

Tough laws continue to target tobacco sales to minors

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Everyone in a community must work together to stop illegal sales, U.S. health official says.

(HealthDay)—Only about 10 percent of inspected stores across the United States illegally sold tobacco products to minors during 2013, a U.S. government report says.

That is half the 20 percent target rate set by a national and state effort called the Synar Amendment program to end illegal tobacco [sales](#) to youth. And it's well below the highest violation rate of nearly 73 percent reported when the program was implemented 16 years ago.

The Synar program requires states and federal jurisdictions to create laws and enforcement programs to prevent the sale and distribution of [tobacco products](#) to people younger than 18.

For the eighth year in a row, all states met their Synar program goals and 10 states had retailer violation rates of less than 5 percent, according to the report from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia had violation rates of less than 10 percent, the report said.

However, the overall national violation rate rose from 9.1 percent in 2012 to 9.6 percent in 2013. Potential reasons for that slight increase include reduced enforcement of the program because of budget cuts in some states, and [states](#) starting to report on [illegal sales](#) of all tobacco products, especially non-cigarette products such as smokeless tobacco, the agency said.

"Tobacco use is still the nation's leading cause of preventable death. We must do everything we can to deter minors from buying tobacco products," Frances Harding, director of the SAMHSA Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, said in an agency news release.

"For the past 17 years, the Synar program has made a real difference in lowering the levels of illegal tobacco sales to minors across the nation. However, everyone in the community must continue to work together in eliminating these illegal sales," Harding added.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [youth and tobacco](#).

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