**STATE FY25 (FFY 2026) SYNAR STUDY**

* **The study timeframe will be** **December 9, 2024 – February 28, 2025, or March 7, 2025 – May 30, 2025. This is dependent upon which group you are in.**
  + **Group 1: Regions 2 and 3** are **December 9 – February 28**. **If you are requesting an extension due to extenuating circumstances, you must submit the request in writing to DAODAS by February 14, 2025.**
    - Paperwork must be mailed to DAODAS by **March 7, 2025**.
  + **Group 2: Regions 1 and 4** are **March 7 – May 30**. **If you are requesting an extension due to extenuating circumstances, you must submit the request in writing to DAODAS by May 9, 2025.**
    - Paperwork must be mailed to DAODAS by **June 6, 2025**.
* **Regions 2 and 3 must complete the “Synar Regulation: Implications for South Carolina” training on Relias between October 18, 2024, and November 8, 2024.**

**Regions 1 and 4 must complete the “Synar Regulation: Implications for South Carolina” training on Relias between January 17, 2025, and February 7, 2025.**

* If an outlet you have received exists, as far as you know, but is not in your county, you must inform state Synar staff **by December 6, 2024 (Regions 2 and 3), or by February 27, 2025 (Regions 1 and 4)**. You can lose your bonus for not doing this.
* **During the initial review process, if the coordinator has reliable knowledge that an outlet does not sell cigarettes and/or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), the outlet could be marked for non-consideration and replaced. All outlet exclusions must be confirmed with a telephone call or a physical site visit to ensure that the business does not sell tobacco products. If an outlet is deemed to not sell cigarettes and/or ENDS, inform DAODAS by December 6, 2024 (Regions 2 and 3) or by February 27, 2025 (Regions 1 and 4) to receive a replacement outlet.**
* We are continuing to require that **two adults** are used for each inspection team: one to be in the establishment during the entire time the youth is in the establishment and one to remain in the vehicle.
* The Synar forms will be scanned, so it is important to be neat – **do not make any extra marks on the form**. Instead of marking freely on the forms, we ask you to **include one overall cover sheet with any changes, such as changes in store addresses or store names.**
* **Multi-county agencies may only count adult or youth volunteers one time for reimbursement purposes, even if they are used in multiple counties.**
* There is an increased likelihood of your outlets including an establishment – like a bar or restaurant – that might involve some different layouts than the traditional “convenience store” inspection. Do advance preparation and have your inspection team ready to handle each situation they will encounter.
* There are two possible levels of repercussions for failing to meet the requirements. Those showing a general awareness of the study guidelines but failing to fully meet them will fail to receive their bonus, as it has been in past years. However, counties that demonstrate a “willful disregard” of the study requirements will only be reimbursed for the cost of tobacco products and mileage.
* Synar staff and DAODAS reserve the right to adjust reimbursement requests for (1) mileage that is excessive in comparison to other counties with similar amounts of inspections and/or (2) use of far more adult or youth volunteers than is necessary. (However, this does not mean you have to use the absolute minimum number of volunteers.)
* Vending machines will no longer be included in the Synar study and have been removed.
* **Mileage is only reimbursable for personal vehicles, not for agency vehicles.**

**Questions? E-mail:** [**prevention@daodas.sc.gov**](mailto:prevention@daodas.sc.gov)

FFY26 Youth Access to Tobacco Study Manual

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# **1 – OVERVIEW OF THE SYNAR AMENDMENT**

# **Features of the Synar Regulation**

In July 1992, Congress enacted the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act (PL 102-321), which includes an amendment (section 1926) aimed at decreasing youth access to tobacco. This amendment, named for its sponsor, Congressman Mike Synar of Oklahoma, requires states (that is, all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and six Pacific jurisdictions) to enact and enforce laws prohibiting the sale or distribution of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 18. States must comply with the Synar Amendment in order to receive their full Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Grant (SUBG) awards.

On January 19, 1996, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) published “Tobacco Regulation for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants” in the Federal Register, amending 45 C.F.R. Part 96 to add section 96.130 – State Law Regarding the Sale of Tobacco Products to Individuals Under the Age of 18 – known as the Synar regulation. This regulation requires states to:

* Conduct annual, unannounced inspections that provide a valid probability sample of tobacco sales outlets accessible to minors.
* Report their sampling methodology and results of the annual Synar survey as a part of the Annual Synar Report no later than December 31. This includes the State’s sampling methodology, Synar survey results, Synar inspection report, and the Synar inspection protocol.
* Achieve a noncompliance rate of no more than 20% (SAMHSA requires that each state reduce its retailer violation rate to 20%).

Public Law 116-94, signed on December 20, 2019, superseded this legislation and increased the minimum age for tobacco sales from 18 to 21. This law also amends section 906(d) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, the General Provisions Respecting Control of Tobacco Products, raising the federal minimum age for sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21 years and instructing the Food and Drug Administration to make conforming changes to regulations regarding sale and distribution of tobacco products to carry out the amendments made by Public Law 116-94. **These conforming changes include increasing the minimum age of sale for tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age, increasing the minimum age for age verification by means of photographic identification from under the age of 27 to under the age of 30, and increasing the minimum age of individuals who may be present or permitted to enter facilities that maintain vending machines or self-service displays that sell tobacco products from 18 years to 21 years of age.**

SAMHSA subsequently issued revised guidance documents, providing instructions to states on compliance rate goals, use of funds, state reporting requirements, conforming amendments, and penalties, with a goal of enforcing underage access laws to a degree that reasonably can be expected to reduce the illegal sale of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21. In accordance with Public Law 116-94, this Revision to Guidance document updates previously issued SAMHSA guidance in 2011 as it relates to compliance rate goals, use of funds, state reporting requirements, conforming amendments, and penalties. This Tobacco 21 Revision to Guidance document also outlines the three-year transition period for implementation and compliance.

**The Synar Regulation:**

# **Implications for South Carolina**

**What Is the Synar Regulation?**

With the realization that too many underage youth throughout the nation were gaining retail access to tobacco products, Congress enacted in July 1992 an amendment to the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act (Public Law 102-321). This amendment is known as the Synar Regulation and is named for the late Congressman Mike Synar of Oklahoma, who sponsored the original bill. The Synar Regulation requires all states to reduce by a negotiated target date the number of illegal sales of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 18 or face penalties in the distribution of federal block grant funds for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention and treatment services. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), oversees and provides technical assistance to help states reduce their rates of illegal tobacco sales to minors to the maximum level of 20% as stipulated by the Synar Regulation.

Public Law 116-94, signed on December 20, 2019, superseded this legislation and increased the minimum age for tobacco sales from 18 to 21.

South Carolina negotiated with CSAP a series of target sales rates to guide the state in reaching a sales rate of no more than 20% by the end of calendar year 2000. The South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), the single state authority that administers the federal Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant (SUBG), is responsible for implementing tobacco use and access prevention programs statewide. DAODAS reports annually to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the state’s progress in achieving the requirements of the Synar Regulation.

**What Are the Synar Requirements?**

In January 1996, SAMHSA issued the Synar regulation to provide guidance to the states. The regulation and updates from Public Law 116-94 require that states:

* Enforce underage access laws to a degree that reasonably can be expected to reduce the illegal sale of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21.
* Conduct annual, unannounced inspections that provide a valid probability sample of tobacco sales outlets accessible to minors.
* Report their sampling methodology and results of the annual Synar survey as a part of the Annual Synar Report no later than December 31. This includes the State’s sampling methodology, Synar survey results, Synar inspection report, and the Synar inspection protocol.
* Revise their methodology, inspection reports, and inspection protocols, to include the revised age requirements (under 21). In addition, the Synar survey results must now include results for sales to youth and young adults under the age of 21. This is in line with the change in December 2019.
* Achieve a noncompliance rate of no more than 20%. (SAMHSA requires that each state reduce its retailer violation rate to 20%).

**Why Is Synar Important?**

*First,* it facilitates the reduction of both current and future health problems among South Carolina’s children and youth. *Second,* compliance with the federal law is consistent with the public’s support of measures to prevent the use of tobacco products by young people, specifically with efforts to discourage tobacco sales to minors (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services report, 1994).

*Finally – and most critically for DAODAS and the county alcohol and drug authorities –* successful reduction of youth access to tobacco in South Carolina is important for the state to continue receiving full SUBG funding for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention, intervention, and treatment services.

Every day an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 kids become regular smokers, and a third of them will eventually die of tobacco-related causes.

