

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **DMHSA Continues Cycle of Improvement 29 Businesses In Violation of Selling Tobacco to Minors**

**Hagatna, November 6, 2009** - Guam Public Law No. 24-278 (also known as the Tobacco Control Act of 1998) mandates the conduct of random, unannounced tobacco vendor compliance inspections each year. The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (DMHSA) in partnership with the Department of Revenue and Taxation (DRT) completed its island wide 2009 monitoring activity.

For this current year, 347 businesses were inspected throughout the nineteen villages on the island; twenty-nine (29) were found to be in violation for selling tobacco products to minors and were cited by DRT officers. P.L. 24-278 prohibits vendors from selling tobacco products to persons under the age of 18 and if found to be in violation, must pay a graduated penalty of anywhere from \$500 up to \$5,000 per violation.

This vendor monitoring activity is federally mandated by the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention for all states and territories who receive substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant funds. Guam must provide assurances that the island's tobacco vendors do not sell tobacco products to individuals below the age of 18.

“Guam has the highest tobacco use rates nationwide among youth and adults. Vendor compliance to not sell tobacco products to minors is an effective strategy for reducing tobacco use among youth and eventual health-related consequences.” said David L. G. Shimizu, Director of the Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse. “Tobacco cessation services are offered as part of DMHSA’s continued *cycle of improvement* of services for the community” said Dr. Shimizu. DMHSA acknowledges and congratulates the over 300 Guam businesses who were awarded *Certificates of Compliance* and who contribute to the increase in Guam’s rate of compliance each year.

For more information about P.L. 24-278, contact the Business License Branch of the Department of Revenue and Taxation at 635-1829 or the Prevention and Training Branch at 477-9079/8863. Additional information about tobacco prevention and control can be found at: [www.peaceguam.org](http://www.peaceguam.org).

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