



## CALIFORNIA TOBACCO ENDGAME CENTER FOR ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT

A project of the American Heart Association®

### Success Story

# Teen Win Against Flavored Tobacco Sales in the City of Adelanto, CA

### At a Glance

Developing local support through long-standing community organizing strategies and tactics, the High Desert Advocates Countering Tobacco In Our Neighborhoods (HD ACTION) Youth Coalition, part of the California Health Collaborative's San Bernardino County Tobacco Control Program (SBCTCP) youth advisory board, harnessed community support and legislative backing for greater tobacco control in Adelanto, California through a tobacco retail license (TRL) ordinance that included a ban on flavored tobacco products. This ordinance was adopted by the Adelanto City Council in December 2019.



### Approach

Beginning in March 2018, staff from the SBCTCP joined Healthy Adelanto, a city-sponsored committee focused on community issues, and began presentations on support available for High Desert communities to combat youth access to tobacco and flavored tobacco products. Following a presentation to Friday Night Live, a student club at Adelanto High School, the SBCTCP invited students to join the SBCTCP youth advisory board and form the HD ACTION Coalition. Youth member Sandy Gayton said the presentations by SBCTCP were eye-opening. She said, "Everyone I knew had tried vaping once or twice...Everyone knows smoking and tobacco kills, but they thought of vaping as [a] different thing and didn't realize it has nicotine."

### Key Community Organizing Strategies and Tactics

Campaigns to win new public policies are most effective when they employ proven community organizing and engagement tactics. The key organizing tactics used by HD Action Coalition are discussed.

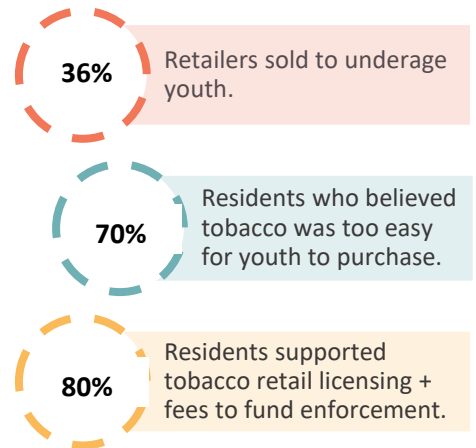
### Building Community Organizers

In June 2018, HD ACTION Coalition members underwent a two-day boot camp training session by SBCTCP focused on evidence-based strategies to address youth access to tobacco. Participants also received coaching on engaging public officials and public speaking.



## Assessing Community Support

The HD ACTION Coalition began using long-standing strategies to build community capacity, including collecting data to support its call for greater controls on tobacco sales to prevent youth access. HD ACTION Coalition youth conducted Young Adult Tobacco Purchase Surveys at Adelanto tobacco retailers, with results showing 36% of retailers surveyed sold to underage youth decoys. In August 2018, the HD ACTION Coalition conducted surveys at several community and school events, distributing postcards about youth use of flavored tobacco products and encouraging people to register to vote. Surveys collected from 153 residents showed more than 70% felt it was easy for youth to buy tobacco products in San Bernardino County and more than 80% supported requiring tobacco retailers to have a license to sell tobacco products and pay an annual licensing fee to help fund enforcement of tobacco laws in the local community.



## Identifying Champions

SBCTCP met with the Adelanto City Manager and City Clerk, but soon recognized the issue would not move forward without the support of the City's Mayor. Working with SBCTCP, HD ACTION Coalition members developed a policy packet and confirmed a meeting with the city's mayor to present their findings from the decoy operations and public opinion surveys. When the mayor failed to attend, HD ACTION Coalition members felt initially defeated, but soon got to work identifying other potential champions.

HD ACTION Coalition members conducted key informant interviews and spoke during the public comment period of council meetings. Sandy, a youth leader in the HD ACTION Coalition, said while council members applauded the teen commitment to the issue, they did not offer support. The HD ACTION Coalition identified an opportunity for cultivating support with the upcoming municipal elections and organized a public forum with 13 city council candidates.

While the event did not draw a large attendance, it enabled the group to publicly raise the issue with candidates, identify potential policy champions as well as areas of concern about the issue that could influence future support. Two new council members and a new mayor – who became a tobacco champion – were elected in November 2018.

## Putting Faces Behind the Statistics

The HD ACTION Coalition secured a meeting with the City's new Mayor, Gabriel Reyes, and Mayor Pro-Tem Stevevonna Evans, and was added to the agenda for an official presentation on Feb. 27, 2019. The HD ACTION Coalition presented its proposal for the TRL ordinance with the flavor ban that included statistics from other California cities or counties reporting dramatic decreases in youth sales rates before and after TRL implementation.

"They painted a very vivid picture that big tobacco companies are targeting minors," said Mayor Gabriel Reyes. The proposal was positively received, and the council directed the City Attorney to develop the necessary legislation for consideration. Mayor Gabriel Reyes said the results of the Young Adult Tobacco Purchase Surveys were particularly impactful, along with reports from the teen decoys that retailers were observed alerting other stores to the decoy operation underway. "They were more concerned with making a buck than harming a child," he said. "We needed to make it clear that you can't sell tobacco to minors."



## Postcard Campaign

Following the city council’s direction for the Adelanto City Attorney to draft legislation, HD ACTION Coalition members launched an educational postcard campaign called “I DECIDE,” to generate support for the ongoing efforts to reduce tobacco sales to underage youth. The campaign reached broadly throughout the community, with postcards that reflected each geographic area of Adelanto. This strategy helped identify support from all segments of the community including enabling community members to demonstrate support in specific council districts. The postcard campaign generated more than 400 supporters of prohibiting flavored tobacco sales.



El Sol, a community partner of SBCTCP, produced and distributed a Spanish-language version of the postcard campaign to demonstrate support from the area’s Spanish-speaking communities. This partnership enabled voices from a segment of the community – which includes undocumented immigrants – that is often distrustful of government and may not have come forward publicly to support the policy otherwise, yet is significantly impacted by youth access to tobacco.

Capacity building efforts by the HD ACTION Coalition also generated support for the policy from St. Joseph Health St. Mary Health Center in Apple Valley, and by the Victor Valley Union High School District Board of Trustees, both of which sent Letters of Support to city council.

The HD ACTION Coalition members presented the 447 “I DECIDE” postcards of support to city council, reinforcing broad community support for the measures.

## Results

On Dec. 11, 2019, Adelanto City Council unanimously passed a city policy to create a Tobacco Retail Licensing (TRL) program that also banned the sale of flavored tobacco products in the city – the first and only such ordinance in San Bernardino County with strong enforcement controls, with retailers given until June 30, 2020 to comply. HD ACTION Coalition member Sandy said work supporting the new policy was an empowering experience whose results validated that youth concerns matter. “It really means a lot to me that we were able to make a difference in our community,” she said. “I had spoken out about other issues in the past, but this was the first time I felt like I really made a difference.”



Mayor Gabriel Reyes, who grew up in Adelanto, said the TRL is an example of the impact local governments can make in implementing positive change and the power residents – no matter what their age – have in bringing issues forward.

*“We had the power to impact a positive change for the community and implement something at the local level that can make a bigger change in the lives of our youth,” he said. “I look forward to becoming an advocate to helping neighboring cities implement this as well.”*



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