

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Compliance survey finds few businesses selling tobacco products to minors

BISMARCK, N.D. – Today the North Dakota Department of Human Services released the results of the annual statewide survey on tobacco sales to minors. The 2006 results are similar to the 2005 results; 92 percent of the licensed tobacco retailers surveyed did not sell tobacco products to minors.

“Most licensed tobacco retailers in North Dakota are complying with laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors. Out of 221 attempts, minors were successful only 18 times in this year’s survey. This compares to 17 sales out of 219 attempts in 2005,” said Elizabeth Cunningham, a research analyst with the department’s Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division.

She said the state has made great strides addressing the issue. Before 2000, the state’s noncompliance rate exceeded 50 percent. It has been below 10 percent for the past five years.

Thirteen of the purchases took place in western North Dakota, and five occurred in the eastern part of the state. This is a reversal of the 2005 results; that year more successful buys occurred in eastern North Dakota. However, the numbers are so small that the findings probably aren’t significant Cunningham said.

The 2006 survey included retailers randomly selected statewide. Bars and places where it is illegal for a minor to enter were excluded. Two 15-year-olds and one 16-year-old participated in the survey and were supervised by an adult.

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Federal law requires all states that receive Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) block grant funding to conduct annual scientific surveys involving test purchases by youth at licensed retail sites. States with noncompliance rates exceeding 20 percent risk losing part of their block grant funding. In 2006, North Dakota received \$5.1 million from this block grant.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services is in the process of notifying businesses of their individual results. In addition, states attorneys will be notified of inspection results in their counties. The Department of Human Services is involved in monitoring, not enforcement. The North Dakota Department of Health and local public health units offer smoking cessation services and provide public health education campaigns in schools and communities.

The department has posted an abstract and the draft report on its web site at <http://www.nd.gov/humanservices/info/pubs/abuse.html>.

For more information about the survey, contact Elizabeth Cunningham, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, N.D. Department of Human Services at 701-328-8705, or socune@nd.gov.

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