

**Michigan Department of Community Health  
Office of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care – Prevention and Treatment Section**

**Overview of Synar Compliance Check Procedure**

This project is part of a larger effort to determine the successful sales rates of tobacco products to minors (under age 18) as part of Michigan's compliance with the Synar amendment. Failure to successfully complete this project may result in significant loss of federal dollars for substance abuse prevention and treatment in Michigan.

The outlets selected for this survey will not be prosecuted during the formal Synar survey process. Because no purchase will actually take place, there will be no legal or administrative consequences or liability for the teens, chaperones, or retailer.

The information obtained from these surveys is for statistical purposes only. This does not preclude, however, follow-up activity in the form of education and/or additional compliance checks. Eventually, the statewide results (without retailer identification) will be published to increase community awareness and to encourage retailer compliance with the Youth Tobacco Act. The data may also be used to stress the importance of the need for statewide enforcement of the Youth Tobacco Act with appropriate law enforcement personnel.

The survey involves visiting randomly selected outlets that sell tobacco products, either over-the-counter or through vending machines. The youth inspector will enter the outlet, attempt to make a tobacco purchase, and record the results. The adult chaperone will need to drive the youth inspectors and oversee the purchase attempts.

If a compliance check cannot be done at a selected outlet, fill out the reason on the compliance check report form, and proceed to the next outlet on the sampling list. All forms must be *completed to the fullest extent possible*, and the original submitted to the state at the completion of the compliance check process.

**Sixteen and seventeen** year old teens can be recruited for this project as youth inspectors. Any compliance checks conducted with youth outside this age range will need to be redone. If possible, an equal number of males and females should be used. Teens selected, as youth inspectors, should look their age, be emotionally mature and their racial/ethnic characteristics should be consistent with the community in which you are conducting the compliance checks. Identify potential youth inspectors through the following: scout groups, school teachers and counselors, theater groups, youth councils, church youth groups, SADD chapters, coalition members' children, PRIDE groups, YWCA, and other youth groups. Parental permission is **required** for a teen to participate as a youth inspector. Please be sure that the parent or guardian of the teen signs the permission slip, which includes a release of liability statement.

An inspection team should at minimum consist of one adult and two teens (one male and one female). A male and a female should work alternately at separate establishments and receive an equal number of assignments per region. This will allow OROSC and ultimately CSAP to determine if clerks exhibit a selling bias between males and females. Ideally, male chaperones should be paired with male teens and female chaperones should be paired with female teens. In addition, an adult chaperone **must** accompany each youth inspector and witness the attempted tobacco purchase.

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Criteria of an adult chaperone are: trained as to their roles and responsibilities as a chaperone, good driving record, current driver's license, proof of vehicle insurance and a willingness to give encouragement and support to the youth inspector during the attempted buy.

Confidence is the key to a youth inspector successfully conducting a compliance check/making an attempted tobacco purchase. When instructing the youth inspector on what to do, emphasize that the ultimate goal is for outlets to stop providing cigarettes to children. Make it clear that if a clerk asks them for identification, or refuses to sell tobacco products or give change for the vending machine, it represents success on the part of the vendor, not failure on the part of the youth inspector.

Other related documents, including sample letters are available on the OROSC tobacco website. Feel free to use or adapt these materials as necessary. Please contact OROSC at [mdch-bhdda@michigan.gov](mailto:mdch-bhdda@michigan.gov), with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your cooperation!

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