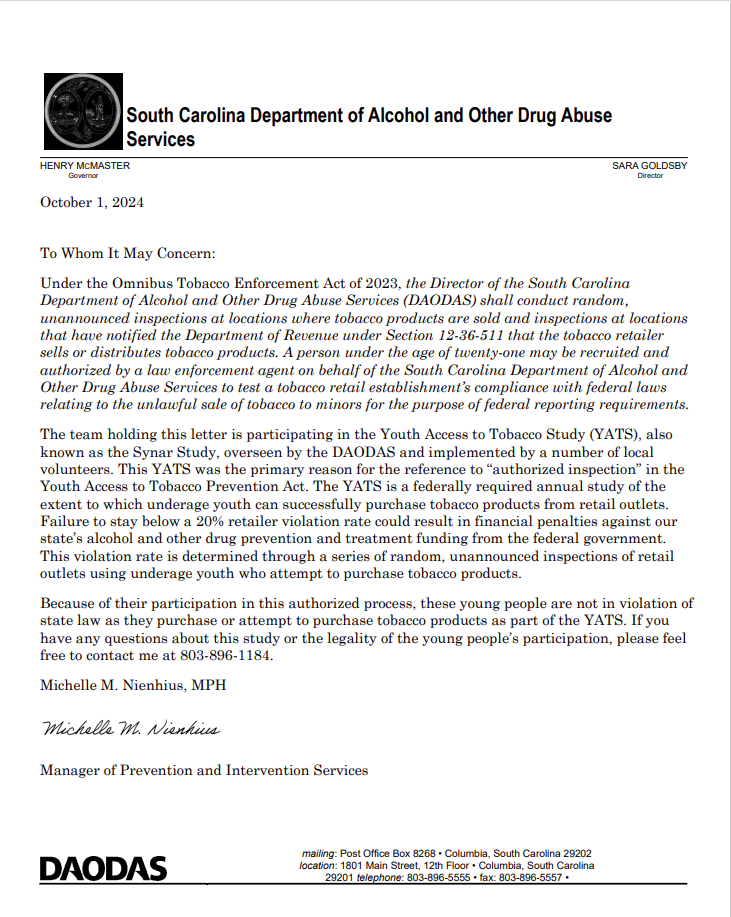
**How Is South Carolina Doing?**

Approximately 4.3% of South Carolina teens ages 15 to 17 are still able to purchase tobacco products illegally from stores throughout the state.[[1]](#footnote-2)

***With Youth Tobacco Sales Enforcement:***

All states and U.S. jurisdictions have laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors and, thus, already comply with the enactment component of the regulation. However, the Youth Access to Tobacco Prevention Act of 2006 helped our state take a large step forward with better tobacco prevention policy. This act raised the fine on selling tobacco to minors, made youth possession illegal, made youth consumption illegal, and provided educational options for the seller and youth in lieu of fines.

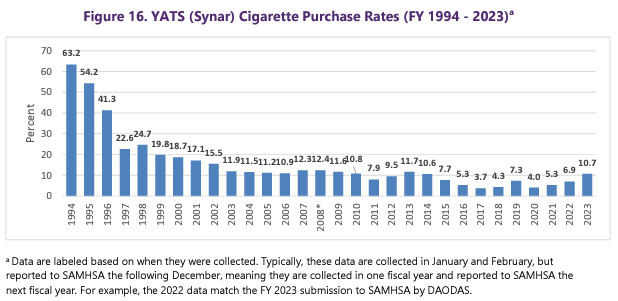
DAODAS requires county authorities to generate local tobacco compliance checks in at least one segment of their catchment area. DAODAS has supported this effort by providing Synar Tobacco Enforcement Partnerships (STEP) incentive points for tobacco compliance checks.



**FFY23 Synar Final Report – Excerpt**

As per the federal Synar Regulation, South Carolina conducts annual, unannounced inspections of a valid probability sample of tobacco outlets that are accessible to minors. This study, known in South Carolina as the Youth Access to Tobacco Study (YATS) or simply the Synar Study, is designed to determine the extent to which people younger than 21 can successfully buy tobacco products from retail outlets. Although similar in nature and scope to the counties’ tobacco compliance checks discussed in the previous section, the Synar Study is a distinct operation that occurs during a specific period each year and uses a scientifically developed and SAMHSA-approved sampling frame.

Between January 1 and February 28, 2023, 126 youth volunteers ages 16-20, under trained adult supervision, conducted unannounced cigarette purchase attempts in 226 randomly selected retail outlets in 46 counties. These outlets were randomly sampled from the estimated 7,095 outlets in the state. Figure 16 from the 2023 Prevention Outcomes Report shows the buy rates from the Synar Study since 1994. For 2023, the estimated overall sales rate (also known as a Retailer Violation Rate [RVR]) was 10.7%, higher than last year’s rate of 6.9%. This rate is far better than the federal standard of 20.0% and substantially lower than the RVR of 63.2% in 1994, the first year of the study.



# **2 – VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

# **Youth Recruitment**

Recruit more than you think you will need. Enough volunteers must be recruited so that you have sufficient variability to achieve the balance of purchase attempts by age and gender, in addition to having available youth of each race to match with the demographics of the community. Having a lot of youth volunteers will ensure adequate diversity in age, race, and gender. Without enough variety in age, race, and gender among the youth, you may bias your results either too high or too low (for example, an over-used 16-year-old may happen to look older for his age, which would result in a higher-than-expected successful purchase rate). **Do not allow any single youth to conduct more than five completed eligible purchase attempts.**

Some youth may not show up on the day scheduled for the purchase attempts, and without enough reserve youth, you will need to go out another day with replacement youth to collect the missing data. Try to recruit dedicated, responsible youth to minimize the risk of “no shows.” **As always, county coordinators are strongly advised to recruit more youth volunteers than expected, assuming that 30% or more of the youth volunteers may not show up on any given data-collection date.**

A sufficient number of youth volunteers will also eliminate the risk of burning out the few kids you have recruited (a burned-out kid wanting to go home is also more likely to fabricate data or rush through and leave some of the paperwork incomplete or inaccurate).

**Number, Age, Race, and Gender of Youth and Purchase Attempts**

Only young people ages 16-20 will be used in this study. You should come very close to dividing your purchase attempts within the age group assigned to your agency (either 16-17 or 18-20). DAODAS will provide the age group that your county will be using for inspection. If a county has two or less outlets to survey, the checks should be completed by two different youth – one male, one female – and the youth should be different ages (e.g., one 16 and one 17). If a county has three or more outlets, the checks should be equally divided among ages and genders. In other words, a county doing 20 checks should have five to six checks done by 18-year-olds, five to six checks done by 19-year-olds, and five to six checks done by 20-year-olds.

The number of purchase attempts **should also be equally split by gender, with an equal number of checks done by males and females**. *In the event that your youth volunteer does not identify as male or female, please mark this youth as non-binary on the YATS form. If the youth identifies as a gender different from that on their license/ID, please mark this youth as the gender with which they identify.*

The calculation of these “splits” should be based only on the eligible inspections conducted.

The race of the youth buyer for each inspection should be based on the demographics of the community. Do not use a White buyer for a predominantly Black or African American neighborhood or vice versa. For a community with a relatively equal mix, you have flexibility in your buyer race.

For smaller counties in particular, this might mean that each volunteer only does one to two attempted purchases.

**Failure to meet these demographic requirements will result in your county forfeiting its Performance Bonus or perhaps being only reimbursed for cigarette and mileage expenses if these requirements are willfully ignored. Multiple counties do not receive their bonuses each year due to failure to meet this standard.**

Again, be reasonable with the demands on the youth. Do not overload a small number of youth to make up for insufficient recruiting – it will just make the over-loaded youth tired and reduce the amount of necessary variability in youth appearance and characteristics.

Multi-county agencies must apply their age/gender balance guidelines across each county and not by agency. If you have any questions, please reach out to DAODAS prevention staff at [prevention@daodas.sc.gov](mailto:prevention@daodas.sc.gov).

### **Sources for Recruiting Youth Volunteers**

Youth recruitment is often the biggest challenge county coordinators face in implementing the study. The following are possible sources for finding youth who might be interested in participating in the study. (You may also use kids who are already participating in the study in another county provided they have not exceeded the five-purchase-attempt limit.)

