



Reducing tobacco sales to minors: Congratulate and Educate

In its second year, the Congratulate and Educate Program found a decrease in the sale of tobacco products to minors.

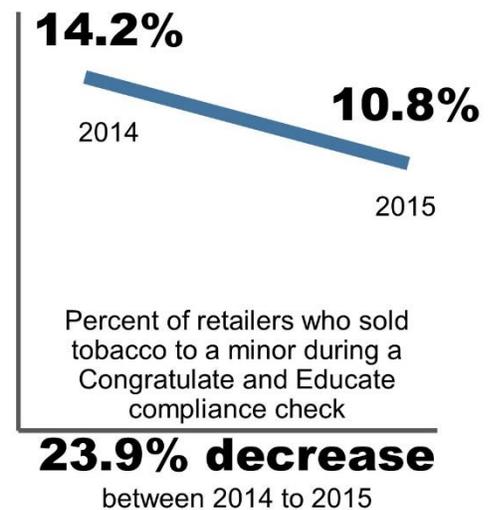
Compliance checks and Congratulate and Educate

Minnesota performs tobacco merchant compliance checks using undercover minors. Should a retailer sell tobacco to the minor, the consequences are a citation, and business owners may receive a fine or civil penalty.

DHS received feedback from local law enforcement that tobacco merchant education and additional compliance checks may help reduce the tobacco retailer violation rate in the state. As a result, in 2014 the Department of Human Services piloted Congratulate and Educate.

Congratulate and Educate compliance checks differ from traditional compliance checks in that:

- Retailers who do not sell tobacco to a minor receive a certificate of congratulations.
- Retailers who sell tobacco to a minor, rather than receiving a citation, are provided education on the importance of keeping tobacco away from youth and education on the consequences of future violations. Information and materials are supplied that management can use to educate their employees on best practices to avoid selling tobacco to minors.



*Congratulate and Educate program goals:
To implement tobacco merchant education and increase the number of tobacco compliance checks across the state of Minnesota.*

Results

Number of compliance checks and percent change by year	2014	2015	Percent difference 2014-2015
Number of compliance checks	819	807	-1.5%
Percent of checks that resulted in the sale of tobacco	116 (14.2%)	87 (10.8%)	-23.9%

Feedback

In 2015 agencies from 44 of 87 Minnesota counties participated in this initiative. Police departments made up the majority of partner agencies, followed by sheriff's offices and public health staff. The Association for Nonsmokers also participated by reaching out to Public Health agencies and providing them an opportunity to participate.

Comments from the partner agencies about Congratulate and Educate:

“The certificates are a nice touch. The employees like them.”

“When I returned to each retailer to congratulate and educate them, we had a good conversation about how they educate their employees and how we can help them with that.”

“This is the second time we conducted these checks with this project. Retailers are happy to talk about the importance of making sure their employees are ID-ing young looking buyers.”