



June 11, 2021

Contact: ODMHSAS Communications
(405) 248-9232 or (405) 248-9233

Tobacco Sales to Minors Still Too High in the State

Although Oklahoma retailers as a whole were better at not selling tobacco to minors over the past year, some areas of the state still need improvement. This is according to the results of Oklahoma's annual Synar report and FDA tobacco inspections. The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) is responsible for compiling the annual report for federal submission.

The federal Synar Amendment requires states to monitor underage tobacco sales. All states are required to maintain a compliance rate of at least 80 percent (or a non-compliance rate of no more than 20 percent). Failure to meet that rate risks federal block grant funding for addiction treatment and prevention services.

This year's inspection rate was 13.2 percent. Certain regions had non-compliance rates as high as nearly 24 percent. Illegal sales to minors ranged from 6.1 percent non-compliance in the southwest to 23.8 percent in the east-central region.

ODMHSAS contracts with the state's Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement (ABLE) Commission to conduct random compliance checks of Oklahoma retail outlets such as convenience and grocery stores to ensure they follow all laws related to sales of tobacco products to minors. Synar results are then reported to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), the federal agency that oversees the state's block grant funding.

The minimum age to buy tobacco products is 21 years old. Retailers across the state of Oklahoma will receive a fine and risk losing their license to sell tobacco products if clerks make illegal sales. Community-based education is available to business owners and clerks regarding youth access to tobacco. Additional information related to Synar compliance can be found on the ODMHSAS website at

https://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/Prevention/Prevention_Initiatives/Synar_Compliance/index.html.

Tobacco use prematurely kills thousands of Oklahomans every year, yet it remains a leading preventable cause of death.

###