



A Program of
**YOUTH
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE**



Flavor Ban Across Central Valley Communities

(Fresno, Kerman, Selma, Unincorporated Madera County, Unincorporated Tulare County)

1-E-3 Final Evaluation Report 2019-2024

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The Mobilizing for Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) would like to thank the youth coalition members for their continued support and work to improve the health and wellbeing of all Central Valley residents. Program staff would also like to recognize policy champions Fresno County Department of Public Health, Madera County Department of Public Health, Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Equality California, American Cancer Society – Cancer Action Network, Fresno Street Saints, Madera Unified School District, and many more.

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Abstract

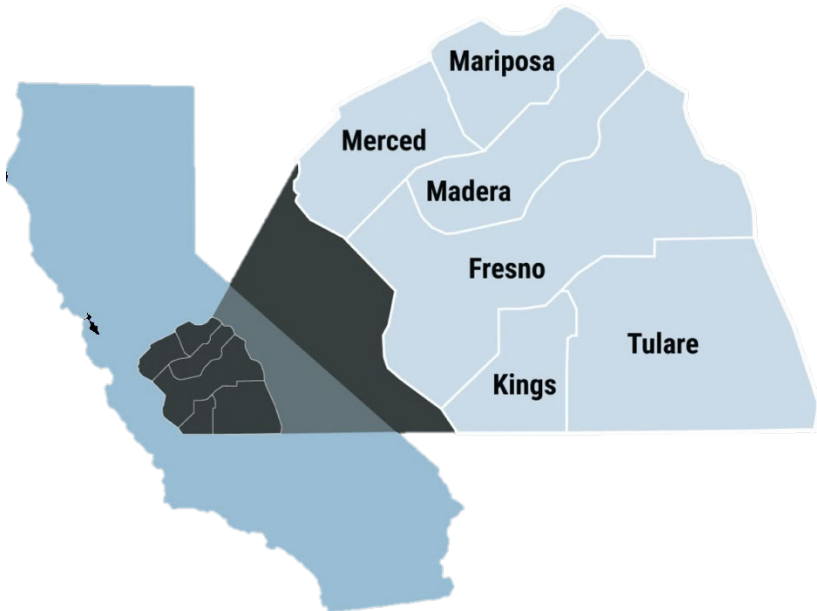
The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) is a non-profit in California that has paved the way for young people to advocate for social justice. In 2017, the YLI – Fresno chapter established the Mobilizing Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) which seeks to engage local youth to reduce tobacco related health issues that deeply impact the African American and communities of color. Between 2019 – 2022, MYNT youth coalition members and their adult allies championed for a menthol and flavor ban that was successfully passed by voters in all of California and took effect in January 2023. From that time, MYNT has led efforts in the City of Madera to evaluate enforcement activities at local tobacco retailer shops, revealing that some districts were not in compliance with the new law. MYNT coalition members also continue to build momentum in the local communities of Fresno and Madera County to pass comprehensive tobacco control ordinances which would limit youth access to tobacco. As a longtime advocate for equity, YLI will continue to involve youth in training and educational outreach events to better inform the community of the negative influences of Big Tobacco.

Aim and Outcome

To limit youth access to flavored tobacco products, the Youth Leadership Institute's MYNT Program set the following objective:

By February 29, 2024, at least 3 jurisdictions in the Central Valley (e.g., Fresno, Kerman, Selma, Unincorporated Madera County, Unincorporated Tulare County) will adopt a policy to eliminate the sale and distribution of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol to reduce tobacco-related health disparities among people who are African American/ Black in the Central Valley Region.

By the end of project year 3 (November, 2022), the objective was partially met: On November 8, 2022, California voters upheld the state law, SB 793, prohibiting a tobacco retailer, or any of the tobacco retailer's agents or employees, from selling, offering for sale, or possessing with the intent to sell or offer for sale, most flavored tobacco products including flavored e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes, as well as tobacco product flavor enhancers in retail locations. On October 7, 2023, Governor Newsom signed into law AB 935, strengthening the enforcement of the flavored tobacco retail law and broadening the definition of a retail location.



