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Guam reports 97.1% compliance with tobacco retail law

Tamuning, Guam - The Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center (GBHWC) in conjunction with the Department of Revenue and Taxation (DRT) conducted the island-wide, annual tobacco retailer compliance inspections. This monitoring activity is mandated by the federal government's Public Law 102-321, the *Synar Amendment*, which requires states and territories that receive Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, Recovery Services Block Grant funds to establish and enforce the minimum legal age for purchasing and using tobacco products.

In Guam, GBHWC and DRT are responsible for conducting random and unannounced tobacco retail compliance checks in all 19 villages. For 2025, the Retail Compliance Rate is 97.1% which maintains the federally mandated rate of above 80%, and is an improvement compared to 94.8% in 2024. GBHWC, DRT, and Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) are jointly responsible for carrying out Guam Public Law No. 24-278 (Tobacco Control Act of 1998) and Guam Public Law No. 34-01 (Youth Protection Act of 2017) to implement island-wide efforts for youth tobacco/nicotine use prevention initiatives.

For 2025, of the 277 eligible tobacco retailers inspected, eight were found in violation of selling tobacco or disposable electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) products to minors ages 16-20 and one retailer failed to display the mandatory "No Sale Under 21" prohibition sign. These nine establishments immediately received citations from DRT ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000. Per Guam P.L. 37-90, tobacco violations may be penalized as high as up to \$20,000 depending on the history of citations.

GBHWC Director Carissa Pangelinan shares, "This annual monitoring effort is made possible through continued collaboration between government agencies and our community partners. In addition to meeting federal requirements, GBHWC has launched the Merchant Education Outreach Program since January 2025 as a supplemental resource for tobacco and ENDS retailers." The program includes door-to-door educational visits, distribution of policy fact sheets, and other relevant materials to increase awareness of local tobacco-related regulations and help maintain strong compliance across the island. Director Pangelinan adds, "It's the first year we offered this service year-round, allowing us to meet retailers in their own environment. These ongoing prevention initiatives help safeguard our youth from prematurely accessing tobacco and ENDS products at the retail level. As an island community, it is our collective responsibility to protect our youth—our future leaders—by fostering positive influences that shape their beliefs and behaviors."

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The current Annual Synar Report is available for community review and feedback through <https://gbhwc.guam.gov/peace>. For more information, contact the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center's Prevention and Training Branch at staff@peaceguam.org or the Synar Coordinator at hannaruth.defiesta@gbhwc.guam.gov.