

Michigan Department Health and Human Services

PROTOCOL FOR CONDUCTING TOBACCO RETAILER COVERAGE STUDY ACTIVITIES

Under the Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Services Block Grant requirement, states must conduct annual, unannounced, random inspections of tobacco and Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) retailers to determine the compliance rate with laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco and ENDS products to persons under the age of 21. These Synar surveys involve choosing a random sample of tobacco and ENDS retail outlets from a well-maintained master tobacco retailer list. Every three years, each state is also required to check the coverage and accuracy of that master list by conducting a coverage study as close as possible to the time of the Synar survey.

“Coverage” indicates how completely the list contains all of the eligible outlets in the state for the Synar survey. The coverage rate is the percentage of all eligible outlets in the state that actually appear on the master list (list frame). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommendation is for a ninety (90) percent coverage rate; however, the actual mandate is for eighty (80) percent coverage. The study will also provide an additional means of checking address accuracy and outlet eligibility, beyond the various methods used to update the list regularly.

This document provides the requirements for the methods and procedures for conducting the Michigan Tobacco Retailer Coverage Study Activity. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) coverage study design required approval from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). Therefore, **variance from these procedures is not permitted.**

MDHHS will:

- Select geographic areas to be sampled.
- Coordinate the participation of the involved Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHP).
- Provide protocol and necessary training/technical assistance to selected PIHPs.
- Provide specific starting points and boundaries, with guidance and a designated number of tobacco and ENDS retailers. (**Note:** Starting points will be used to provide consistency.)
- Amend the PIHPs Prevention project allocation according to the required number of outlets per stratum in its region.
- Distribute and collect necessary canvassing forms.
- Determine coverage rate.
- Update master tobacco retailer list (list frame).
- Report the results to SAMHSA by December 2025.

Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans guidance:

- Be responsible for the completion of the coverage study activities within its region during the period of **August 1 – August 31, 2025.**
- Provide two-person “field worker” teams (minimum two adults).
- Train, schedule, and supervise the teams in purpose, protocol, routes, and use of canvassing forms.
- Collect canvassing forms: review for completeness, legibility, and necessary signatures.

- Before **Wednesday, September 10, 2025**, submit canvassing forms and contact information of canvassing team membership via e-mail to: MeisterJ1@michigan.gov and ohs@michigan.gov.

Canvassing Teams guidance:

- Understand that:
 - The purpose of the coverage study is to determine the quality of the Michigan tobacco Master Retailer List (MRL).
 - In no way is the existing MRL or retailers' history to be utilized or considered.
 - Teams will physically canvass all retailers until they have found and recorded **exactly the designated number** of those selling tobacco and ENDS products, regardless of the number of unvisited retailers and tobacco and ENDS retailers remaining within the community. Stop when quota is reached.
 - In some cases, additional communities are listed besides the original selection. This is done to provide an additional location to canvass in case the first selection does not hold enough tobacco and ENDS retailers to net the desired canvassing total within that county.
- Review protocol; ensure understanding of task and responsibilities.
- Acquire starting points, boundaries, and canvassing forms from the PIHP.
- Demonstrate professional etiquette. Understandably, it is expected that canvassers will conduct themselves professionally in a way that reflects well on the PIHP and MDHHS
- Provide an explanation of the study's purpose utilizing the language in the first paragraph of this document. Thank merchants for their cooperation.
- Go to the designated starting point in the assigned city/township/village and conduct the coverage study.
 - Utilize the provided starting point and boundaries to locate all retail businesses and physically enter in the order that they are encountered. CSAP recommends canvassing the entire selected area. Teams may stop when they have reached the quota; however, it is recommended that the Designated Youth Tobacco Use Representatives canvass the entire selected area and submit a complete list. If this cannot be done, please provide an explanation with the report for MDHHS/SUGE records.
 - Make no assumption regarding whether a particular business or a type of business does or does not sell tobacco and ENDS products – all businesses must be entered and assessed for tobacco and ENDS product sales.
 - Make exceptions to physical entry/visitation only if: 1) exterior signage clearly prohibits entry to the establishment by persons under 21 years of age, or 2) the location is determined to be dangerous to the canvassers' safety. Do not canvass beyond boundaries given. At no time, canvass beyond the county limits.
 - Notify the PIHP Prevention Coordinator or designee if the starting point is in obvious error upon arrival. If the team is in a commercial area, secure permission to use the following backup protocol:
 - At the primary intersection, start in any single direction on one side of the street. Continue on that side for five (5) blocks until all retail establishments have been visited within that area. Cross the street and work the way back on the opposite side to the primary intersection starting point.

- If additional tobacco and ENDS retailer recordings are needed, this protocol is to be used **ONLY** if the provided starting point proves inadequate and **ONLY** after being granted permission from the PIHP designee. Stay within the boundaries indicated and check establishments while proceeding either:
 - ✓ Five (5) blocks forward on the same street.
 - ✓ Turn one block to the right or left, and then continue parallel to the first checked street and repeat the process above.
- Complete the provided form.
 - Legibly record only tobacco and ENDS retailers that are accessible to persons under 21 years of age. Do not record visited sites that do not sell tobacco or ENDS products or are not accessible by underage individuals.
 - Include complete data for the contact information: name of store, street number, street name, city, zip code, area code, and phone number. If owner information is available, please add that to back of the form along with the name of store listed on the front. Include their email information if available.
 - Complete the rest of the form as directed by column headings.
 - Both canvassers must sign and date each page of the form.
 - Check the form for completeness, legibility, and signatures.
- Return the form to the PIHP by given deadline.