

PRESS RELEASE

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DMHSA Announces Drop in Tobacco Sales to Minors

Hagåtña, Guam – The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse – Prevention and Training Branch announces today that tobacco sales to minors have remained under 12 percent since 2007 on Guam. Recent tobacco vendor monitoring survey results show a decline in illegal tobacco sales to minors; from 10.2% in 2010 to 7.8% in 2011. The federal fiscal year 2010 national weighted average is 9.3% (Retail Violation Rates).

This federal mandate (referred to as Synar) is aimed at reducing tobacco sales to minors. Guam conducts unannounced tobacco vendor inspections and compliance checks every year. In September 2011, twenty-three stores were in violation of Guam Public Law 24-278 (also known as the Tobacco Control Act of 1998) and were assessed fines ranging from \$500 for a first-time violation, up to \$5,000.

DMHSA partnered with the Guam Department of Revenue and Taxation to conduct and report the results of the Synar compliance checks. “The Guam Department of Revenue and Taxation is in-charge of tobacco-retailer licensing and tobacco law enforcement,” said Director John Camacho. “Also, we provide merchants education to guide them on compliance. The outcome of this year’s compliance checks is the result of the hard work by our field agents and the youth volunteer inspectors.” Director Camacho commended the 273 of 296 tobacco retailers who complied with the law and who passed the Synar inspection. “We look forward to the day when Guam’s merchants are 100% in compliance and are fully committed to doing their part in keeping Guam’s youth safe from tobacco use. “

“We’d also like to thank our partners for their efforts and for collaborating with us,” said Director Wilfred Aflague of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, “including the Department of Revenue and Taxation – Alcohol Beverage Control Branch and General Licensing Branch, and the Youth for Youth LIVE! Guam organization. We will continue to explore ways to work together to help Guam further decrease the risks associated with tobacco use and abuse.”

For more information, contact the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse – Prevention and Training Branch (PEACE office) at 477-9079 ~ 83 or the Department of Revenue and Taxation – Alcohol Beverage Control Branch at 635-1804.

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Synar regulation: In July 1992, the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act (P.L. 102-321) became law, which includes the Synar amendment (section 1926) aimed at decreasing youth access to tobacco. The Synar regulation requires all 50 states and territories to:

- *Have in effect a law prohibiting any manufacturer, retailer, or distributor of tobacco products from selling or distributing such products to any individual younger than age 18;*
- *Enforce this law;*
- *Conduct annual, unannounced inspections of retail tobacco outlets in a way that provides a valid probability sample of tobacco sales outlets accessible to minors;*
- *Negotiate interim target rates and a date to achieve a noncompliance rate of no more than 20 percent; and*
- *Submit an annual report detailing State and Territorial activities to enforce its law.*

The 2012 Synar report can be downloaded from the PEACE website: [Get link here](#)

P.L. 24-278: Also known as the Tobacco Control Act of 1998; this Guam law prohibits the sales or distribution of tobacco products to minors. Tobacco vendors must obtain a separate tobacco retail license for each premise or vending machine in which tobacco products are sold. The Act also established the Youth Tobacco Education and Prevention Fund (YTEPF) for use by Department of Mental Health and substance abuse for youth compliance monitoring and tobacco and drug prevention and education programs.