

SYNAR TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIPS (STEP) OVERVIEW



The SC STEP program incorporates three current aspects of our state’s prevention system, the **Synar study**, **merchant education**, and mandated **county tobacco compliance checks**, with two other aspects, the **Synar coverage study (federal requirement)** and **tobacco strategy incentives**. *The intent is for the STEP program to package tobacco enforcement best practices and requirements and provide incentives to encourage the use of more best practices at the local level.*

Annual Synar Tobacco Buys. According to federal requirements and guidelines, DAODAS annually oversees a study consisting of random, unannounced inspections of known tobacco outlets to see what percentage of them comply with state laws and refuse sales to underage youth. Through this study, local county agencies conduct around 500 randomly selected inspections per year.

Periodic Synar Cover Study. SAMHSA has issued a mandate related to the annual Synar study. Every three years, states must do a coverage study to assess the accuracy of their frame list, the list of known tobacco outlets in the state. The term “coverage” indicates how completely the list frame contains all of the eligible outlets in the State for the annual study. SAMHSA recommends a 90% coverage rate. However, as it can be difficult to achieve this level of coverage by a list frame created from commercial sources, SAMHSA requires a coverage rate of at least 80% for the Synar survey. SAMHSA guidelines will require us to randomly sample 15-20 of the state’s 862 census tracts and canvass those areas to locate actual eligible tobacco outlets. We will compare this to our current Synar outlet list and hope the two lists match above the 80% rate. We expect that it will, particularly if counties are vigilant about informing DAODAS of new outlets opening in their county.

PIRE implemented the state’s first coverage study in 2006.

Merchant Education Development. DAODAS supports statewide implementation of the Palmetto Retailers Education Program (PREP), a Department of Revenue (DOR)-approved program. Under this joint effort of DAODAS and the county authorities, the number of merchants served through PREP has jumped considerably each year.

County Tobacco Compliance Checks. DAODAS has a contractual mandate for each county to conduct tobacco compliance checks in some area of each county they serve. DAODAS does not make funds available directly for this activity.

STEP Incentives. Each year, DAODAS tries to make funds available to reward counties for implementing tobacco best practices.

Counties earn STEP points for some or all of the following achievements:

- Conducting tobacco compliance checks,
- Conducting merchant education,
- Reporting new tobacco outlets, and
- Establishing multi-jurisdictional law enforcement agreements around tobacco.

These components will be tracked and earn points as follows:

Tobacco Compliance Checks

- For counties with more than 100 outlets
 - 2 points for every 10 compliance checks conducted
 - Maximum 20 points/year
 - Example: 42 compliance checks completed would earn 8 points (2 points for each set of 10 checks)
- For counties with less than 100 outlets
 - 2 points for # of compliance checks equal to 10% of tobacco outlets
 - Maximum: 20 points/year
 - Example: A county w/ 50 outlets would receive 8 points for 20 compliance checks ($20/50 = 40\% = 8$ points)
- Counties must submit DAODAS Compliance Check Forms for each check attempted along with the STEP Cover Sheet.
- These forms (as already required in the county contracts) are due to Michelle Nienhius or Steven Burritt by the 8th working day of the following month.

Merchant Education

- For counties with more than 100 outlets
 - 1 point for every 10 merchants taught
 - Maximum 10 points/year
 - Example: 42 compliance checks completed would earn 4.2 points (1 point for each set of 10 checks)
- For counties with less than 100 outlets
 - 1 point for # of compliance checks equal to 10% of tobacco outlets
 - Maximum: 10 points/year
 - Example: A county w/ 50 outlets would receive 4 points for 20 compliance checks ($20/50 = 40\% = 4$ points)
- Counties must submit PREP sign-in sheets and a fidelity checklist for each class attempted along with the STEP Cover Sheet.

- These forms (as already required in the county contracts) are due to Michelle Nienhius or Steven Burritt by the 8th working day of the following month.

New Tobacco Outlets Reported

- 1 point for every new tobacco outlet reported
- Maximum: 10 points/year
- Purpose: To ensure that the state has all existing outlets in our list so our accuracy remains high for future coverage studies
- Counties must provide the name of the outlet, the address, and a phone number if possible. Other information that will help locate the store more easily would also be appreciated. Must be submitted with a STEP Cover Sheet.

Multi-jurisdictional Agreements

- 10 points if county provides a copy of a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement agreement that includes tobacco enforcement specifically
- Maximum: 10 points/year
- The agreement must state cooperation and document that cross-jurisdictional details have been addressed
- There is no specific deadline for this submission, but no points will be awarded without a copy being provided to DAODAS. Should be sent with a STEP Cover Sheet.
- One agreement can receive 10 points each year, without resubmission, as long as (1) some level of enforcement continues and (2) the signatories maintain their positions of having proper authority to carry out the agreement.

Counties receive a portion of the STEP incentive funds based on their total number of points as a percentage of the total points in the state. (Example: If a county has 17 points and there were 528 points in the state that year, they would receive 3.2% of STEP funds because $17/528 = .032$) These incentive funds are for the county prevention department to use, which could include providing training for law enforcement, purchasing educational materials related to tobacco, supplies/materials for information dissemination or merchant education activities related to tobacco, etc. PIRE will keep track of each county's STEP points and calculate the STEP Incentive. STEP incentives will be calculated annually based on the 12 months between June 1 and May 31, and STEP incentives would be received early in the following fiscal year.

Management Plans. Counties will submit the following management plans each year related to STEP:

1. Tobacco compliance check plan
2. PREP (merchant education) plan (a template plan is provided)
3. Synar plan (a template plan is provided)

Please contact DAODAS questions regarding STEP.