Background

The mission of Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) is to build communities where youth and their adult allies come together to create positive social change. For 27 years, YLI's work has been based in the conviction that, if we invest in young people and help them uncover their authentic leadership style, the entire community will prosper as a result. This work has resulted in 120 concrete policy reforms across the state, the formation of numerous youth advisory bodies that give young people a permanent voice in policy making, and generations of civically engaged Californians.

Since its founding in San Francisco in 1991, YLI has sparked the leadership of more than 90,000 young people to solve pressing social issues and serve their communities. Across 70 cohorts throughout California, YLI reaches 1,700 youth leaders ages 12-26 each week, 90% of whom are youth of color, and 67% of whom qualify as low income. 9% of YLI youth identify as African American/Black, and another 10% identify as multi-racial; YLI has served this population since its founding. With seven offices throughout California in Fresno, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Riverside, San Mateo, and San

Francisco Counties, YLI has long been established as one of the premier youth development agencies in the state. YLI recently merged with YouthWire, acquiring its two Southern California offices (Long Beach and Eastern Coachella Valley), as well as its deep expertise in digital strategies and youth media.

YLI has particularly strong experience in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) prevention, which has been at the heart of YLI's work throughout its 27-year history. For nearly three decades, YLI has designed, implemented, and evaluated programs and other initiatives that engage youth, families, schools, and communities to prevent ATOD use. YLI is a nationally recognized expert in environmental prevention, with particular emphasis on school- and community-based youth-adult partnerships to reduce tobacco access and availability.

Smoking is the single greatest avoidable cause of disease and death in the United States.¹ Exposure of adults to secondhand smoke (SHS) can have immediate adverse effects and can cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer.¹ The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to SHS.¹ Exposure to SHS can have immediate health consequences to children, including eye, nose, and throat irritation, and can cause asthma attacks and breathing problems for people with chronic lung disease.² Also, children exposed to SHS are more likely to suffer from bronchitis, asthma attacks, eye irritation, coughing, ear infections, pneumonia, and colds.³ However, tobacco related health disparities among people who are African American/Black continue to be an issue in many Central Valley communities.

In 2021, an estimated 8.2% of non-Hispanic Black youth currently used any tobacco product, compared with 11.0% of non-Hispanic White youth and estimated 3.1% of non-Hispanic Black youth currently used cigars, compared with 1.4% of non-Hispanic White youth.⁴ Despite starting to smoke cigarettes later in life, African American people are more likely to die from smoking-related diseases (e.g. heart disease, diabetes) than Hispanic people and Non-Hispanic, White people.⁵ Products like the use of electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDD) and flavored tobacco products pose a new threat to youth as well. Whereas the side effects electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDD) among youth has become a growing concern as well, the long-term risks associated with ENDD use is not currently known. However, flavor products are attractive youth and are known to promote youth tobacco experimentation.⁶ It is important for youth in diverse racial and ethnic groups to be educated and become advocates for their communities as they may more commonly experience biased structural practices and social conditions, discrimination, poverty, and stress, which can increase commercial tobacco use. ⁷ The work of MYNT youth coalition members and their adult allies serves as a prime example of youth led efforts to advocate for local health equity and social justice in marginalized communities.

Evaluation Methods and Design

The theory of change for this project was the diffusion theory whereas MYNT sought to work with communities who were ready to adopt tobacco control policies and would then work with other communities to adopt more policies, modeling the example of the first community. The evaluation design is a non-experimental, adoption and implementation study of evaluating the effectiveness of SB793 in the championing for a comprehensive tobacco retail ordinance in the city of Madera. The evaluation plan includes both process and outcome objectives and includes qualitative and quantitative data that informed intervention strategies and activities throughout the grant period. The intervention plan focused on the adoption of a legislated flavor ban and included two process

