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New tobacco and nicotine products target students

Stanton, MI- Results from a community scan recently conducted by local agencies around Michigan, in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Tobacco Section, indicate that there are several new and emerging tobacco and non-tobacco nicotine products being sold and marketed statewide and locally.

“In the past several years an abundance of new tobacco and nicotine products have come on the market, including in our local community,” stated Kimberly Singh, Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) Health Officer. “These products are heavily marketed to young people through advertising and the use of colorful packaging and flavoring.”

Thirty-six agencies conducted the scan in 806 venues located within 45 Michigan counties. Scanned venues included gas stations, convenience stores, grocery stores, pharmacies, and others. The Mid-Michigan District Health Department participated in the scan, visiting 24 venues in Clinton County, 21 venues in Gratiot County, and 16 venues in Montcalm County.

Among all venues scanned statewide, 98% sold newly emerging products. Snus and e-cigarettes were the top two products sold. Other products sold included hookah, orbs, dissolvables, strips or sticks, nicogel, crush, and nicotine drops. The products were available in a variety of flavors including mellow, mint, frost, peppermint, winterchill, robust, citrus, vanilla, cherry, and many others. Snus and e-cigarettes were available throughout Clinton, Gratiot, and Montcalm counties.

The tobacco industry markets these products as an alternative to smoking cigarettes, and portrays the products as less harmful than smoking cigarettes. However, there is no evidence indicating these new products are any safer. Quitting tobacco use or addiction to nicotine is one of the best steps that people can take to improve their health.

According to Singh, “The most challenging aspects of these new products are that they can be used discretely and they are appealing to young people. Kids can begin a lifetime of addiction to nicotine with these products, and be at risk for all of the health issues associated with tobacco use. During this busy and exciting time as kids head back to school, we want parents, caregivers, school staff, and area youth to be aware that these products are being sold in our community, and that they are not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.”

For more information on the results of the community scan, contact Cheryl Thelen, MMDHD Health Educator, at 989-831-3634. For help in quitting tobacco use, talk with your healthcare provider or contact the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-784-8669.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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