* Children age 16-20 of agency staff
* Friends of agency staff’s children
* Youth/young adults used in previous years of the study (if they are still of eligible age) or their siblings
* Children of agency staff’s neighbors
* School service clubs (Key Club, honor societies, etc.)
* School junior career clubs (4-H Club, etc.)
* Students needing community service credits to graduate
* School sports teams
* School health classes
* School cheerleaders, band, choir, pep squad, etc.
* Church youth groups
* Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts
* YMCA/YWCA Youth Programs
* Junior Police Cadets / ROTC Cadets
* Just Say No clubs
* SADD clubs
* University public health clubs, sororities, fraternities, other clubs, etc.
* University student government

**Youth, Young Adult, and Parent Letters**

**Youth Letter**

Dear Volunteer,

We are very excited that you are interested in becoming part of our Youth Access to Tobacco Survey!

We are looking for youth age 16 or 17. Your participation in this survey involves visiting places that sell cigarettes or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) and attempting to buy the products. This survey will include convenience stores, grocery stores, drug stores, bars/restaurants, and vape stores. This event will occur on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you are interested in volunteering for this survey, you will need your parent’s permission.

There will be a training session to help you understand the goals and methods of this survey, to practice making tobacco purchase attempts, and to answer any questions you might have.

After the training session, you, another teen, and two adults will go to the designated locations. After you have completed all your purchase attempts, we will meet for a debriefing to discuss your experiences and findings.

We believe that his experience will help you develop leadership skills as well as help prevent teens from becoming addicted to tobacco. You will be making a major contribution to the health of your community and state.

If you are interested in participating in this survey, or if you have any questions, please feel free to call us at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

**Young Adult Letter**

Dear Young Adult,

We are very excited that you are interested in becoming part of our Youth Access to Tobacco Survey!

We are looking for young adult volunteers age 18, 19, or 20. Your participation in this survey involves visiting places that sell cigarettes and/or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) and attempting to purchase the products. This survey will include convenience stores, grocery stores, drug stores, bars/restaurants, and vape shops. This event will occur on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you are interested in volunteering for this survey, you will need to sign this document to confirm your consent to participate.

There will be a training session to help you understand the goals and methods of this survey, to practice making tobacco purchase attempts, and to answer any questions you might have.

After the training session, you, another young adult, and two adult chaperones will go to the designated locations. After you have completed all your purchase attempts, we will meet together for a debriefing to discuss your experiences and findings.

We believe that this experience will help you develop leadership skills as well as help prevent underage youth from becoming addicted to tobacco. You will be making a major contribution to the health of your community and state.

If you are interested in participating in this survey, or if you have any questions, please feel free to call us at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

**Parent Letter**

Dear Parent:

The state’s county alcohol and drug authorities and local smoke-free groups are planning an initiative that focuses on the problem of over-the-counter sales of tobacco products to minors.

Currently, South Carolina law states that it is unlawful for any person to sell tobacco to anyone under 18 years of age, and the federal law is age 21.

Unfortunately, many store owners, clerks, and teenagers violate this law. Our purpose is to determine the ease with which underage youth can purchase tobacco products in South Carolina. It is not our intention to embarrass or publicize particular merchants that sell tobacco to underage youth. Instead, we intend to determine the extent of the problem of tobacco sales to minors.

Smoking is the most preventable cause of death and disability, and nicotine is one of the most addictive drugs available. Limiting minors’ access to tobacco products is one way to prevent them from starting this habit.

Two trained adults will accompany each pair of teens. They will park outside the purchase-attempt site, and one of them will be inside the establishment the whole time your teen is making a purchase attempt. Your child will not be violating any laws; youth are exempted from being in violation of the law for trying to purchase cigarettes or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) when they participate in inspections like these.

A training session will be held for the teen volunteers. They will attend this session on the same day as the purchase-attempt operation.

An estimated two to three hours will be spent driving to the sites and attempting cigarette or ENDS purchases. Routes will be mapped out in advance for each car.

At the group’s discretion, an additional hour will be spent at a debriefing following the purchase-attempt operation, where results will be discussed and compiled.

Parents will need to sign a consent form for their teen’s participation. There are no other parental requirements unless you would like to volunteer as a driver and/or be involved in the planning and implementation of this public education campaign.

If you are interested in participating in this project or if you have further questions, please feel free to call us at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

**Permission Forms**

**Retain the permission forms below in your files and send copies to DAODAS along with your other completed study materials.**

# Parent Permission

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, give permission for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

(Name of Parent/Guardian) (Name of Youth)

who is 16 or 17 years old, to participate in the South Carolina Youth Access to Tobacco Survey, to be held on

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, beginning with a training session at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(Day, Month, Date) (Time)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

# Youth Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the training and survey sessions

(Name of Youth)

and to abide by all the regulations governing the Youth Access to Tobacco Survey.   
I understand that all information gathered is to be kept confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Youth) (Date)

**COVID-19 Safety Procedures**

While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that more than 98% of the United States population has some degree of immunity from COVID-19, this does not mean that we are “safe” from the virus. COVID-19 is still a part of our respiratory illness mix, right alongside illnesses like RSV and the flu. Therefore, we would like to include these additional safety recommendations for volunteers to follow while conducting the Synar study:

* + Wear a mask-if required or preferred by volunteers. (Please provide masks for all your volunteers.)
  + Proper hand hygiene is an important infection-control measure. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever available or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. (Please provide hand sanitizer for your volunteers.)
  + If you test positive for COVID-19, stay home and avoid contact with others until you are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications. Continue to take precautions, like wearing a mask and limiting unnecessary contact with others, for five days.

**Youth and Adult Volunteers**

The county coordinators must provide training sessions for all youth and adult volunteers for each team prior to data collection. Local cigarette study coordinators must do complete training with each team. Budget one to two hours – do not just send youth and adults out with the forms.

During training events, remind all those present that the youth would not be breaking the law by purchasing the tobacco products due to specific exemptions for authorized inspections in the Youth Access to Tobacco Prevention Act of 2006.

During local training, county coordinators must review every item on the data collection form.

Work through a few role-playing exercises (with feedback) before conducting the visits. County coordinators should conduct role-playing examples of typical encounters and provide feedback to youth regarding what to say and do. Remind youth to relax and be confident. Be sure to review with them how things might work differently when attempting a purchase at a bar or restaurant.

Conduct visits on weekends, during after-school hours, and on holidays.

Match the youth volunteer’s race to the racial characteristics of the neighborhood where the purchase attempts are planned.

Do not use official cars or cars marked with an agency or business name. Park the car out of the line of sight of clerks or managers in establishments (especially when visiting convenience stores and gas stations).

Youth should be instructed to be honest with the clerks and not lie about their age, submit a fake ID, claim the cigarettes/ENDS are for a parent in the car, claim their ID is in the car, or mislead the clerk in any other way. The rules of engagement must preclude the common charge of “entrapment” while clearly establishing the merchant’s inclination to sell cigarettes/ENDS to underage youth.

Establish a time and place for teams to meet after data collection is over for the day. Set a time to return and meet for the debriefing.

# **DOs and DON’Ts for Youth Volunteers**

**DOs:**

* Do quickly locate the tobacco products (display rack, behind the counter, in checkout line, etc.) after entering the establishment.
* Do purchase the product told to you by your adult chaperone – cigarettes/ENDS only – no cigars, chewing tobacco, or snuff.
* Do expect to make the purchase. Look at the clerk and make the request “Marlboro, soft pack, regular” (for example).
* Do match the requested brand of cigarettes/ENDS as appropriate for your race and gender. (Your adult coordinator should have asked what you see your peers using.)
* Do leave the store quickly after every encounter (sale or not) and return to car (parked out of the clerk’s line of sight).
* Do dress “normally.” (Do not try to look older or younger than you are.)

### **DON’Ts:**

* Don’t lie if asked your age or birth date. Be truthful in all responses.
* Don’t make up any stories for not having an ID. Don’t say “I left it at home” or “My ID is in the car.” If asked for an ID, present your ID.
* Don’t show a fake ID.
* Don’t say the tobacco product is for your mother in the car, etc.
* Don’t feel bad if you are not sold cigarettes/ENDS. The goal is to measure the ease with which youth can purchase cigarettes/ENDS. Success is not making a purchase; success is documenting what actually happens.
* Don’t do anything that might tip off the merchants that a study is being conducted.
* Don’t take the opportunity to “educate” the merchants. Staff will do that later by letter.
* Don’t smoke cigarettes or use ENDS yourself while conducting the study.
* Don’t wear an anti-smoking T-shirt while conducting the study.
* Don’t cut classes to conduct the visits.
* Don’t carry the data collection forms into the establishments. Fill out the data collection forms only after the driver has left the parking lot (out of sight of any clerks, etc.).