evaluation activities and two outcome evaluation activities. Process data was collected from a total of four evaluation activities. Program staff conducted a Public Opinion Poll in year 2 to measure current knowledge, attitudes, and level of support for laws that stop the advertising, discounting and selling of menthol and flavored smoking products. A Media Activity Record and a post SB793 Key Informant Interviews with tobacco retailers was also completed in year 4. Finally, a post policy implementation observation survey was completed in year 5. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency counts; qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. Process evaluation activities, including a Public Opinion Poll, provided information on public opinions and awareness around policies to limit access to these products, while the Media Activity Record documented the type of local media coverage following the passing of proposition 31 and retailer's hesitancy with the law and policy enforcement barriers and challenges and support of TRL. Table 1 provides detailed information on the key process and outcome evaluation activities.

Limitations

The major limitations in the evaluation design are: 1) Public Opinion Poll results, based on a convenience sample, may not have accurately reflected the views of the wider community and ; 2) limited process evaluation activities completed to support definitive project success (Store observations, key informant interviews).

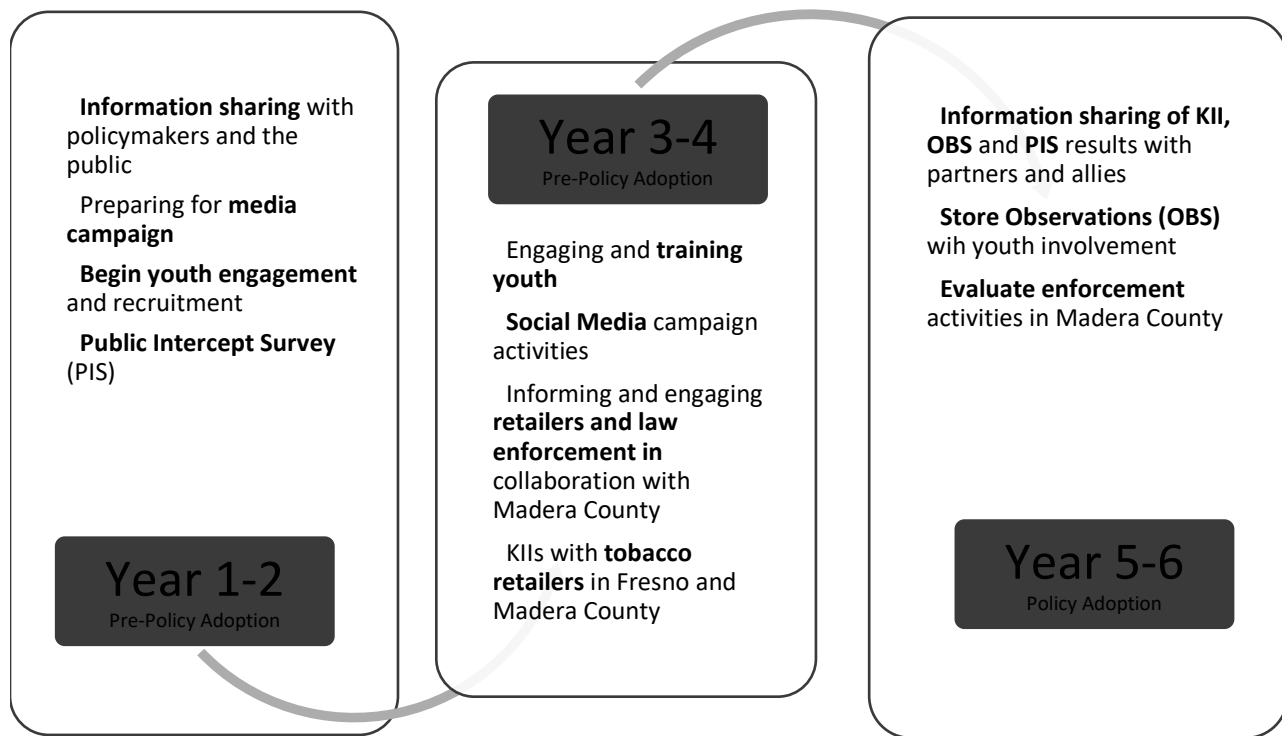
Table 1: Key Process and Outcome Evaluation Activities

