



Public Health
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Florence County
Health Department

Florence County Health Department

501 Lake Ave PO Box 410 Florence, Wisconsin 54121 715-528-4837
A.Seibold, RN, MS Health Officer/Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ally Kalkofen
Florence County Health Department
715.528.4837
akalkofen@florencecountywi.gov

Underage Tobacco, Nicotine Sales on the Rise in Wisconsin

[Florence, WI] -

The rate of selling tobacco to underage individuals in Wisconsin surged from 5.5% in 2019 to 13.6% in 2023, according to the Synar Survey. The Synar Survey is Wisconsin's yearly check to see how often stores sell tobacco to people who are too young. If this trend continues, Wisconsin could lose millions of dollars in federal funding that depends on underage tobacco sales rates being low.

In 2019, Tobacco 21 became a law for the whole country, making it illegal to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products to anyone under 21. Since then, the Synar Survey has been checking if states are following this law. Wisconsin is one of just eight states that hasn't changed its own law to match the national Tobacco 21 law.

FDA inspectors are working hard to make sure stores follow the federal Tobacco 21 law in Wisconsin. However, local officials cannot enforce the legal tobacco sales age of 21 because they get their authority from state law. This confusion about different laws makes it easier for young people to get their hands on tobacco products.

If state lawmakers change Wisconsin's law to match the federal one, it would authorize local law enforcement to stop young people from buying tobacco and nicotine products. It would also allow Wisconsin Wins, a program that checks on stores selling tobacco products, complete more checks to make sure they are following the national law.

Using tobacco products at a young age puts people in danger of getting addicted to nicotine for their entire life. In fact, 95% of people who use tobacco now started before they were 21. If we all follow the national law, we can decrease tobacco-related harm and make our community healthier.

Looking for resources? Stores can get free training to understand the Tobacco 21 law at witobaccocheck.org. If people in Wisconsin want help to stop using tobacco, they can go to WIQuit.org or call 1-800-QUIT NOW or text "READY" to 200-400 for free help. Contact the Florence County Health Department at 715.528.4837 or visit 501 Lake Ave. in Florence, Wisconsin Monday thru Thursday 8:30am to 4:00pm.

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