# **Rewards and Reinforcements for Youth and Adult Volunteers**

Your agency will receive $30 for each adult and youth volunteer (not staff) you worked with to conduct the study. You have discretion as to what to do with that $30 per volunteer. You may buy them a T-shirt, have a pizza party or snacks, buy them lunch/dinner, present them with a gift card, etc. However, you may not give volunteers cash or a check. Please comply with the financial regulations of your agency. No receipts need to be submitted to DAODAS.

Counties should be mindful of the number of youth and adult volunteers they use. While you are not required to use the minimum possible number of youth volunteers, you also should not, for example, use a different youth for each inspection if that is not required to meet your gender/age balance requirements. DAODAS reserves the right to reduce the number of volunteers you are compensated for if it is determined the number of volunteers is excessive. In addition, staff do not count as adult volunteers for the purposes of reimbursement.

**\*\*\*\*Multi-county agencies may only count a youth or adult volunteer for reimbursement purposes one time total if the same person is used in multiple counties.\*\*\*\***

Unless given prior consent by state Synar staff, only those youth or adult volunteers who take part in an eligible Synar inspection may be counted for reimbursement (e.g., the Adult or Youth ID Code should appear on an eligible inspection form).

For legal and liability reasons, however, do not pay the youth or adult volunteers any of the $30 in the form of cash or check. Doing so might establish an employee/employer relationship subject to obligations and benefits inherent in such a relationship.

**Youth Training**

The purpose of tobacco compliance checks is to help states and communities reduce illegal sales of tobacco to minors, so that fewer youth use and become addicted to nicotine, thereby reducing the suffering and unnecessary loss of life associated with tobacco use.

This manual and online Synar training ideas and information are intended to be used to train teen inspectors on how to conduct tobacco sale compliance checks. These materials were developed as resources for state and local agencies responsible for monitoring tobacco sales to minors as mandated by the Synar Regulation. Following the procedures presented in this manual ensures that compliance checks are conducted consistently from year to year and from place to place.

This training manual outlines a sample training day and provides suggestions on how to structure the training and what additional information to cover in the training session.

Suggestions for additional training for adult escorts are included in this manual.

### **Training Agenda**

* + 1. Welcome and Introductions
    2. Icebreaker Game
    3. The Local Project
    4. Snack Break (optional)
    5. Procedures, Questions, and Answers
    6. Role Plays for Volunteers
    7. Additional Procedures for Adult Drivers
    8. Administrative Issues and Team Assignments
    9. Debriefing (after teams have conducted inspections)



**1. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)**

Give nametags to all participants. Nametags help people get to know each other and make the introductions easier for the trainer. When introducing the volunteers, mention how they were recruited (through a school, club, community organization, etc.).



**2. Icebreaker Game (Optional) (10-15 minutes)**

To encourage the volunteers to feel comfortable being teamed up with people they might not know, it is useful to begin the training with an icebreaker game. Below are suggestions for two games that work well with teens and can be completed in 10-15 minutes.



***Who Am I?***

**Supplies:** Self-stick nametags, one per person

**Preparation:** On each nametag, write the name of a TV personality, musician, movie star, politician, or celebrity that teens would recognize.

**Game Instructions:** Place a nametag on each teen’s back (or forehead). Tell the group not to reveal what anyone else’s tag says. Volunteers must try to find out who their famous person is by asking questions of other people. Only YES and NO answers may be given. There is a limit of 20 questions. They may sit down when they have correctly guessed who they are.

## *Tobacco Puzzles*



(Optional Puzzle Image)



**Supplies:** Photocopies or magazine pages of tobacco advertisements or other relevant pictures. Select as many pictures as there are tables for seating at the training.

**Preparation:** Cut each picture into puzzle pieces. Place one piece from each puzzle on a separate table and mix the rest of the pieces together in a bag. The goal is to put each puzzle back together.

**Game Instructions:** Each person takes a puzzle piece and finds the correct puzzle for the piece. Participants sit at that table during the training.

**3. The Local Project (10–20 minutes)**



Explain to the participants the reason that the Synar Study/tobacco compliance checks are being conducted in your community. Mention all agencies and groups that are participating in the project. Specifically, you should cover:

* + What is the state and federal tobacco law? Is the minimum age 18 or older?
  + What geographic area is to be covered?
  + What is the time period during which this area is to be inspected?
  + How many establishments will be inspected? What kinds of establishments? What kinds of products will be purchased?
  + What is the general form of the Synar/enforcement activities?
  + Will there be any media coverage of inspections?

**4.** **Snack Break (Optional) (5-10 minutes)**

This might be a good point to take a brief break to stretch and get a snack! Experience shows that the volunteers maintain attention better with a snack break.

**5. Procedures, Questions, and Answers (20 minutes)**



**Makeup of teams**

* + How many volunteers and adult chaperones are on your teams?
  + Do volunteers go into the store alone or in pairs?
  + Who are the adult chaperones in your program (parents, police officers, etc.)? Briefly explain their role.

**Keeping records**

* + Explain the procedure for storing tobacco items purchased.
  + Review the data collection form and instructions on how to fill it out.
  + Remind them to **not** take the form into the store.
  + Fill out the data collection form for each store on the list completely.



**The purchase attempt procedure**

* The buyer enters the establishment and locates the tobacco item.
* If the clerk asks for identification, the volunteer should present their ID.
* If asked their age, volunteer buyers respond truthfully. If asked for whom they are buying the tobacco product, they respond, “For myself.”
* Volunteer buyers should not purchase anything but the pack of cigarettes or ENDS as instructed by the adult chaperone.



**Type and brand of cigarettes/ENDS**

* Which brand of cigarettes/ENDS should be requested?

*Request Newport, Marlboro, or Camel for cigarettes.*

*Request VUSE, NJOY, BLU, PUFF, EFL, or HYDE for ENDS.*

* Will smokeless tobacco items be included?

*No.*

**Enforcement issues**

* Entrapment is a concern in inspections. Explain what it is and that it is crucial to not trick the clerk into selling. The outcome must reflect what a clerk would normally do when asked by a minor for tobacco.
* A store owner will not know the identity of the volunteers who conducted the check.

**Unusual situations**

* Volunteers should not make a tobacco purchase attempt if they know anyone in the store. To minimize the likelihood of this occurring, assign buyers to inspect establishments outside their home and school neighborhoods.
* A uniformed police officer in the store may influence the way the clerk behaves. To avoid biasing your inspection results, an establishment should be skipped if a uniformed officer is present. The establishment should be revisited later.
* Volunteers should never engage in arguments with anyone in the establishment. If a clerk becomes verbally abusive, the buyer should leave.
* If a clerk suspects that the volunteer is an inspector, the buyer should leave the store without attempting to purchase tobacco.
* A store should be skipped if any team member feels that it is not safe to go into the establishment. However, the adult in the establishment should make this a rare situation.

**6.** **Role Plays (20 minutes)**



Role plays are an important part of the volunteer inspector training; they allow the volunteers to practice saying their lines aloud.

Divide participants into pairs or trios and instruct them to take turns role-playing the buyer and the clerk. After role-playing, discuss how it felt to be the buyer and what was easy or hard about each situation.

**Scenarios**

* 1. The clerk is willing to sell, no questions asked.
  2. The clerk looks at the buyer carefully, asks for ID, and will not sell.
  3. The clerk is willing to sell; a bystander makes comments about the buyer’s age.
  4. The clerk asks for the buyer’s age, then calls the manager over. The manager says they do not sell to minors.
  5. The clerk is willing to sell but gets annoyed at canceling the sale.
  6. The clerk gives a speech to the minor about not using tobacco products.
  7. The clerk gets angry at the buyer for trying to get him or her into trouble.
  8. You are attempting to enter a bar, and the person at the door does not let you in.
  9. Make up your own scenario.

**7.** **Additional Procedures for Adult Chaperones (20 minutes)**

While volunteers are role-playing, additional procedures can be covered with the adults.

**Navigating and parking**

* The escort and driver should review their maps and plan their route before starting.
* The driver should park out of the view of the clerk if possible.

**Safety issues**

* Safety belts must be worn when the car is in motion.
* A store will be skipped if any team member feels that it is not safe to go into the establishment (e.g., people loitering outside, bars in the windows).
* The driver will observe the store from inside the car and alert the adult escort in the store if something suspicious is going on outside.
* One of the adults will enter the establishment first and maintain sight and sound of the youth inspector the whole time they are in the establishment. The adult driver will have them in sight the whole time they are outside the establishment.