Evaluation Activity	Purpose	Sample	Instrument Source	Analysis Method	Timing
Process					
1-E-4 Public Opinion Poll	Measure the level of public awareness around menthol and flavored tobacco products and support for flavor ban policies.	Convenience sample of 95 community members	Tobacco Control Evaluation Center	Qualitative Analysis / Quantitative Analysis	Year 3
1-E-6 Media Activity Record	To inform coalition members' and project staff about opportunities to engage the community and understand how tobacco control is being portrayed in local media.	Census of 4 print, radio and online media outlets in the area	Evaluation Consultant	Content analysis	Year 4
Outcome					
1-E-9 Tobacco retailer Key Informant Interviews	Measure the level of and challenges and barriers to SB793 implementation.	Sample of 11 tobacco retailers (9 from Fresno County and 2 from Madera County).	Evaluation Consultant	Qualitative Analysis	Year 5
Post SB793 Store Observation	Measure evidence of enforcement and the level of successful policy implementation in select Central Valley community.	Convenience sample of 15 Madera County stores that sell tobacco products	Evaluation Consultant	Qualitative Analysis / Quantitative Analysis	Year 5

Implementation and Results

Early intervention and evaluation activities conducted through years 1-6 determined the location, timing and strategies of future program efforts. Figure 1 provides an overview of the project timeline and includes key intervention and evaluation activities.

Figure 1: Key Intervention and Evaluation Activities in Chronological Order and Evaluation Activities in Chronological Order



*Evaluation activity that was part of a statewide data collection effort coordinated by the California Tobacco Control Program among all Local Lead Agencies in California.

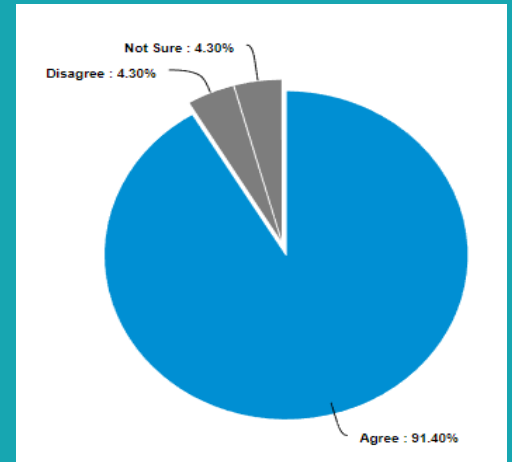
Public Intercept Survey

At the end of project year 1, staff and youth coalition members also administered an electronic Public Intercept Survey to measure the level of public awareness around menthol and flavored tobacco products, use of these products and support for a policy that limits their sale. A barrier to this activity was that the survey was kept open for more than a year which might not accurately reflect the public's perception at a given point in time. Additionally, the sample size was small, given the population size of the Central Valley communities.

A convenience sample of 95 Central Valley participants completed the survey. Public Intercept Survey results revealed that 91.40% of respondents are worried that kids can easily get flavored tobacco products while only 4.30% said that they disagreed (Figure 3). When asked if they thought the community would be healthier if stores did not sell flavored tobacco products, 91.21% agreed. The most noteworthy finding was that the majority of respondents said they would support new laws banning the advertising, price discounting and sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products. Findings from the public intercept survey showed that there is community concern and support for stronger tobacco control policies.

Media Activity Record

In Year 4, a media records review was conducted to monitor public support for a tobacco retail license that encompasses flavored tobacco and menthol to adopt a policy to eliminate the sale and distribution of all flavored tobacco products. This information assessed the political and social environment and recent history on issues related to the tobacco retail environment. The review of local media revealed three (3) articles featured in The FresnoBee (1), California Healthline (1), and Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (1). These items focused on the aftermath of the passing of Prop 31 in California and the introduction of new products by tobacco companies that can be characterized as "flavored." Throughout the course of the project, youth conducted numerous interviews to increase public awareness of reducing the sale of flavored tobacco products in their communities. Photo 1 shows two youth coalition members at Great American Smokeout 2022. The interview was featured on ABC 30 Action News alongside Spanish news broadcasting company Univision.



