

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

**Vendor Education Protocol**

1. Review the listing of vendors identified within your Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan (PIHP) Region. Utilize the most current tobacco Master Retail List (MRL) provided to the PIHPs.
  
2. Select **25 – 50%** of those vendors listed within the PIHP region to receive a personal visit by the Designated Youth Tobacco Use Representative (DYTUR) or their designee(s) during the **designated vendor education initiative time period**. This does not preclude additional Vendor Education at other times of the year. Every region should choose a minimum of 25%, however, if your region or designated catchment area has exceeded the maximum 20% retailer violation rate (RVR) as prescribed by the federal Synar Amendment, for three consecutive years, select 50% of the establishments from the MRL within that PIHP region. During the selection process, please take into consideration:
  - Sites selected for last year’s vendor education initiative
  - New businesses
  - Repeat violator sites identified as part of the Formal Synar Survey and the Non-Synar compliance check process
  - Locations with higher risk factors for selling (i.e. to minority groups, close proximity to middle and high schools)
  - Types of businesses known to sell tobacco to youth at a greater frequency than others, such as, gas stations, bars and lounges, and restaurants

Additionally, you will want to create a limited list of alternates in the event that you encounter establishments that have gone out of business, no longer sell tobacco products, or where the manager is unavailable to speak with you.

**Example:** If there are 1,000 retailers/vendors within the PIHP region, **25%** of those would equal 250. When determined necessary, Synar vendor education recommendations will be provided for you by OROSC.

3. When identifying persons to implement the retailer/vendor education activity, there is flexibility within the PIHP region with regard to who is selected for this process. Examples of possible participants for the education visits include, but are not limited to: DYTUR, local tobacco coalition members, state or local law enforcement personnel, and area youth. Any combination or pairing of persons that you feel would be effective is left to your discretion. Three points of caution, however, 1) do not cluster too large a group of individuals to provide the education visits (we do not wish to overwhelm the retailer/ vendor) 2) do not send a youth in by themselves - they need to be accompanied by at least one adult, and 3) make sure that those individuals who did the retailer/vendor education visit (especially the youth) are not the same as those who will conduct the formal Synar compliance check at designated retailers.

**Note:** If you are intending to use youth as part of your retailer/vendor education process, be sure to obtain prior written parental consent for their participation in this effort. Additionally, please provide training for this initiative in advance of the effort to ensure that the youth and adults are prepared and comfortable with their role. It is not mandatory that youth be engaged in the education process.

4. When scheduling time to make your visits, try to be cognizant of peak business times for those establishments on your list and make every effort to avoid those times. This may not always be possible, but if you are able to do so this may increase the likelihood of having a successful visit. Although peak times will certainly vary depending on the community and the type of business, peak times might include: first thing in the morning, lunch time, routine school adjournment, and when work shifts transition.
5. When approaching retailers/vendors as part of the education initiatives, please observe the following guidelines:
  - A. Upon entering the establishment, approach an available clerk and respectfully request to speak with the owner or manager. If asked, **be honest** about the purpose of your visit.
  - B. If the owner/manager is available, promptly get to the point of your visit, so as to be respectful of their time. Explain the purpose of your visit and ask if they have a few minutes to discuss some important and useful information about tobacco sales to youth. A sample script is provided for your convenience.

**Note:** If you are met with any anger or hostility on the part of the owner/ manager, do not persist. Thank them for their time and leave the establishment. Select another site to visit in place of that site. If the available quantity allows, you may wish to leave a packet. If not, make sure that visited establishments where you were not able to complete the education effort get a packet mailed to them. Your personal safety is always the primary consideration.
  - C. Be succinct in your discussion and presentation of the packet materials. Be prepared to walk them through the information in an organized manner, with the information of greatest importance and usefulness presented most prominently and covered early in the discussion. Some highlights to incorporate in your discussion include: the importance of complying with the Youth Tobacco Act (YTA), the posting of signs relevant to tobacco sales to minors, the necessity of checking identification, and the importance of making all clerks aware of the YTA and relevant details. (See “Education Visit Notes” at the end of this document for details on information to be included as part of Vendor Education visits.)
  - D. Upon concluding your discussion, leave the retailer packet with the owner/manager and let them know how to contact you for further information and/or assistance, and be sure to thank them for their time.
  - E. If for any reason the owner or manager is not available, inquire as to whether the clerk is available for a brief discussion. If so follow the protocol as if speaking with the owner/manager. If the clerk is not available be sure to thank them for their time and proceed to an alternate site.
6. Continue with this process until you have completed your region’s designated number of retailer/vendor education site visits. You may exceed your designated number of sites and conduct additional Vendor Education visits if you desire.

**Education Visit Notes:** Entering an establishment and merely leaving a packet with a clerk or owner/manager is not considered a successfully completed retailer/vendor education visit. A successful visit is a dialogue inclusive of the “Do Your Part” brochure which includes:

- Excerpts from the YTA and the potential cost for selling tobacco to minor
- Tips for employee training
- Examples of store policy regarding tobacco sales that vendors can use,
- Examples of directives to employees,
- Examples of employee agreements,
- Instructions on YTA signage and the placement of signage
- Discussion on the SMART Tobacco Vendors Guidelines

If you are unable to have a successful visit, note the reasons and consult with your supervisor about whether a follow-up might be warranted.

Thank you for assisting with this effort.

Attention: Synar Coordinator  
Phone: (517) 373-4700  
Email: [SOM-DTMBRemedyMail@michigan.gov](mailto:SOM-DTMBRemedyMail@michigan.gov)  
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care  
Prevention & Treatment Section  
Lewis Cass Building, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
320 S. Walnut Street Lansing MI 48913