommendations for how the community, especially retailers, can get more involved in supporting and promoting healthier living for Californians. Interviewees gave a variety of answers including lower prices on healthy foods, promoting and displaying healthy alternatives, advertise nutrition content, bigger product warnings, community gardens and education about healthy living.

* *“Grocery stores should offer more fresh foods for cheaper because I could buy a pizza for the family for $6, but a bag of oranges is $6 as well.”- Nevada County Parent*
* *“Raley’s labels food to help people make healthier choices. People know what they’re buying , it’s a reminder, a motivator.”*

The second section of the survey asked interviewees whether they would be in favor or against specific policies, mainly regarding tobacco, but also including alcohol and nutrition. Following their initial answer, the interviewer probed the interviewee to find out the reasoning behind their responses. See question by question results and key findings below.

***Question 4a. Would you be in favor or against a law that bans pharmacies from selling tobacco products?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q41** | **In favor** | **Against** |
| **Behavioral Health Director** | **x** |  |
| **Grass Valley Planning Commission Chairman** | **x** |  |
| **Store Owner** | **x** |  |
| **School counselor** | **x** |  |
| **Nurse** | **x** |  |
| **Parent** |  | **x** |

Five out of six of the respondents said they would support a law banning pharmacies from selling tobacco products. They talked about pharmacies being a place for healthy products and customers perceiving tobacco as healthy because its being sold in a pharmacy. The opponent of the policy felt that it wouldn’t have an effect on lowering tobacco use and would be pointless.

***Opposition***

* *“It won’t make a difference because if someone wants to smoke they are going to smoke. It won’t matter at all.” (parent)*

***Support***

* “*Pharmacies should not promote unhealthy things.”(nurse)*
* *“The perception of a healthy choice when selling tobacco doesn’t seem right.” (store owner)*

***Question 4d. Would you be in favor or against a law to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q4d** | **In favor** | **Against** |
| **Behavioral Health Director** | **x** |  |
| **Grass Valley Planning Commission Chairman** | **x** |  |
| **Store Owner** | **x** |  |
| **School counselor** | **x** |  |
| **Nurse** |  | **x** |
| **Parent** |  | **x** |

The majority of respondents said that they would support a law banning the sale of flavored tobacco products. They talked about a lack of research on the harmful effects of vaping and flavored products being enticing to youth. Arguments made against the policy included educating people and allowing them to make their own healthy decisions and flavored products not really tasting like the flavor being advertised. Comments indicate that leaders may support the policy, but more work will be needed to gain public support.

***Opposition***

* *“I think we should be educating people on the bad habits of tobacco. If we tell people they can’t smoke, they will do it anyway.”(nurse)*

***Support***

* *“ Not enough research on the effects of vaping. It’s hard to sell when we don’t know harmful effects.” (Behavioral Health Director)*
* *“ 100% in support, it targets youth.”(school counselor)*

***Question 4e. Would you be in favor or against a law that makes it illegal to sell small amounts of tobacco like single cigarillos, or other tobacco products in packs of one?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q4e** | **In favor** | **Against** |
| **Behavioral Health Director** |  |  |
| **Grass Valley Planning Commission Chairman** | **x** |  |
| **Store Owner** |  | **x** |
| **School counselor** |  | **x** |
| **Nurse** |  | **x** |
| **Parent** |  | **x** |

The majority of respondents said they would be against this type of policy. They talked about educating people and allowing them to make their own decisions, doubting whether the policy would actually lower smoking and freedom of choice for adults. The Behavioral Health Director was neither for nor against the policy and wondered whether making people buy more would actually contribute to them smoking more, but also noted that less packaging would be better for the environment. The one respondent who supported the policy didn’t provide any specific reasons.