**8. Administrative Issues and Team Assignments (10 minutes)**

* Collect consent forms with parental signatures from teens.
* Announce teams and give packets to team leaders.
* Explain when and where the packets are to be returned.
  + If inspections are not conducted immediately following training, review the date, time, and place for teams to meet. Arrange for rides if needed.

**9.** **Debriefing (after teams have conducted inspections)**

Depending on the scope of your project, a debriefing can be held at the end of the day after teams have returned from their assignments or at a later time if assignments are carried out over a large geographic area or take several days. A debriefing allows teens to share their experiences and to relate anecdotal information. A debriefing can be set up as a pizza party, which can also serve as an additional incentive for teens to participate.

Suggested discussion topics for the debriefing:

* + Safety – Did you feel unsafe at any time? What made you feel unsafe?
* Being turned down – How did it feel to be turned down? Did you feel competitive with your teammates? Did you want to congratulate the clerk when he or she turned you down?
* Unusual situations – Did you experience anything out of the ordinary during the inspections? How did you deal with the situation?



# **3 – PLANNING AND DATA COLLECTION**

# **Sample**

**What is random sampling?**

Random sampling is randomly selecting a subset of the full population you wish to study and using the science of statistics to apply what you find to the full group within an acceptable margin of error. In this case, we are randomly picking a subset of all known tobacco retail outlets to estimate our state retailer violation rate.

As an example, last year the sample was selected using a systematic sampling method. After determining how many outlets needed to be inspected to meet the requirements after adding considerable “cushion” for error (565)[[2]](#footnote-3), the number of outlets on the Synar list (7,096) was divided by 565 to get 12.5 (rounded up to 13). Then, a number between 1 and 13 was randomly selected (13). After organizing the outlets by county (A to Z), the 13th store in the database was selected. Then, staff counted down 13 outlets to select the next one (#26). This process was repeated to identify the sample (outlet 39, 52, 65, 78, etc.). Through this method, every county is guaranteed to be in the sample because all counties have more than 13 stores. Counties with more outlets overall will have more outlets in the sample.

Some of the newly added outlets in the state Synar outlet database may turn out to be ineligible. Our searches for new possible outlets have inevitably led to us identifying some outlets that do not actually sell cigarettes/ENDS. Even though some of these will turn out to be ineligible, check them to be sure so we can eliminate them from the database next year.

As always, every outlet sheet must be reviewed for eligibility. All eligible outlets must be visited by a youth volunteer.

**Finding Outlets**

Most of the outlet sheets have telephone numbers. However, it is not uncommon for phone numbers to have changed since the last study. Do not solely rely on phone numbers printed on the data collection form to determine eligibility. If you find that a phone number has changed or been disconnected, investigate further by checking the phone number in a local telephone directory or by physically visiting the address. If you find a new phone number, be sure to indicate the change on a note attached to the data collection form to save your county from having to duplicate your efforts again for next year’s study.

Many of the outlets might have updated addresses. In some cases, two address aliases are included to help identify an outlet’s location (e.g., 1492 East Main – Redcliffe Shopping Center).

If you find that an outlet has a better address, a more complete address, or any address alias that will make it easier to find, write the new address information on a note attached to the outlet sheet so it can be added to the database.

**New Names for Outlets**

Many outlets change their name or are bought out by different chains each year (especially among drug stores and convenience stores/gas stations). The database may or may not have the current business name, depending on how recent any change has been.

Visit the outlets based on the address on the outlet sheet, even if the outlet has a new name. Go to the address, regardless of the outlet name.

If an outlet has simply changed ownership and has a new name, do not apply the ineligibility code “OUT OF BUSINESS.” Rather, go to the specific address and see if it has a new name and then visit the newly named outlet and be sure to indicate the new name on a note attached to the outlet form.

# **Convenience Stores & Gas Stations**

Many convenience stores change the name of the store itself or the brand of gasoline it sells – or both – from year to year. If our database has a different name (or part of a name) than the outlet at a particular address, visit the outlet anyway and change the name on a note attached to the outlet form (after being sure you are at the correct address).

If an outlet has a different name than that on the outlet verification sheet, inspect it anyway and record the new information on a note attached to the form.

In some cases, the “official name” of an outlet is different from the name on the building (e.g., the database says the business name is “Emro Marketing Co,” but the building says “Speedway”). Provide whatever additional information on the form will best help future Synar inspection teams find the location.

# **Hotels**

If a hotel has a gift shop, be sure to attempt to purchase cigarettes/ENDS at the gift shop itself. If the gift shop has a separate name, be sure to include it on a note attached to the outlet form.

Also, be aware that many hotels have recently been bought by different chains and might have a different name than the name in the database. Visit the hotel at the address on the outlet sheet and update the new name of the hotel as needed.

# Do not substitute a nearby outlet at a different physical location.

If you cannot find a particular place, do not substitute a nearby similar outlet. (Many hotels are clustered close to one another and do not have the exact address listed on the building.)

If you are looking for a Marriott – and you are sure that you are at the correct street address – but the hotel is now an Embassy Suites, go ahead and visit the Embassy Suites and change the name on the outlet sheet. If you cannot find the Marriott, do not go to the nearby Holiday Inn instead (for example).

Route Planning

Before the local training event, the county coordinator and the recruited adult drivers should establish the division of routes and the estimated number of purchase attempts per team.

The outlet forms provided to the counties were not necessarily sorted in any useful way geographically, so you might want to do so by ZIP Code or town to help see the most efficient routes.

## Sample Eligibility Monitoring

# **Attend to Every Outlet Form**

Every outlet provided to you by the state Synar staff must be visited. However, not every outlet will turn out to sell cigarettes/ENDS. You may review the forms for eligibility (i.e., that an outlet sells cigarettes/ENDS accessible to youth) before you take youth out on purchase attempts. DAODAS will replace identified ineligible outlets with a new outlet prior to the start of the study.

### **Inspection Completion Rate of 100%**

With our state random sampling methods, you must assess every outlet given to you. If you do not, it will severely affect the results! Every location must be either documented completely as ineligible or actually visited by a youth.

Failure to inspect all outlets provided to you will result in your county forfeiting its performance bonus.

If you locate new outlets during your inspections, you should not inspect them. However, you should turn them in to the state Synar staff, and you will receive a STEP point for each location (maximum of 10 points per year).

# **Reviewing Outlets for Eligibility**

When you review outlets before data collection, concentrate on the outlets most in need of review (i.e., those outlets most likely not to sell cigarettes/ENDS – hotels, bars, and restaurants especially) since convenience stores and grocery stores are all likely to sell cigarettes/ENDS.

**If you determine an outlet is definitely outside your county, you do not have to inspect it. However, you must inform state Synar staff of this by December 6, 2024 (Regions 2 and 3), or by** **February 27, 2025 (Regions 1 and 4)**. **This outlet must still be inspected by the other county, and we want to give them plenty of time to incorporate it into their plans.**

Avoid the temptation to mark an outlet as ineligible just to avoid having to drive to it. This biases the results and biases the sampling in future years.

Do not substitute sites. If you cannot find a site, do not pick another one nearby instead. Just mark the site as ineligible because you truly could not locate it.

Some duplicate outlets might remain, since various data sets are used to identify possible cigarette outlets. Although we removed as many duplicates as were obvious, some remain in the data set and may be in your sample. These duplicates could be two versions of the same outlet with names that have slightly different spellings, or the street name might be listed differently for the same physical address (e.g., Highway 378 = Sumter Highway = Garners Ferry Road). It is difficult for DAODAS to tell which outlets might be duplicates; therefore, when you find a duplicate in your county, declare one of the duplicated outlets ineligible and write in the matching outlet number on the ineligible form so we can clean up the data set for future years.

It is possible that there are a few outlets with the wrong city listed on the form (e.g., an outlet may be listed as Charleston but is really in Summerville). Sometimes the records reflect the city in which the telephone service operates, and often city boundaries change and an outlet might actually now be annexed into a different city than the list indicates. Do not give up too quickly. If the city or address does not look right, call the outlet and get directions, then make the correction on a note attached to the data sheet so we can make the correction in the database for subsequent years.