Two MYNT Fresno County youth coalition members speak to a local media outlet for The Great American Smokeout 2022 at First Congregational Church, Fresno, CA, 93704

Notable tobacco retailer quotes.

“The ban is not bad, it does not affect my business a whole lot, and I support the ban.”
– Fresno storeowner/associate

“In a way its good because then people will stop smoking.” – Madera storeowner/associate

" It's bad for youth, because when the flavor ban hadn't gone into effect, youth would purchase flavored products and want to try everything else." – Fresno store owner/associate

Approaching Tobacco Retailers

The passing of SB793 in California took place in November 2022. During that time, project alignment was geared towards assessing the successful implementation of SB793 in local Central Valley communities. Therefore between April 2023 – May 2023 of project year 4, in coordination with the Madera County Department of Public Health and Fresno County Department of Public Health, MYNT staff and youth coalition members conducted Key Informant Interviews (KII) with 11 store owners that sell tobacco products (9 KIIs from Fresno and 2 KIIs from Madera) to determine the level of awareness around the passing of SB793 which bans the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products and support for a comprehensive Tobacco Retail License (TRL) ordinance which would greatly reduce the sale of all tobacco products in local jurisdictions. Program staff provided opportunities in the KII questionnaire for the interviewer to discuss relevant background data, keeping in mind that the interviewee may not be familiar with the existing TRL or retail data collection efforts. (Key Informant Interview questionnaire is attached in the Appendix.) A barrier to completing this activity was that only two (2) KIIs from Madera County were done which may not accurately reflect the opinions of all store owners in Madera. Secondly, the sample size in Madera did not include rural Madera County which was one of the target communities parts of this project because at the time of the interviews, program staff had not decided whether the intervention would target Fresno or rural Madera County. Despite these barriers, the data collected was vital to the Madera County Local Lead Agency (LLA) to move a comprehensive TRL in city of Madera.

Key Informant Interview data results provided MYNT with an initial understanding of the political climate and level of support for a TRL and assess store owner support for complying with the new state law. Compliance by store owners is instrumental in the implementation of SB793, so knowing their position on the current issue was a priority for program staff, who felt that future

Store Observations Post SB793

After the passing of SB793 in November 2022, MYNT shifted its focus to the Store Observation Surveys, which were conducted in coordination with the Madera County Department of Public Health. Program staff and youth/adult coalition members conducted a census survey of 11 tobacco retailers located throughout the City of Madera. Prior to conducting the store observations, 11 participants attended 1.5-hour training to become familiar with the survey questions, products being documented and how to submit the observation results. Training

materials were developed by the external evaluator. A post-training knowledge questionnaire, also developed by the external evaluator into Survey analytics. However, the training survey data was lost due to canceling YLI changing survey analytics accounts. Using a pen and paper tool, data collectors documented the availability, placement, price and promotion of menthol and flavored tobacco products. Once Store Observation Surveys concluded, the evaluator cleaned and analyzed the survey data and provided the project director with the results, which were shared during meetings and presentations with coalition members, as well as county and community partners. Survey results showed that 100% of stores surveyed in District 3 in the City of Madera, were still selling flavored tobacco products. Overall, 73% of stores surveyed in Madera were selling flavored tobacco products while 40% continued to show advertisements for those products. Table 1 shows the results of the tobacco retailer observation results in Madera County.

