THE TOBACCO RETAIL ENVIRONMENT IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

May 2016

Tobacco Retail Assessment
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Tobacco Prevention Coordinator
Washington County Department of Health and Human Services
The Tobacco Retail Environment in Washington County

TOBACCO RETAIL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION
Tobacco use continues to remain the largest preventable cause of death in Oregon, and in Washington County more than 1 in 6 deaths are tobacco related.\(^1\) Tobacco has taken a financial toll in Washington County as well, costing $103.9 million in tobacco-related medical care and $83.3 million in lost productivity in 2014 alone.\(^2\)

In June 2014, Washington County Public Health conducted an assessment of the local tobacco retail environment. The primary goal of the assessment was to better understand the tobacco retail environment, particularly as it pertains to youth and other vulnerable populations. Findings will be used to guide future tobacco prevention and education efforts in Washington County.

METHODOLOGY
Highly trained research staff visited 236 tobacco retailers that were identified by Oregon Health Authority and Washington County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This list excluded liquor stores and hookah bars, which already have age regulations.

Data collection was primarily observational, rather than conversational, and occurred via paper-and-pencil surveys during standard store business hours between June 11 and June 18, 2014. Store managers were given a letter of introduction at the time of the data collection (Appendix A). Any stores refusing a first attempt to be surveyed were attempted a second time by a different researcher.

The data collection tool used for this research was designed by State and Community Tobacco Control Research (SCTC) and referred to as the Standardized Tobacco Assessment for Retail Settings (STARS) survey (Appendix B). STARS provides key information about the retail environment; the survey is user friendly and designed for practitioners to inform state and local tobacco control policies for the point of sale. Washington County HHS staff and MDC Research met in person for a project-specific training to cover the STARS materials. The assessment included questions on the different types of stores selling and advertising tobacco products, location of products, types of tobacco products sold and the types of advertising used.

Researchers were equipped with smartphones and used Google maps to locate the stores. The research team verified that the store address matched the store name. Each researcher photographed the storefronts they visited, as well as any selected observations inside or outside the stores. Data analysis was conducted using Excel. The following tables (1 and 2) indicate the retailers that were assessed per city as well as the types of stores assessed.
**Table 1: Tobacco retailers assessed per city**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaverton</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornelius</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Grove</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaston</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsboro</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King City</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Plains</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigard</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tualatin</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated – Urban</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated – Rural</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Types of stores assessed (excludes liquor stores and hookah bars, which already have age regulations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/Pharmacy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass merchandiser</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Washington County, the number of retail outlets is unrestricted, making tobacco products easily accessible particularly in minority communities and lower socio-economic neighborhoods. Research has shown a correlation between greater tobacco use among youth and adults in areas with greater density of tobacco retailers.\(^3,4\) For example, schools that are located near several tobacco retailers tend to have higher rates of students smoking then compared to schools that are not within close proximity to a retailer.
Figure 2: Schools with a tobacco retailer within 1,000 feet.

In 2015 in Washington County, 10% of 8th graders and 20% of 11th graders used tobacco; 8% of 8th graders and 16% of 11th graders used an electronic nicotine delivery product. More youth are becoming addicted to nicotine at a younger age, which makes it more difficult to quit. Nearly nine in 10 adults who smoke started before age 18. The same number of adult smokers also regret having ever started.
Table 3: Percentage of 11\textsuperscript{th} graders in Washington County who have used tobacco/nicotine products in the past 30 days\textsuperscript{5}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarillos, little cigars</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigars</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokeless tobacco (chew, dip, snus, snuff)</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hookah</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Cigarettes or other vaping product</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: High school students use of E-Cigarettes in Oregon\textsuperscript{5}
Every day, tobacco companies market their addictive products to Oregon kids and teens by making them look, smell and taste like candy. Tobacco companies are so adept at this targeted trickery, many adults don’t even notice it.