***Opposition***

* *“If they are forced to buy more than the one in the pack then they are going to smoke more.” (parent)*
* *“I don’t think it would make them smoke less. Doesn’t stop them.” (store owner)*

***Question 4h. Would you be in favor or against a law to ban the sale of vaping devices?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q4h** | **In favor** | **Against** |
| **Behavioral Health Director** | **x** |  |
| **Grass Valley Planning Commission Chairman** |  | **x** |
| **Store Owner** |  |  |
| **School counselor** | **x** |  |
| **Nurse** |  | **x** |
| **Parent** |  | **x** |

Respondents were divided when it came to the vaping policy. Those against the policy talked about consumer choice and the potential for illegal “black market” sales of vaping devices. Supporters of the policy focused on a lack of research and safety concerns.

***Opposition***

* *“It is the consumers choice. They have to choose.”(parent)*
* *“People would be selling them on the black market.”*

***Support***

* *“There isn’t enough research to get behind the safety.”(Behavioral Health Director)*
* *“The vaping industry needs to be regulated.” (counselor)*

In the last section of the interview, respondents were presented with a multiple choice question and asked what type of advertisements should be allowed at stores.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Behavioral Health Director** | **Planning Commission Chairman** | **Store Owner** | **School Counselor** | **Nurse** | **Parent** |
| 1. **Allowed anywhere**
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Allowed only on the inside of the storefront**
 |  | **x** | **x** |  |  | **x** |
| 1. **Limited to a small percentage of storefront windows**
 |  |  |  |  |  | **x** |
| 1. **Allowed but only in places hard for children to see**
 |  | **x** |  | **x** |  |  |
| 1. **Not allowed at all**
 | **x** |  |  |  | **x** |  |
| 1. **Don’t know**
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

All six respondents felt that there should be some restrictions on where products can be advertised at stores. The Behavioral Health Director and the nurse both said that advertisements should not be allowed at all. Three respondents said that they should be allowed only on the inside of the storefront windows, while two said that they should be allowed, but only in places hard for children to see.

The final question asked interviewees to share their opinion about the greatest barriers to regulating the retail environment regarding tobacco, alcohol, food and beverage sales and/ or advertising. Interviewees gave a variety of responses.

* *Healthy food is more expensive. A consumer can buy a bag of oranges for the same price as a frozen pizza; the pizza is dinner for the whole family.*
* *Money incentives- Retailers make a profit from selling unhealthy products.*
* *Capitalism- too much reward for doing the bad thing, less reward for good.*
* *Nevada state is so close and consumers will buy their products outside of the Truckee area, therefore regulations need to be at the federal level to make it fair for all businesses.*

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, support for retail policies was mixed among the six interviewees. The two policies with the most support include a ban on tobacco sales in pharmacies and a ban on flavored tobacco products. When asked about polices surrounding minimum packaging restrictions and a ban on vaping devices, the majority of respondents said that they would not support these policies. All interviewees believe that advertising in the retail environment should be limited in some way, but there was disagreement over the stringency of the regulations.

Common reasons given in opposition to the polices included consumer rights and freedom of choice, disbelief in the efficacy of the policy, and fear that banned products will be obtained illegally. Reasons given in support of the policies commonly included lack of existing regulation, lack of research on harmful effects of vaping products and extreme youth appeal. When asked about the barriers to regulating the retail environment, interviewees talked mainly about financial concerns, such as healthy food being more expensive and retailers making money by selling unhealthy products.

Program staff should consider focusing future policy efforts on tobacco free pharmacies, as it may be easy to gain and demonstrate public and decision maker support for this type of policy. Approaching decision makers with information about pharmacy chains and jurisdictions that have successfully implemented this type of policy could be an effective strategy. More education is needed to raise awareness about vaping, specifically youth use, local availability and product safety. There was some confusion surrounding minimum packaging, therefore education materials should clearly explain how the cheap price of singles makes them more accessible and appealing to youth. Educating the public and decision makers about aggressive tobacco marketing strategies aimed at youth could increase support for more broad advertising restrictions.