Table 1: Post SB793 Tobacco Retailer Observation

MADERA COUNTY		POST SB793 TOBACCO RETAILER OBSERVATION	
DISTRICT	SELLING FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS	ADVERTISEMENTS FOR FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS	SELLING VAPES OR VAPING PRODUCTS
District 1 (n=3)	67%	None	None
District 2 (n=3)	67%	33%	None
District 3 (n=4)	100%	50%	50%
District 5 (n=3)	67%	67%	None
District 6 (n=2)	50%	50%	None
TOTAL (N=15)	73%	40%	20%

Comprehensive TRL Policy Planning

In the remaining months of the final project year, program staff are working closely with local community partners to educate policymakers and community members on the importance of adopting a comprehensive TRL policy. Program staff have trained youth advocates to conduct Key Informant interviews with policymakers to assess their knowledge and support for a comprehensive TRL policy. Additionally, staff are working on assisting the Madera County LLA to conduct a photovoice project with youth advocates and their adult allies centered around tobacco control. MYNT will continue to be a strong partner to help reduce tobacco influences on the younger generations for years to come.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the passing of SB793, MYNT has partially achieved its goal of passing a flavor ban policy in at least three (3) jurisdictions in the Central Valley. The legislation for enacting a statewide flavor ban took place prior to analyzing the local public intercept data. However, MYNT was quick to shift gears in support of the adoption of a comprehensive TRL and to assess local policy implementation while simultaneously assessing the enforcement of the new flavor ban law to assist LLAs in the area. Several key factors helped build momentum to continue these efforts. The following graphic show a list of key lessons learned.

In 2024, MYNT refocused its efforts to pass a comprehensive TRL in the City of Madera. Efforts are focused within Madera County because staff have an established relationship with the local LLA, who have a robust team of staff and community health workers that are committed to protecting youth from the dangers of tobacco use. MYNT experienced several staff changes throughout the course of the project term. When the former MYNT Project Director announced their departure, YLI was quickly able to hire a new and passionate Project Director who brought together various community partners to educate and lead TRL efforts. In the next coming months, Key Informant interviews and education presentations will be important catalysts in the policy adoption progression, as they will enable staff to measure the level of community and leadership support in local jurisdictions and identify champions for the Madera City TRL policy. Timing will play a key role in the passage of a TRL policy. The Central Valley is somewhat politically divided, thus an ideal situation is not guaranteed, as the views of the city council can change significantly from one election cycle to the next as new members join the City Council or existing members leave. Thus, it is important to be aware of when and what changes might occur during the remaining course of the project.

MYNT will continue to recruit, train, and involve Youth Coalition members to present to the city council members. Future efforts will also focus more on involving law enforcement, who could voice support for the adopting of a TRL policy. Program staff and coalition members will develop and distribute educational materials to Central Valley tobacco retailers, informing them of the flavor ban and how to comply with the new rules. Staff will also work with the local Police Departments to ensure that TRL compliance checks are being completed. MYNT will continue to be a strong partner that aims to improve community health by reducing youth access to harmful tobacco products.

The strategies and activities that have been **most helpful** have been the:

- ▶ Conducting a post SB793 store observation which measured evidenced of enforcement and level of policy implementation.
- ▶ Forming strong collaborative partnerships with LLAs such as the Madera County Department of Public Health
- ▶ Bringing on board project staff with a passion for public health and understanding of program planning and implementation.

A few things that the program would **do differently** would be to:

- ▶ Conduct a SWOT analysis in year 1 and 2 of the project to identify key partners and target communities.
- ▶ Conduct key informant interviews with law enforcement and policy makers in year 1 and 2 to assess level of support for new policies.
- ▶ Increase media efforts to generate positive coverage about the retail campaign and local store survey results.

Recommendations for other projects hoping to take on the adoption of a comprehensive TRL policy objective.

- ▶ Conduct post policy enforcement data collection, on the availability to assess any evidence of the availability of flavored tobacco products.
- ▶ Continue to involve youth coalition members to present to the city council as they are uniquely positioned to speak on the issues of age group targeting by Big Tobacco.
- ▶ Collaborate strategically with other tobacco control projects in the area to increase support and community involvement in efforts.

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