-Karen Girard
Manager of the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention section for the Oregon Public Health Division

Interior

In efforts to attract new consumers and maintain current users, the tobacco industry relies heavily on advertising, price promotions, marketing and product placement. In 2012 the tobacco industry spent more than $112 million promoting tobacco in Oregon. This translates to just over $3 million a day, and almost $13,000 an hour. Of the 11th graders surveyed in Washington County, 66% reported seeing an advertisement for cigarettes or other tobacco products at a store. Over half (54%) of these students agreed with the statement that tobacco companies are deliberately advertising and promoting cigarettes to encourage youth under 18 to smoke.\(^5\) The 2014 Surgeon General Report states that “the tobacco industry continues to position itself to sustain its sales by recruiting youth and young adults...as consumers of all their nicotine-containing products including cigarettes.”\(^6\) This statement becomes more evident when in Washington County one in four retailers displays tobacco ads at the eye level of a child and 87% have tobacco products visible to all customers, regardless of age. Seeing such a high prevalence of advertising in stores normalizes the presence of tobacco, encourages initiation and impulse purchasing all the while discouraging cessation.

The product found to be the most prevalent across all stores assessed were cigarettes. Convenience stores offered the cheapest pack of cigarettes (average $4.60 vs. $5.30 at grocery stores) and stores classified as “other” offered the cheapest menthols ($6.10 vs. $7.10 at grocery stores). Cigarillos, or little cigars, were predominantly found in convenience stores (97%). Federal law prohibits flavorings in cigarettes, but this does not extend to e-cigarettes or cigarillos, which can also be sold as singles as opposed to a package. The tobacco industry is aware that flavorings such as tropical fusion, grape and peach appeal primarily to youth, masking the smell and harsh taste of tobacco. The prevalence of youth using flavored tobacco or other nicotine products is high. Nationally, out of the middle and high school students who currently use tobacco, seven out of 10 use a flavored product.\(^7\) In Washington County, 32% of 11th graders and 14% of 8th graders have, at some point, used a flavored tobacco or vaping product.\(^5\)
Table 4: Percentage of specific products sold by retailers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menthol</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarillos</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigars</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew, snuff, dip or chew</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Cigarettes</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Price promotions, such as coupons and “buy one get one,” were available at all retailer locations. The benefit to the tobacco industry to offer these discounts is that associated taxes and minimum price laws can be offset when using price promotions. In 2012, the Federal Trade Commission reported that all the various promotions offered made up 85.1% of all the advertising done by the tobacco industry.\textsuperscript{8} Price promotions make tobacco and nicotine products more affordable to people with fewer economic resources, and coupons encourage users to purchase more and use more often. Price is a powerful influence, especially for youth initiation and continuation. Studies have shown that when the price of tobacco is raised, it reduces overall consumption among youth. There is a general consensus among researchers that if the price is raised 10%, it reduces consumption by 3-5%.\textsuperscript{9} Lower income and predominantly minority neighborhoods tend to have a higher density of tobacco retailers and more tobacco advertising than in other communities.\textsuperscript{12} Eliminating price promotions is one tactic used to reduce tobacco-related disparities and promote health equity.\textsuperscript{12}
Figure 4: Tobacco retailer density and percentage of population at the federal poverty level
Exterior

Tobacco products are advertised extensively, both outside and inside stores. This advertising is especially prolific at convenience stores with 84% of them having exterior ads. The tobacco products most heavily advertised on the store exterior were non-menthol cigarettes (51%) and menthol cigarettes (42%). Convenience stores (29%) were the type of store most likely to have a cigarette ad within three feet of the floor.
SYNAR INSPECTIONS

The Synar program was established as a means to measure various states’ progress toward reducing youth access to tobacco. Oregon law prohibits a person under the age of 18 from buying or obtaining tobacco products. To ensure retailer compliance with the law, random, unannounced annual inspections are conducted throughout the state by the Oregon Health Authority. In 2014, of the randomized sample of retailers inspected just in Washington County, 28% were found to have sold tobacco products to a minor; warning letters were issued from the State. This is important; having too many retailers statewide fail inspections would lead to a loss of millions of dollars (up to 40%) in federal funding to Oregon from the federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) block grant. In 2013, the statewide rate was 22.5%, just inside the allowable 3% margin of error. A retailer’s commitment to upholding the law not only benefits Oregon financially, but most importantly protects our youth from the harms associated with tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