# **Ineligibility Decisions During Initial Reviews**

During the initial review process, if the coordinator has reliable knowledge that an outlet does not sell tobacco products, the outlet could be marked for non-consideration and replaced. All outlet exclusions must be confirmed with a telephone call or a physical site visit to ensure that the business does not sell tobacco products. If an outlet is deemed not to sell tobacco, inform DAODAS by December 6, 2024 (Regions 2 and 3), or by February 27, 2025 (Regions 1 and 4) to receive a replacement outlet.

It is best to eliminate any ineligible outlets before taking youth on the actual data collection routes.

Ineligible Outlets – Reasons for Ineligibility

The following are possible reasons that an outlet might be declared ineligible, either at the various outlet review stages or during data collection:

* Outlet does not sell cigarettes/ENDS over the counter.
* Outlet is inaccessible to youth under age 18 by state law (e.g., “adult entertainment clubs”).
* Outlet is no longer in business.
* Unable to locate the outlet or wrong street address for the outlet. (Be sure it is not just a business name change.)
* Outlet is a seasonal business and is not open at this time of year.
* Outlet is locked, and access is restricted by buzzer and security camera.
* Outlet is judged by adults or youth to be unsafe.
* Outlet has an out-of-state address.
* Outlet sells cigarettes/ENDS by the carton only (i.e., no individual packs).
* Outlet sells cigarettes/ENDS via vending machine.
* Establishment is actually a corporate office and not a retail outlet.
* Establishment is a wholesaler that does not sell directly to the public.
* Outlet is a duplicate record.
* Address is a personal residence/post office box (where mailing address also is not an eligible outlet).
* Cannot talk way past doorman, greeter, maître d’, or excessive misrepresentation needed to gain access.
* Other legitimate reason (specify).

## Inspecting Bars, Restaurants, or Other Non-Traditional Outlets

# Not all tobacco retailers are “stores.” Federal Synar regulations tell us that we should be attempting inspections at all types of locations that sell tobacco, although there are a few exceptions. One exception is locations that are prohibited by state law from allowing entry by youth under age 18 (e.g., “adult entertainment clubs”). These establishments should not be inspected.

# **Bars/Restaurants**

Traditional bars/restaurants are not barred by state law from allowing those under 18 to enter the establishment, even if it is that establishment’s policy. These establishments must be inspected.

If you are given a bar or restaurant in your sample, first confirm that they sell cigarettes/ENDS (if that has not been *recently* confirmed). This can be done in the same ways you would confirm whether a traditional store sells cigarettes/ENDS prior to inspection.

If you learn that an establishment *does* sell cigarettes/ENDS and will need to be inspected, a bar/restaurant might require some additional pre-inspection preparation, as we want our youth fully informed on how to proceed once inside. Also, it might require slightly different tactics for the adult inside the establishment during the inspection. Some of the things you might try to learn are:

* When does this establishment open/close?
* Does this establishment typically have someone checking IDs at the door?
* Where are the cigarettes/ENDS sold inside this establishment?
* How can I describe to the youth how to most quickly get in and locate the place where the cigarettes/ENDS are sold? Will they need to say anything to a staff person to get to that location?
* What type of cigarettes/ENDS are sold? (This may not be necessary.)

*When should these outlets be inspected*? As early in the day as possible to maximize youth safety, although some bars may not open until “happy hour” or later. Also, for bars, the earlier the inspection, the better the chance that they might not have to deal with a doorman or cover charges.

*What should the adult who goes inside the bar/restaurant do?* The adult who enters the establishment should try to place themselves in a location where they can see/hear the attempted purchase once the youth enters. In most cases, this will be the bar area of a bar/restaurant. It does not make sense for that adult to order something, as they will be leaving shortly. You can determine how to best handle this, but we recommend pretending to be on a cell phone call (perhaps talking to someone who is supposed to join you) to avoid placing an order.

When the attempt is completed and the youth has left, the adult can simply leave too. This might look odd – and might even tip off the establishment that an underage buy attempt has just taken place – but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Creating a sense of perceived enforcement might help prevent future sales, and the likelihood of the retailer “phone tree” hindering upcoming inspections is minimal, given that you will be inspecting only a small number of locations each year and they will likely be scattered across the county.

We recommend that the adult inside the establishment carry the letter from Michelle Nienhius about the legality of these inspections *(see page 4)*. However, the letter should be kept out of sight unless needed.

*What should the youth buyer do?* For the most part, these inspections are not unlike store inspections. The youth should approach the area where cigarettes/ENDS are sold and follow the general protocols in all aspects. One exception is *how* they ask for cigarettes/ENDS. For stores, we ask them to request a specific brand/style of cigarettes/ENDS. For bars/restaurants, the cigarettes/ENDS are often out of sight, and they have a limited selection of brands. In this case, it is appropriate for the youth to ask, “What kind of cigarettes do you have?” and then select one of the brands named.

# **Doorman / Cover Charges**

Some bars/restaurants might have a level of restricted entry before the youth ever gets to the location where they can buy tobacco products. As mentioned earlier, if the establishment can be checked at a time before there is a doorman or a required cover charge, then do that.

If a cover charge is *always* required, then the establishment can be listed as ineligible due to “Inaccessible by Youth.”

If the youth must encounter a doorman, the youth should say as little as possible. If they are asked to show ID, they should answer as they would at the point of purchase – “I don’t have it with me.” If they are denied entry, then the establishment can be listed as ineligible due to “Inaccessible by Youth.” If they are asked why they want to go in, they should respond “to buy cigarettes.”

# **Private Bars**

Some bars are private establishments, where patrons are supposed to have pre-paid memberships to gain admission. These establishments might be more likely to have someone working the door, so refer to the guidance directly above on doormen. If the youth is asked if they are a member, they should respond “no.” If they are asked if they have a membership card, they should respond that they are not a member.

**Other Private Establishments**

Other types of private establishments should generally be approached as described in “Private Bars” above. Basically, if there is a person who must be addressed to gain access to the location where cigarettes/ENDS are sold, the youth should attempt to gain access, being fully truthful as always.

If grounds are marked as “private,” “no trespassing,” etc., but there is no person to deal with, the establishment can be listed as ineligible due to “Inaccessible by Youth.” We do not want to encourage trespassing where no permission was granted.

If the premises have a gate, buzzer, or security camera system that must be bypassed for entry, then the establishment can be listed as ineligible due to “Inaccessible by Youth.”

**Youth ID Code and Youth Master List**

When creating the Youth Master List:

1. Obtain a count of the number of discrete youth involved in the study.
2. Determine the number of purchases per youth volunteer.
3. Provide youth anonymity on the data collection forms.
4. Provide a shorthand for data entry efforts.

The Youth Master List is used to record each youth’s name, dates of participation, date of birth, age, race, gender, last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN), and telephone number.

The instructions for creating the Youth ID Code are detailed on the Youth Master List. **The first two values of Adult and Youth ID Codes must be letters.** *(See examples below.)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Youth Name | Youth Initials | Last 4 Digits of Youth SSN | Youth ID Code |
| Tina Salem | TS | 8248 | TS8248 |
| Joseph Kamel | JK | 4491 | JK4491 |
| Winston Hack | WH | 1528 | WH1528 |
| Ann Orien | AO | 7640 | AO7640 |

If a youth does not know the last four digits of his/her SSN, you can substitute the last four digits of his/her home telephone number.

The county coordinator must ensure that the Youth ID Codes are unique (i.e., no two youth in the same county share the same Youth ID Code). Example of a potential problem: Two siblings, John Smith and Joanna Smith, are participating. Neither knows their SSN, so you use the last four digits of their home telephone number. In this case, both John and Joanna would have the same Youth ID Code. To solve the problem, modify one digit of the home telephone number to make the two Youth ID Codes unique.

The county coordinator should give the youth his/her ID on a piece of paper to take with them in case they forget it during the day. The youth will write the Youth ID Code on each purchase attempt form.

See various attachments for details of this process.

