

**NEWS** from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
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## **Tobacco sales to minors drop to historic low**

Bismarck ND – The North Dakota Department of Human Services today announced that tobacco sales to minors fell to a historic low of 1.7 percent in an annual federally-mandated survey. Last year, the violation rate was 5.8 percent, which was a record low at that time.

The statewide survey was conducted between July and September. Minors working under adult supervision attempted to purchase cigarettes at 239 businesses statewide, and were successful only four times.

“We are very pleased with the results because access to tobacco contributes to smoking, and we know that tobacco use adversely affects health,” said Michaela Schirado, a research analyst with the Department of Human Services.

Schirado said the *We Card* program, and other efforts retailers have made to educate and supervise staff appear to be making a difference.

North Dakota has made significant progress addressing the sale of tobacco to minors. In 1995-1996, the state’s noncompliance rate exceeded 50 percent.

To receive federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funding, states are required to conduct the annual scientific survey of licensed tobacco retail sites. Last year 26 states, including North Dakota, achieved a 90 percent or higher compliance rate. Currently, if compliance rates are below 80 percent, a state could lose block grant funding.

In 2008, the North Dakota Department of Human Services received \$5.1 million from the block grant. The funds are typically used for public substance abuse treatment through the department’s eight regional human service centers.

Survey results are available on the department’s Web site at [www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/abuse](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/abuse).

For information about the compliance check, which is independent of other local compliance activities, contact Michaela Schirado, research analyst, N.D. Department of Human Services, at 701-328-8705.

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