CONCLUSION

The 2014 tobacco retail assessment provided a much needed picture of the retail environment in Washington County, resulting in information that will be utilized to shape future prevention efforts. This report is intended to illustrate the impact that the tobacco retail environment can have on those most at risk for negative health outcomes, such as youth and low-income groups. One way to ensure that youth and others are protected from tobacco and nicotine is by implementing evidence-based interventions (policies, systems and environmental initiatives) that have been proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use, tobacco-related disease, health care costs, lost productivity and even death.\(^{10}\)

Addressing industry influence at the point of sale (POS) is a recognized strategy in tobacco control programming. Over 75% of states have a comprehensive tobacco retail licensing program; however, Oregon isn’t one of them.\(^{11}\) The main goal of a tobacco retailer licensing program is to provide adequate enforcement for the laws that make it illegal to sell tobacco and nicotine products to minors. The program also provides appropriate penalties for retailers that continuously break those laws. Licensing could also set limits on the amount and type of advertising from the retailer to the public and set zoning restrictions. A retailer’s commitment to upholding the law not only benefits Oregon financially, but most importantly protects our youth from the harms associated with tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

Other strategies that have been proven effective have been raising the cost of tobacco, establishing smoke-free policies, encouraging cessation, raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco and nicotine products, and launching hard-hitting counter-marketing campaigns.\(^{12,13}\) Utilizing evidence-based best practices such as those listed previously, in conjunction with data, will allow Washington County to increase efforts and strengthen prevention endeavors, ultimately leading to the protection of the health of everyone who lives, works and plays in our communities.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Retailer

Letter given to retailer at the time of site visit:

**English Version**
June 10, 2014

Dear Store Owner/Manager:

MDC Research on behalf of Washington County Public Health is conducting an assessment of retail stores in Washington County. The purpose of the assessment is to observe placement and advertising of tobacco and healthy food products in the retail environment.

Observers will make every effort to not interfere with shoppers while in the store. This healthy retail assessment will take approximately 15 minutes. Observations from each store will be combined county-wide and state-wide. Individual stores will not be identified.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Carla Bennett, Washington County tobacco prevention and education program coordinator, at 503-846-4544 or carla_bennett@co.washington.or.us.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this project!

Sincerely,
Marni Kuyl, RN, MS
Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow
Director, Department of Health & Human Services

**Spanish Version**
June 10, 2014

Querido Propietario/Supervisor de la Tienda:

En representación de Salud Pública del Condado de Washington, MDC Research está conduciendo una evaluación de tiendas a todo el Condado de Washington. El propósito de la evaluación es observar la ubicación de anuncios de tabaco y comida saludable en el ambiente de las tiendas.

Los observadores harán todo lo possible de no interferir con clientes en la tienda. Esta evaluación en las tiendas tomará 15 minutos aproximadamente. Los resultados de cada tienda se combinarán en el Condado y en el Estado. Las tiendas no serán identificadas.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor contacte Vikki Moore, Coordinadora del Programa para Prevención del Condado de Washington al teléfono 503 846-4522 o vikki_moore@co.washington.or.us

Gracias por su cooperación y participación.

Atentamente,
Marni Kuyl, RN, MS
Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow
Director, Department of Health & Human Services
Appendix B: STARS Survey Instrument

1. Date of visit: ________________________________

2. STORE ID: ________________________________

3. CODER ID: ________________________________

4. Store Name: Does the actual store name match the assigned store name?
   □ Yes
   □ No – Enter correct name: ________________________________

5. Store Location: Does the actual store address match the assigned address?
   □ Yes
   □ No – Enter correct address: ________________________________

6. Can you survey this store? [If not, then select an option below and STOP]
   □ Yes, I can
   □ No, store does not exist
   □ No, store is closed
   □ No, under 18 not allowed to enter
   □ No, membership or fee required to enter
   □ No, environment unsafe for me
   □ No, asked to leave before completing the survey
   □ Other (specify): ________________________________