**Note:** We will need the home telephone number regardless of which Youth ID Code method you use, since we will need to call youth if we have questions regarding a particular form.

|  |
| --- |
| Youth Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Youth ID  Last 4 Digits of Youth’s SSN  First and Last Initials  Youth’s County of Residence \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_  Dates of Participation \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ |
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## Adult Participant Master List

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Adult Name | Telephone Number | Adult ID Code | | | | | |
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Ineligibility Codes Defined

The following additional information is intended to further explain the ineligibility codes listed on the data collection form:

* **OUT OF BUSINESS –** Outlet is no longer in business. If the business has been closed for many years, you may indicate that on the form.
* **WHOLESALE ONLY / CARTON SALE ONLY –** Establishment is a wholesaler that does not sell directly to the public, or outlet sells cigarettes/ENDS by the carton only (no individual packs).
* **DOES NOT SELL –** Outlet does not sell cigarettes/ENDS over the counter.
* **INACCESSIBLE BY YOUTH –** Outlet is inaccessible to youth under age 18 (either an “adult entertainment club,” which does not need to be attempted, or a bar/restaurant that will not allow the youth to enter the establishment). Actual attempt is required unless a cover charge is required.
* **PRIVATE CLUB OR RESIDENCE (MEMBERS ONLY) –** Need to be a member to get into the outlet (e.g., shopping club, private club, private golf course). An attempt should be made by a youth unless some unmanned gate/buzzer system is used.
* **DUPLICATE –** Outlet is a duplicate record. Use the space on the form to record the outlet number of the duplicate.
* **TEMPORARY CLOSURE –** Outlet is indefinitely closed at the time of visit or is a seasonal business and is not open at this time of year.
* **UNLOCATABLE –** Unable to locate the outlet, although a reasonable attempt has been made to look for it in the approximate area.
* **OTHER** **REASON(S) –** Other legitimate reason. Record the reason not otherwise listed on the back of the form.

Reasons for Not Completing an Inspection at an Eligible Outlet

If an eligible outlet cannot be inspected for any of the following reasons, but is likely open at a later time, you must return and conduct the inspection. An eligible outlet should be visited at least three times before being returned without being inspected.

* **CLOSED AT TIME OF VISIT**
* **UNSAFE**
* **PRESENCE OF POLICE**
* **YOUTH INSPECTOR KNOWS SALESPERSON**
* **OTHER**

Treatment of Outlet Forms – Summary

* Never change the outlet number for any reason. The outlet number refers to a unique outlet and must not be changed, even if the outlet is a duplicate or not eligible. If the outlet is a duplicate, write the number of the duplicate outlet in the ineligibility box.
* Please ask your volunteers to write neatly and fill in the bubbles completely. Black ink is mandatory.
* Please inform your volunteers to fill in the bubbles on the scannable forms. Do not put check marks or dashes through the bubbles.
* Outlet numbers might change each year. If you made a note about a particular outlet number last year, that number might not refer to the same location this year.
* Be certain that each youth has only one Youth ID Code (initials and last four digits of their Social Security Number) that is unique to that youth, and that the code is written in the appropriate space on the sheet for each outlet that the youth visited. If a youth has a birthday between two inspections they attempt, then they should be listed with two different Youth ID Codes.
* Be sure that the Youth ID Codes on the outlet forms match the Youth Master List.
* Although youth volunteers often fill out the forms themselves, an adult must review each sheet to be sure that it was filled out correctly.
* If you declare an outlet to be a duplicate, only one of the two outlets is a true duplicate. Do not mark them both as duplicates and consider them both ineligible.
* Do not rely on the telephone number alone to determine if an outlet is ineligible. The telephone number may be wrong or changed, even if the outlet itself is still open.
* If you find that the name or address for an outlet is incorrect on the form, make a note and send one coversheet with all changes for any outlet. We will make the corrections for next year’s forms.
* Return the sheets in order by outlet number. Do not separate the buys or the ineligibles – leave them all together in one stack and sorted by outlet number.

## 4 – Post-Data Collection Data Review / State Forms

Importance of Edit Checks

We need to be sure that all the data submitted are as accurate as possible. The federal oversight agencies will review the data and question any unusual findings. Local law enforcement may follow up with their own inspections of sites that we indicate sold cigarettes/ENDS to an underage youth.

Please review and correct your data collection outlet forms very carefully before sending the data to DAODAS. Correct any miscoding or inconsistencies and fill in as much missing data as possible. Examples of edit checks:

* Be sure Youth ID Codes and age-race-sex on the data collection forms agree with the Youth ID Codes and age-race-sex on the Youth Master List and correct where necessary.
* If no Youth ID Code is listed, but the youth’s age-race-sex are checked, investigate the likely candidate from the Youth Master List or from the team number and write the Youth ID Code on the form.
* Check inconsistencies between an outlet being marked “ineligible” and the actual visit. Sometimes it appears that an outlet was initially marked ineligible but later revisited with an actual purchase attempt.
* If an outlet is marked “ineligible,” make sure the reason is indicated.
* Was the youth asked their age or asked to show ID? Review any unusual situations. For example, a youth might mark “yes,” they were asked their age or asked to show ID, but were sold cigarettes/ENDS anyway. This does occur, but review so we can be sure that it was not miscoded.
* Were cigarettes/ENDS sold (yes/no)? Check for reasonableness. If “no” is checked, but the price is listed, check and change to “yes” if necessary. Also, if the outlet was marked as ineligible, the cigarette sale “yes/no” block should be blank to avoid confusing a true eligible visit in which no sale occurred with an outlet where no sale occurred because the outlet was ineligible. We will make this edit automatically unless you tell us that an outlet marked ineligible really was an eligible visit with a “no” sale.
* Date and time: Fill in any missing dates and times that you can. Fill in any other missing data that you can remember or determine from the youth and adult volunteers.
* If you have any doubts about an outlet (e.g., if you suspect the data is too unreliable or inconsistent to withstand challenges by a merchant), re-visit that site.

Post-Data Collection Data Review at the Local Level

Immediately after the end of each data collection outing (e.g., during the debriefing/pizza party), the county coordinators must review the following items:

* Make sure all the teams returned with the forms and cigarettes/ENDS and related information.
* Count the forms returned vs. the number sent out (to ensure you are not missing any), total eligible visits, total ineligible visits, and the number of eligible outlet visits resulting in a sale vs. no sale.
* Check that all non-visited outlets have a reason for ineligibility checked and initialed by an adult.
* Have the youth and adult volunteers review the data collection forms, fill in any missing data, and correct any inconsistent data while the youth and adults are still present and their memories are fresh.
* Ensure that six-character Youth ID and Adult ID Codes are on every outlet inspection form. (Use your cross-reference list if the forms are still grouped by team or individual youth’s name.)
* Count all purchased tobacco products and prices on all forms if a purchase was made, and cross-check that a pack of cigarettes or ENDS is present for every “yes” sale marked on the forms.
* Write down any interesting experiences, even if not on a particular outlet form. Have youth discuss their interesting experiences, thoughts, and opinions about their experience.
* Ensure that Youth Master Lists and Adult Participant Master Lists are complete.
* Collect accurate mileage and cigarette cost information from teams.
* Review the checklist items on the County Coordinator Checklist and Return Cover Sheet *(see Page 40)*.
* Make copies of data collection forms, Youth Master List, Adult Participant Master List, parent permission forms, expense reports, and County Coordinator Checklist and Return Cover Sheet before sending originals to DAODAS.

What Do I Send Back to DAODAS?

When all purchase attempts are completed, edit checks are finished, and the County Coordinator Checklist and Return Cover Sheet has been completed, copy and send the following to DAODAS:

* All outlet forms provided to you, including those for outlets not visited. (Be sure that they are in order by outlet number and bubbles are filled in correctly.)
* Youth Master List
* Adult Participant Master List
* All parent permission forms (signed and dated prior to inspections)
* County Coordinator Checklist and Return Cover Sheet
* County Synar Expense Report (for each county if a multi-county agency)
* Copy of each letter sent to a violating store or a completed Call/Visit Log with each call or visit to a violator listed

**\* DO NOT FAX! \***

County Coordinator Checklist and Return Cover Sheet

**NOTE: Complete a separate checklist form for each county in a multi-county agency.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| County in which tobacco purchase attempts were made: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Name of county coordinator: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| □ Total number of outlet forms given to this county: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| □ Number of outlets determined to be ineligible: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| □ Number of outlets eligible for a youth visit: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | = Line 1 – Line 2 |
| □ Number of eligible outlets actually visited by youth: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| □ Number of eligible outlets **not** visited by youth: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | = Line 3 – Line 4 (should be 0) |
| □ Check (line 2 + line 4 + line 5 should equal line 1): | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | = Line 2 + Line 4 + Line 5 |
| □ Number of successful purchase attempts (buys): | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| All provided data collection forms have been collected, reordered by outlet number, and no data forms are missing. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every data form is completed as a visit or marked ineligible. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| All forms marked ineligible have a reason that “ineligible” is specified. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| The Youth ID Code (e.g., TS9801) is on every eligible data form. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| All check boxes and appropriate text boxes on all forms are filled in. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Youth Master List is enclosed. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every youth in the study is included on the list. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every youth in the study has an appropriately created Youth ID Code. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| A roughly equal number of visits were done by youth of each age (16-20)  and gender. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Each visit was done by a youth of the race of a majority of the outlet’s community. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every youth on the list has a home telephone number listed. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Adult Participant Master List is enclosed. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every adult who participated in the study is on the list. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |
| Every adult on the list has a telephone number listed. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| County Synar Expense Report is completed, reviewed, and included. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Signed Consent forms were obtained from all youth and their parents.  Copies are being sent to DAODAS. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Every violated outlet has been sent a letter, called, or visited before final forms are returned to DAODAS. Copies of letters or Call/Visit Log returned to DAODAS. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Copies have been made and kept of all data forms, Youth Master List, Adult Participant Master List, permission forms, and County Expense Report. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| This checklist is included in the package sent to DAODAS. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | (Initial if done) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Overall review of all of the above done by: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name) | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date) |

