

Fewer US kids buying tobacco products, report says

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Rate at which retailers violate under-18 sales ban has fallen to just 9 percent.

(HealthDay News) —Government efforts to keep minors away from tobacco appear to be working, with a new U.S. report finding sales of cigarettes and other products at near-record lows.

The Synar Amendment Program, initiated 16 years ago to prevent the sale of [tobacco](#) products to youth, has seen very low rates of retailer violations of the ban on tobacco sales to those under the age of 18.

Overall, only about 9 percent of retailers violated the ban, according to the latest annual report—well under the target of 20 percent set by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). It's the second lowest national retailer violation rate observed since the law's inception.

What's more, while 33 states and the District of Columbia are now

registering local violation rates of below 10 percent, nine other states have seen their statewide violation rates plummet to below 5 percent.

"Over its 16-year history the Synar program has made remarkable strides in lowering the levels of illegal [tobacco sales](#) to minors across the nation," Frances Harding, director of SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, said in an agency news release.

The Synar program (named after its legislative sponsor, the late Representative Mike Synar of Oklahoma) was first enacted in 1996 as part of the passage of the Public Health Service Act.

Since its launch the program has required that all states and U.S. jurisdictions implement both laws and programs to enforce them, to prevent access to [tobacco products](#) among the under-18 set.

Despite the program's success, Harding said the fight to keep youth and tobacco apart is far from over.

"Far more needs to be done to prevent kids and young adults from using tobacco, which is still the nation's leading cause of preventable death," she said.

More information: There's more on ways to keep young people from smoking at the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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