**EXTERIOR**

7. Which products are advertised outside the store (on windows/doors, building, sidewalk or elsewhere)?
   a. Cigarettes – non-menthol  □ Yes □ No
   b. Cigarettes – menthol  □ Yes □ No
   c. Cigarillos/little cigars  □ Yes □ No
   d. Large cigars  □ Yes □ No
   e. Chew, moist or dry snuff, dip or snus  □ Yes □ No
   f. E-cigarettes  □ Yes □ No

**INTERIOR**

8. Store Type: (Choose one)
   □ Convenience store with or without gas (e.g., 7-Eleven, Exxon, Wawa)
   □ Drug store/pharmacy (e.g., CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid)
   □ Beer, wine, or liquor store (e.g., ABC)
   □ Grocery store (e.g., small market/deli/produce market) or supermarket (e.g., Stop & Shop, Harris Teeter, Albertson’s)
   □ Mass merchandiser (e.g., Walmart, Costco, BJ’s, Sam’s Club) or discount store (e.g., Dollar General, Family Dollar)
   □ Tobacco shop (e.g., Cigarettes Cheaper, cigar shops, hookah bars, e-cigarette shops, or other tobacco shops)
   □ Other (specify): ________________________________
      (e.g., gas station kiosk, donut shop, bait & tackle)

9. Any tobacco products sold here (i.e., cigarettes, cigars/cigarillos/little cigars, chew, moist or dry snuff, dip, snus, or e-cigarettes)? (Choose one)
   □ Yes and visible to customers
   □ Yes but not visible to customers
   □ No [STOP if focusing on tobacco retailers]

10. Does the store have a pharmacy counter?  □ Yes □ No

11. WIC and/or SNAP (i.e., food stamps, EBT) accepted here?
   a. WIC  □ Yes □ No
   b. SNAP  □ Yes □ No

12. Alcoholic beverages sold here?  □ Yes □ No

13. Counter-marketing: Does store display a graphic health warning sign?  □ Yes □ No
### Cigarettes

14. Answer these questions about cigarettes.

- a. Any cigarettes sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- b. Menthol cigarettes sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- c. Any cigarettes (menthol or non-menthol) within 12 inches of toys, candy, gum, slushy/soda machines, or ice cream?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- d. Product ad (menthol or non-menthol) within 3 feet of the floor?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- e. Any cigarette price promotions?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- f. Any menthol cigarette price promotions?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

### Other Products

15. Cigarillos/little cigars

- a. Sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- b. Flavored products?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- c. Single cigarillos/little cigars sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

16. Large cigars

- a. Sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- b. Flavored products?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- c. Single large cigars sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

17. Chew, moist/dry snuff, dip, or snus

- a. Sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- b. Flavored products?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- c. Single chew, moist/dry snuff, dip, or snus sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

18. E-cigarettes

- a. Sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- b. Flavored products?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

- c. Single e-cigarettes sold here?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

### Prices

19a. What is the cheapest price to purchase a single pack of cigarettes?

- [If cigarettes not sold here, skip to Q. 21]
  - □, Cashier provided price
  - □, Observed advertised price
  - □, Unable to determine (e.g., only cartons sold here)

19c. Sales tax included in cheapest pack price?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

20a. What is the price to purchase one regular hard pack of Newport menthol?

- [Image of Newport menthol]
  - □, Cashier provided price
  - □, Observed advertised price
  - □, Sold here but can't get price
  - □, Not sold here

20c. Sales tax included in the price for Newport pack?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

21a. What is the cheapest price to purchase one Blu disposable e-cigarette (menthol)?

- [Image of Blu e-cigarette]
  - □, Cashier provided price
  - □, Observed advertised price
  - □, Sold here but can't get price
  - □, Not sold here

21c. Sales tax included in the price for Blu disposable e-cigarette?
  - □, Yes
  - □, No

### Field Notes

This retail environment provides a great photo opportunity.
References