## 5 – reimbursed expenses

DAODAS will reimburse:

* **The cost of the purchased tobacco products.** To make sure each youth has enough money for each outing, check prices of the products you are asking them to attempt to purchase and provide them with enough money to make the purchase. For example, for 10 attempted purchases on a trip, each team would need: $6.00 per pack x 50% buy rate (worst case – purchases made in half of the 10 attempts) = about $30 per trip for cigarettes. Make sure volunteers return leftover money.
* **$30 for each youth and adult volunteer used.** You do not need to use the absolute minimum number of volunteers possible; however, you might not be reimbursed for every volunteer if you use far more volunteers than needed. **Staff do not count as adult volunteers.** Multi-county agencies may only count a youth or volunteer adult once across counties. **NOTE:** Reimbursement is only for volunteers who conducted the checks, and their initials should be noted on the forms.
* **State Mileage Rate of 67 cents per mile as of January 1, 2024,** for personal vehicles used to travel to outlets during the Synar study. DAODAS will inform you of any updates to this reimbursement rate, as it is subject to change.

Performance Incentive Bonus Eligibility Guidelines

Counties that fulfill all of the major guidelines for the survey will receive a separate performance incentive bonus equal to the amount of their approved Synar study expenses. This performance incentive money is to be used for prevention programs.

To receive this money, all of the following guidelines must be met:

√

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Purchase attempts must be completed by February 28, 2025 (Group 1), and  May 30, 2025 (Group 2).** Counties must have attempted a purchase at all eligible outlets provided to them for the study or documented that the outlet is ineligible. **If you are requesting an extension due to extraneous circumstances, you must submit a request in writing to DAODAS by February 14 (Group 1) or by May 9 (Group 2).** |
|  | Groups must inform DAODAS by the stated deadline if any outlets are ineligible. |
|  | All required information, forms, and data must be returned to the state Synar staff by the stated deadlines. Forms must be fully and correctly completed. Do not fax any forms. |
|  | **Purchase attempts must be conducted with an approximately equal balance of males/females and assigned age groups (16- and 17-year-olds OR 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds).** The race of the buyer for the purchase attempt should match the demographics of the community. |
|  | All inspections were conducted according to protocol as documented by state Synar staff. |

To minimize bias, **no youth may make more than five purchase attempts**. Even if a youth is used for more than one county, that youth may not make more than five combined purchase attempts. **Ask DAODAS Prevention staff if you have any questions about the breakdown of buy attempts by each youth age group.**

**Failure to meet these requirements could result in your county not receiving its bonus.** Further, if state Synar staff determine the county willfully disregarded the requirements of the study, the county could be reimbursed only for the cost of the cigarettes and mileage. One example of a “willful disregard” would be to use one youth for all the inspections, clearly a departure from the standards presented.

FY25 County Synar Expense Report

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| County Covered by This Report: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| County Synar Study Coordinator: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Number of Eligible Outlets Visited in This County: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Number of Completed Purchases in This County: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Date of This Report: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Travel/Cigarette Expenses | | | | |
| Trip Number | Miles Traveled | Vehicle Mileage Costs  (miles x current state rate) | Total Tobacco Purchase Costs for This Trip | Total Trip Costs |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |
| 13+\* |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTALS** | **Miles:** | **$** | **$** | **\*$** |

\*If you had more than 13 trips, detail the broken-down costs for trips 13+ on an attached sheet of paper.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Overall # of Youth Volunteers | + | Overall # of Adult Volunteers (Non-Staff) | = | Total # of Volunteers | **x $30** | Volunteer Reimbursement |
|  |  |  | **\*\*$** |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total Trip Costs\* | + | Volunteer Reimbursement\*\* | = | **Total Synar Expenses** |
| **$** | **$** | **$** |

|  |
| --- |
| All data and all forms must be received by DAODAS and DAODAS must perform initial data entry and quality assurance checks before the reimbursement request is processed. |

|  |
| --- |
| DAODAS approval and signature required before forwarding for payment:  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Signature of DAODAS Approving Officer Printed Name – Approving Officer Date of Approval |

## 6 – MERCHANT FOLLOW-UP

Following Up With Outlets

Counties are required to follow-up with all outlets they inspect. Before you turn in your final Synar paperwork to DAODAS (postmarked by **March 7, 2025 [Group 1], or June 6, 2025 [Group 2],** at the latest), you must mail or otherwise contact each eligible outlet inspected and inform them of whether they sold or not during the study. If they sold, you must inform them of the day and time of the inspection. It is recommended that you invite them to attend a future PREP session, particularly if they sold.

**For violating outlets, you are required to send in a copy of the letter sent to each violator with your final paperwork. If you made contact by telephone or personal visit, you must fill out the Call/Visit Log for Synar Violators *(see Page 47)* and return the log to DAODAS by the deadline.**

Sample Notification Letter of  
Merchant Compliance with Tobacco Sales Law

Dear Tobacco Retailer:

As part of a federally mandated study conducted earlier this year by state and local alcohol and drug abuse authorities, a youth under the age of 21 visited your establishment in an authorized attempt to purchase tobacco products. This study was not a “sting” conducted by law enforcement. Rather, the intent of the study was to measure the ease with which underage youth can purchase tobacco products in South Carolina. The primary focus of the study is to make merchants and the general public aware of the extent of the problem of underage tobacco sales.

I am pleased to report that **your establishment did not sell tobacco products to the underage youth**. It is encouraging to know that you and your employees are aware of the South Carolina law that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to minors. It is known that retailers who check for proper identification on all tobacco sales are less likely to inadvertently sell to a minor.

Educational materials and training programs are available to help retailers identify and handle cigarette and alcohol purchase attempts by underage youth. If you would like more information about these materials and programs, please contact your county alcohol and drug abuse authority.

Thank you again for your conscientious efforts to comply with the law to prohibit the illegal sales of tobacco products to minors. Your role is important in helping reduce youth access to tobacco and thereby reducing other community problems associated with tobacco use by South Carolina’s children and youth.

Sincerely,

County Prevention Professional

Sample Notification Letter of  
Merchant Non-Compliance with Tobacco Sales Law

Dear Tobacco Retailer:

As part of a federally mandated study conducted earlier this year by state and local alcohol and drug abuse authorities, a youth under the age of 21 visited your establishment in an authorized attempt to purchase tobacco products. This study was not a “sting” conducted by law enforcement. Rather, the intent of the study was to measure the ease with which underage youth can purchase tobacco products in South Carolina. The primary focus of the study is to make merchants and the general public aware of the extent of the problem of underage tobacco sales.

Unfortunately, **your establishment sold tobacco products to the underage youth** during our purchase attempt at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, placing you in violation of federal law that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21. It is known that retailers who check for proper identification on all tobacco sales are less likely to inadvertently sell to a minor.

Educational materials and training programs are available to help retailers identify and handle tobacco and alcohol purchase attempts by underage youth. As a community merchant, your role is important in influencing youth access to tobacco and thereby impacting other community problems associated with tobacco use by South Carolina’s children and youth. If you have any questions or would like assistance in addressing this problem, please contact your county alcohol and drug abuse authority.

Sincerely,

County Prevention Professional

**CALL/VISIT LOG FOR SYNAR VIOLATORS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Violating Outlet** | **Outlet ID #** | **Type of Follow-Up Contact Made** | **Date of Follow-Up Contact** | **Name of Person Making Follow-Up Contact** | **Synar Coordinator’s Initials** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. South Carolina FFY2019 Youth Access to Tobacco Study, DAODAS, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Numbers here are examples to illustrate the process. They are not actual numbers used to draw the sample. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)