

## Surveillance of Vape Retailers in Torrington

### WHAT WE DID

In June 2021, Torrington's Local Prevention Council conducted a surveillance of 21 registered vape retailers in the community. This followed the first surveillance conducted in 2019.

There were several areas that were assessed during the visits including the existence of signage around Tobacco 21 and 'We ID', if they displayed their license to sell, the type and amount of advertising found on store windows, the types of vaping products sold, and location of vape products within the store.

Owners & clerks were also asked about the bestselling brands at the shop, the general age of the consumers, and their own knowledge around the dangers of vaping.

### WHAT WE FOUND

- Since the first surveillance was conducted in 2019, both Walgreens and Walmart stopped selling vaping products.
- Nine retailers did not display a license to sell.
- Five retailers did not display any Tobacco 21 or 'We ID' signage.
- Fourteen retailers had numerous advertisements for vaping products on store windows.
- In several stores the vaping products were displayed next to the candy or the ice cream cooler.
- Store owners & clerks identified their best-selling products as JUUL, disposable vapes, and any 'fruit flavored device.'

### MARKETING TO YOUTH CONTINUES

*"The younger crowd prefer the fruity flavors."*

Although JUUL discontinued selling fruit flavors in 2019, there are still numerous replacements available. Popular brands such as Puff Bar and Airis Puff are available in over 15 'kid-friendly' flavors including Grape, Blueberry Razz, Pink Lemonade, Gummy Bear and Sour Apple.

*"People really like the fruity stuff."*



## What is the current PERCEPTION OF HARM?

**SIXTEEN** of the owners & clerks we spoke with were aware of the dangers of vaping.

- **ONE** clerk stated that the store's owner had all staff watch a video about the dangers of vaping, which included information on the impact to a person's lungs and their developing brain.
- **SIX** owners indicated that they believed vaping was a better alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes, "vaping is better for people than smoking cigarettes".

**TWO** owners were not aware of the dangers of vaping.

## What about ACCESS & ENFORCEMENT?

Although, no owners or clerks indicated that the store sells to underage youth, there were several locations that are known to do so. (Based on information from youth in the community.) During our surveillance of one retailer, two underage youth entered the store and attempted to buy disposables. They were not asked for ID. When we prompted the clerk to do so the youth said they 'forgotten' them in their car. They left and never returned.

Several owners discussed seeing parents and grandparents purchase vapes for their own children/grandchildren & older youth who

## NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Continue to educate youth, parents and caregivers on the dangers of vaping for our youth.
- ✓ Promote the Tobacco 21 law that took effect in October 2019.
- ✓ Conduct compliance checks utilizing local youth. Follow up with all retailers that fail and offer any support or training that may be required.
- ✓ Highlight & promote all retailers that pass compliance.
- ✓ Continue to conduct an annual environmental scan and determine current needs in the community.

## PARENTS ARE PROVIDING VAPES

Several shop owners talked about the need to educate parents & grandparents around the dangers of vaping & youth.

One owner stated that he has parents come in to buy vaping devices for their kids quite a bit and finds that concerning.

*"They need a lot of education, because they come in here, buy the vapes and hand it to kids clearly underage right in front of the store."*

## OLDER YOUTH ARE PROVIDING VAPES

An owner pointed out that older youth also purchase vaping products and then sell them to underage kids in front of the store.

*"It happens all the time."*

Another owner said he turns away at least 6 to 8 youth a week who are trying to purchase vapes.